

Summer 2021

# *Listening* *World*

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From the Chief Executive Officer,  
Dr Russell Farnworth.



“The voice that came out of the box came into my heart.” That’s the simple, straightforward way a Kabyle Berber explained how he came to Christ through TWR. I must say, that might be the best description that I’ve ever heard of the intimate way God uses Christian radio to change the hearts of listeners.

Berber Christians face tremendous pressures as they follow Christ. Embracing Christianity brings shame on your family and often leads to ostracism and persecution. In this issue of *Listening World*, we feature TWR’s ministry in some of the places of the world where it is most difficult, and dangerous, to be a Christian – Uzbekistan, China and Algeria (where the Berber live).

As countries like these and others in Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, become increasingly closed to religious freedoms and as followers of Christ in many areas face persecution, radio becomes very important to encourage believers and to expose others to the Gospel.

So, thank you for your support in so many ways! Even as the world grows more restrictive, more hostile to the truth that Jesus is reconciling his followers to God, you and I will continue to proclaim the good news to the whole world by mass media so lasting fruit is produced.

Yours in Christ,

**TWR’s bank account for the UK is:**

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*Thank you for your ongoing support which makes it possible for us to continue reaching out and touching hearts with the Gospel.*

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## Joy and Jubilation in Malawi

Sounds of joy and jubilation were heard from different areas visited by TWR staff in Malawi, when they distributed new radios to beneficiaries. “Women were ululating and dancing,” says Victor Kaonga, National Director of **TWR Malawi**, “and people were greeting us with smiles and tears of joy.”

The **TWR Malawi** team recently travelled roughly 2500 miles across Malawi in order to distribute radios to 16 different districts from South to North. This is all part of the radio distribution project which began back in 2018 and was initiated to enable people to hear the Word of God, so that lasting fruit is produced. The four-week intensive journey involved crossing hills, forest, remote and beautiful places of Malawi. They distributed radios by working alongside traditional leaders, in order to select beneficiaries who would benefit the most. Almost every beneficiary in the 16 selected districts could not believe they were receiving a Tecsun Green-88 radio. These radios receive FM,

AM and shortwave signals and are powered by hand-cranking or batteries.

In one location, the TWR team arrived at 9am and found the local chief and the radio beneficiaries already gathered, waiting for their arrival. Some indicated that this was their first time owning such property. People from other religions also gathered and said they would start listening to TWR programmes.

### Why are radios so vital?

Victor Kaonga points out that many countries rely on radio as their key medium for keeping informed about the world and that means it's also a powerful tool for sharing the Gospel. “Because of economic disadvantages, over 40% of Malawi's households do not have a radio set,” he said. “So, placing a radio in someone's hands is enriching their access to the Word of God, information, entertainment and, equally important, it empowers women in particular to



***“I am happy my family has a radio now that we can use to listen to TWR, because in the past we used to listen through my neighbour's radio. With this gift, I can listen to any message from TWR at any time.”***

own this as a household property of pride. In most rural homes here, a man is most respected when he has a radio and a bicycle.”

As well as sharing the Gospel, one hope of this project is that TWR will strengthen its presence through initiating and building radio listening communities. From time-to-time the producers will revisit these communities to continue building relationships and engage with listeners. From the result of this work, a group of listeners in Malawi's northern most and hard-to-reach locations have now formed a WhatsApp group to discuss and encourage one another. Many of the people who received radios said they listen to TWR regularly and continue to be enriched by the programmes. One lady said she has "learned a lot through TWR programmes." The group's Village Head said most people in his area enjoy listening to programmes like *Word of Life*, and *Water for Life*. "It's rare to have someone come just like that and give such a precious gift. God bless you".

## **The beginning of TWR Malawi**

Broadcasting in Malawi began on short and medium wave from Manzini, Swaziland in 1986. In 2000 **TWR Malawi** FM went on air in Blantyre, and by 2004, more transmitting sites were added. Today there are FM transmission sites broadcasting programmes 24 hours a day in the Chichewa, English and Chitumbuka languages. Not only is the country of Malawi being permeated with these Gospel radio programmes, but they are being heard as far afield as Mozambique and Zambia. **TWR Malawi** is one of **TWR Africa's** National Partners. Other TWR partners can be found in Burundi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya and South Africa.

