

OCTOBER 2020 | THE COURIER

BY RUDY GRAY, Editor

SUNDAY, NOV. 1, IS THE INTERNATIONAL DAY of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, and a group from the Upstate is ready and eager to help churches promote this important mission. Jesse French, founder, and president of Operation Orange Ribbon, along with vice presidents Maurice Rice and Gerry Barlik, lead a group of volunteers focused on bringing attention to the plight of persecuted Christians around the world. All three men are members of First Baptist Church, Simpsonville, and stated that their church “has been extremely supportive of this mission. The pastor and staff have been outstanding in helping us.

According to Open Doors, over 260 million Christians are experiencing high levels of persecution

Their goal for the International Day of Prayer is to reach as many churches as possible with various aids for promoting the emphasis on prayer. OOR is offering a promotional kit for churches and small groups that includes a DVD, Day of Prayer information and fact sheet, orange ribbons and wrist bands, a display poster, and strategies for bringing to light the plight of those who are suffering and being killed for their faith in Christ. After launching OOR in 2015, French was sidelined with a serious illness in 2017, resulting in chemotherapy treatments. He said, “The life expectancy for this disease is about 12 months. My doctor told me my recovery was miraculous, and I told him that many Christians and churches were praying for me.” He is now back to near full strength and works almost daily on this mission. Rice is the technical support for the team and keeps the website up to date. He worked with Wycliffe Bible Translators and Jungle Aviation and Radio Service, which supports Wycliffe’s mission outreach. Barlik has a background in volunteer mission work and church planting with the North American Mission Board. OOR has enlisted over 25,000 prayer warriors and is reaching over 600 churches from 15 denominations in nine states.

French emphasizes that each month 255 Christians are killed for their faith, 104 are abducted, 66 churches are attacked, 160 believers are imprisoned without a trial, and 180 women are raped, sexually harassed or forced into marriage. For 18 consecutive years, North Korea has been the worldwide leader in persecuting Christians. OOR has made an impact in its efforts to protect targeted Christians in hostile parts of the world. One example is a young Christian girl from the Nairobi area of Kenya who was living in a slum populated by about a million people and controlled by gangs. Living conditions were horrible, and sometimes as many as 10 people were cramped into a 12-by-12-foot building. “When this Christian girl

graduated from high school, she wanted to attend the Kenya Medical Training Center,” French said. “But that was a financially impossible hurdle for her without divine intervention.” OOR got her out of the slum and is paying for her first year’s tuition and providing some of her living expenses. Hopefully, they will be able to support her until she graduates, as well as provide a canopy of protection for her. At OOR, no officer or other worker receives any financial compensation. Everyone is a volunteer. Their funding comes from individual and church donations as well as the sale of their kits. This advocacy group that helps persecuted Christians can be contacted at www.operationorangeribbon.com or by phone at 864-982-6111. French warned that “the call to prayer is urgent because the pathway may one day end up on our own doorsteps.” While Nov. 1 is the day designated for prayer across the globe, organizers are encouraging Christians to pray throughout the month of November.

RED= Extreme Persecution ORANGE = Severe YELLOW = High