What a truly amazing story of how God can use something as simple as a radio to build community and to share the Gospel.

# Faith in the Shadows

How do you see persecution? According to 'Open Doors World Watch List 2021', one in eight Christians worldwide experience persecution for their faith. That's one in eight of us whose faith can come at great cost — in some cases, even at the cost of life itself. In response to this painful statistic, we will be sharing three stories of lives affected by persecution, so that we may stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters who so often live out their faith in the shadows. We pray this would shine a light in the otherwise-darkened corners of our world and connect us all to these hidden members of the body of Christ.

## Uzbekistan

WORLD  
WATCH  
RANKING **21**

Conditions for Christians in Uzbekistan can be very challenging. The Central Asian nation ranks 21st among the 50 countries where persecution of Christians is the worst. Unregistered religious groups and activities here not only are punished with fines but also may face imprisonment or worse, and family members may be threatened. Harsh treatment doesn't come from officials alone; believers may be shunned by unhappy relatives or neighbours.

In 2017, the first Bible in the Uzbek language was published, but many believers have never held God's Word in their own hands. Although the translation now exists, getting it into the country legally has been nearly impossible in past years. Today, the government permits a strictly limited number of Bibles to be imported.

For people who can't participate in church regularly for fear they will incur severe persecution, TWR radio programmes serve as an important source of spiritual food.

According to monitoring agencies, secret prayer gatherings, if discovered, are punishable by fines. Unannounced visits by police officers have been reported at several churches in Central Asian countries. Other Uzbek believers have been arrested for gathering to worship, despite their events having been registered by authorities. Suspicious of possible supervisions, the government reportedly monitors religious



refugees and their families.

Many believers in Uzbekistan have expressed their thanks to TWR for sharing listener responses from other believers around the region. The testimonies give them hope and encourage them to stand firm in their faith despite persecution.

Umida\* wrote to TWR, "The fact that there are believers among us who passed through persecution [dealt by] their relatives and the government and still stood strong in faith is especially encouraging to us. It is joyful to see that God, through the firmness of [the persecuted believers'] hearts, works with their relatives, and some relatives accept Jesus as their Saviour."

These broadcasts are speaking hope to the estimated 345,000 Uzbek Christians and the millions of their compatriots who need to hear the Gospel. Umida says, "Through these programmes, we can see that God does not leave his children but instead even strengthens their spirit and gives the power to stand in faith."



## Algeria

WORLD  
WATCH  
RANKING **24**

Born and raised in a non-Christian household, Illi\* accepted Jesus as her Saviour without her family's knowledge. To grow in her faith, she would listen to TWR's Kabyle-language programmes in private, away from her family.

Illi lived her early life as a follower of the religion of her country. However, it was only in appearance and not in heart. Her family members were religious fundamentalists, especially her two brothers and father. Illi was forced to cover her face with a veil whether she liked it or not.

Her mother, on the other hand, has a tender heart. She was the only one who noticed a change in Illi when she came to Christ.

She asked, "What has happened to you, my daughter? Your look has changed."

Illi asked her mother, "Are you sure you like the change that God has brought about in me?"

She said, "Yes, I, too, would like to have the wonderful loving eyes you have."

Illi boldly declared, "What you see in me is the wonderful Aissa El-Masih [Jesus Christ], to whom I gave my heart and my life."

At these words, her mother fell to her knees, and her eyes were filled with tears of joy. She said, "I'd also give my life to Jesus, but if your

father and brothers found out about this, they would certainly kill us."

The Kabyle people, self-labelled as Imazighen, are more than 6 million in number. A non-Arab people, they have inhabited northern Africa for more than a millennium. With communities scattered across Morocco, Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Mali, Niger and Mauritania, most Kabyle reside in Algeria. Historically they have lived as shepherds and farmers in small communities high in the Atlas Mountain range to protect themselves against invaders, though today many have moved into large cities and even immigrated to southern Europe.

The Christian Church once flourished and had deep roots in Algeria until the 7th century. Augustine and Tertullian, both ancient church fathers, were of Kabyle ancestry. Today the number of Christian believers is estimated at a mere 0.3% of the population and persecution is an increasing reality. Witnessing and professing the Christian faith freely and openly remains illegal. While government officials claim that current laws are meant to keep religious extremists at bay, some officials have also publicly announced that Christian evangelism is equal to terrorism.

TWR's media outlets proclaim messages of hope to the Kabyle people. The teaching programmes *Thru the Bible* and *Women of Hope* are delivered through high-powered AM (or medium wave) radio, websites and social media. Late in 2020, audio production and broadcasting of *The Way of Righteousness* began in Kabyle. This programme, and a few others in development, share the Gospel via elements common to the Bible and Quran such as the Old Testament prophets. These topics help bridge the divide to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In addition to evangelism, TWR's programmes provide opportunities for growth to local believers like Illi who are living in difficult circumstances.

While Illi and her mother were talking, they realized her father was standing behind the door



Photo credit: Amy Wenzel

and had been listening to the conversation. He came out of hiding and saw the two women trembling.

He smiled and said, “Don’t be afraid. We are not those who kill, but those who have been led into error by our religion.” He turned to her mother and said, “I know that our daughter has been listening to the radio in secret. But I noticed the peace of God in her, so I decided to let her be.”

Then Illi’s mother cried out, “Blessed be Christ, the Lord of lords, the God of all gods, who breaks hearts of brass and fills with tenderness and love!”

Her father’s heart was touched immediately. The brothers were surprised to see that their father had changed his cape, which is a traditional way of indicating the adoption of a different faith. After a minute of silence, their faces lit up and they said, “Only Jesus can change our sadness into joy, so let us adore him with all our heart!”

Even amid great persecution and resistance to the Gospel, the Lord is still calling out to His people. Via media, TWR is speaking hope to the world because hope knows no barriers.

## China

WORLD  
WATCH  
RANKING **17**

Life has always been hard for Christians in China. Believers suffered severe persecution for decades, especially from the 1950s to the 1970s. For a while, things seemed to be getting better.

Churches were established and Bibles were even printed on the mainland.

But now, Bibles cannot be purchased online. And while enforcement varies by area, we have learned of churches being demolished, missionaries being forced to leave, religious books being removed from stores and online platforms.

In spite of this persecution, the Church in China continues to grow. There were only one million believers in China in 1949. Today, according to official estimates, there are about 38 million Protestants in China. The real number is believed to be between 70 million and 116 million.

These believers need sound teaching to grow in their faith and without it they can quickly fall into doctrinal error. Uncensored, unfiltered biblical teaching is getting harder to find in China. People may come to Christ and search for spiritual nourishment, but what they may find might not be the whole truth.

There is a great need for biblically sound, well-educated pastors and church leaders. However, house church leaders almost never have the opportunity to receive any formal, systematic Bible training. Many have a limited educational background, and most are busy with church ministry.





are currently unable to resume physical gatherings. Most churches have had to break into smaller groups and as a result, the workload of the church leaders has grown tremendously. The lack of physical gatherings has made it more difficult for SOTA to minister to students.

SOTA has adapted to these conditions using other means, in order to reach out to the students and continuing to provide the training that they need. Various online ministry groups have been formed, focusing on topics such as preaching, Bible study and missions. We also provide resources such as 137 lessons of the *Discipleship Essentials* and over 200 Bible stories from *Bible Stories Alive* for the small groups.

TWR's SOTA programme seeks to meet this need by providing quality theological education for promising students who seek to reach out to their own people. SOTA stands for "Seminary on the Air" and allows these students to learn at a time and pace more suited to their busy schedules.

Originally broadcast over shortwave from the Pacific island of Guam, this essential initiative shifted to an online platform in 2012. Various forms of media such as CDs, USB drives, MP3 players and digital tablets are also used.

Since 2012, over 1000 students have graduated from SOTA. There are presently close to 2000 active students.

Looking back at the previous century, the situation for Christians in China was grim. But this was also the time when God raised up leaders such as Wang Ming-Dao, Nee Duo-Sheng (Watchman Nee) and Yang Shao-Tang (David Yang), who helped guide the Chinese church through many perilous years.

We pray that God will use SOTA to develop Christian leaders who will not flinch in the face of increasing adversity, but serve their people with confidence, compassion, and courage.

\*Pseudonyms have been used to protect privacy.

Due to COVID-19 response measures, churches

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**Simply input your details on our website or email to [twr@twr.org.uk](mailto:twr@twr.org.uk) with your details.**



# Faith and Mental Health

Over the last decade, the UK has seen a significant shift in the way people approach mental health. We are encouraged to care for our mental wellbeing and to seek help during times of mental struggle. Numerous campaigns from mental health charities, professionals and activists have fought against the stigma surrounding mental health disorders. But how has this social shift been reflected in Christian communities? Has the Church done enough to welcome conversations of mental health as part of our spiritual journey? In April, we began broadcasting our new series called *Faith and Mental Health*. Each episode explores a different mental health topic with input from mental health experts and relevant Christian speakers.

We asked one of the contributors to the series to tell us what he thought about the programme...

*“The impact of the pandemic is being felt in a number of different ways beyond the physical impact of the disease itself. The ripples of this disease (and the necessary approaches to its containment) are having economic, social, educational and relational consequences. One area that is of particular concern to us at the Mind and Soul Foundation is the mental and emotional health impact, which, despite being*

*widely reported in the media, is not always assumed to be relevant in the church. Over the last 16 years we have been working to increase mental health awareness within the Christian community, reducing stigma and shame around mental ill health and acknowledging the reality that being a Christian does not prevent the onset of mental illness any more than it does prevent the onset of physical illness. At the same time we believe that the Christian church is a place of healing, support and transformation in this area, if only we could take an informed and integrated view which made space for psychological therapies and medications as well as prayer and worship.*

*We are delighted to partner with TWR through this series of programmes, which we hope will increase understanding and engagement with mental illness and an awareness of the love of God through the presence of Jesus, who ministers to us in times of emotional distress without condemnation.*

*To find out more about our work or to access supportive Christian resources for yourself head to [www.mindandsoulfoundation.org](http://www.mindandsoulfoundation.org)”*

Will Van Der Hart from  
The Mind and Soul  
Foundation.

So if you missed it (or fancy listening again) then tune in each week as we bust the mental health myths, unpack the real-life issues and reflect on the biblical response.

**The 13-part series begins again on the 3rd July. Listen Saturdays at 7.30pm on TWR UK or catch up online at [www.twr.org.uk/ondemand](http://www.twr.org.uk/ondemand).**

# Media Makes a Way

**TWR Motion** have launched in a new language! The animated series of Bible stories will now be available in Modern Standard Arabic. This is an important language. In fact, it's one of the most commonly spoken languages in the world.

## What is TWR Motion?

The heart of what **TWR Motion** does is to create Gospel-centred videos to enhance the local mission of church planters and ministries. Video topics include:

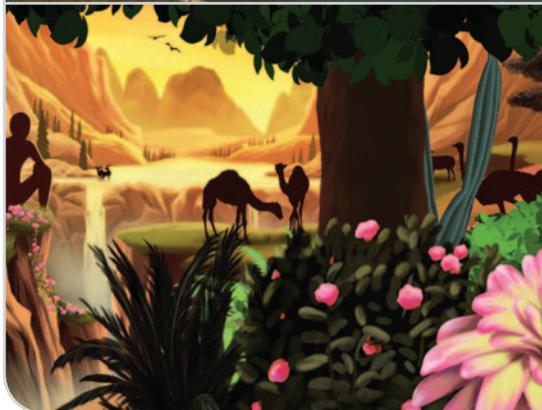
- Evangelism
- Discipleship
- And training in media strategy.

One of their projects involves creating an animated Bible series. The 20-episode series starts with the story of how God created the world and ends with the resurrection of Jesus, weaving a redemption theme throughout the stories. The video series is created as a tool for church planters, so they can share videos online to connect with people searching for answers to some of life's biggest questions.

## The Possibilities of Media

Our church planting partner, Yohanna\*, and his team believe the new series will enhance their disciple-making efforts. The team are working among a group of immigrants located in Western Europe, many of whom come from North Africa. Within these communities, sharing the Gospel is prohibited and at times receives hostile opposition. This makes it challenging to share Jesus with those who seek to know him.

“Through media you can reach every area, every house and every person, no matter what age



they are,” Yohanna said.

Yohanna grew up in a Muslim family in North Africa. Growing up, before he became a follower of Christ, he heard stories of people who came to know Jesus after hearing a message over the radio.

Media continues to play a role. Huge numbers of people are coming to know Christ, whether through radio, satellite TV, YouTube or Facebook. People are engaging with media, so why not use media to share the Gospel with them?

“We are so thankful for **TWR Motion** and to all those standing behind them, whether in prayers, or giving toward their work of empowering people like us, by providing media resources that meet the needs of our target people groups,” he said. “Thank you!”



# Called Home: Andrew Pettinger

1961 - 2021



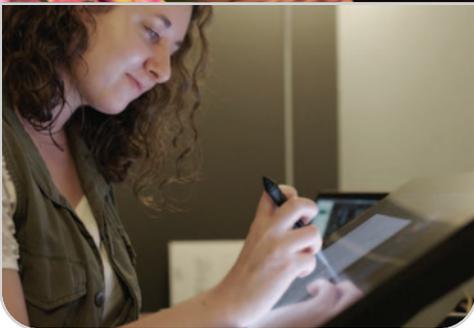
It was with great sadness that we heard of the passing of our Technical Manager, Andrew Pettinger on the 6th May 2021, at the age of 60.

Andrew served with TWR from 1984 to 1994 at the Monte Carlo station, once a base for Adolf Hitler's Nazi propaganda, but gloriously converted by TWR to transmit Gospel broadcasts! From 1994 Andrew served as Technical Manager for TWR-UK, developing and maintaining the infrastructure needed to keep our programmes on the airwaves.

As a technician he was committed to ensuring that the highest professional standards were applied to TWR's transmissions and played a key role in bringing the good news to millions of people across Europe and the UK.

We will miss him, his commitment to reaching the world by radio and the invaluable contribution he made to broadcasting the Hope of Jesus Christ. Please pray for Andrew's wife Lesley and twins, Tim and Becky.

As we acknowledge Andrew's transition to heaven, we who are left behind are so thankful for his life and willingness to freely share his gifts for the spiritual benefit of others.



*Pictured above: The illustrator at work.*

***“This is the best video content in this dialect I’ve ever seen. As we’ve been sharing these videos, already we have seen people come to learn, share and discover the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** Church planter in North Africa

*\*Name changed to protect identity.*

# Prayer Matters

## Persecuted Christians

From July to September we invite you to join us in praying for TWR's ministry in countries facing persecution around the world and (at the weekends) in the UK.

### PRAYER DIARY

#### MONDAYS

Please pray for strength, courage and protection for listeners around the world who face persecution from peers for their faith.

#### TUESDAYS

Please pray for the TWR broadcasts that reach Christians in Uzbekistan.

#### WEDNESDAYS

Pray for the production of the *Thru the Bible* and *Women of Hope* programmes, which are delivered through radio, websites and social media to the Berber people.

#### THURSDAYS

Pray for the 2000 active students on the SOTA programme, that they would become biblically sound and well-educated church leaders.

#### FRIDAYS

Thank God for the ways the SOTA programme has adapted during the pandemic.

#### WEEKENDS

**Please pray for TWR's ongoing work in the UK.**  
Pray for those involved in programme content and production, that they will act as God's servants to bring His Word to the nation with relevance and power.  
Join us as we pray for the development of new programmes and schedules for broadcasting to our UK audience, that these will be in line with God's agenda for broadcasting in the UK, and be programmes our listeners and potential listeners want and need.

**Prayer is the backbone of TWR** – and we are so grateful that **you** stand alongside us in intercession! God delights to change people's lives and we are amazed and humbled that He allows TWR to be a part of it all.