

Update from Pete & Pip Gardner - January 2026

Happy New Year and what a fast-paced crisis making New Year it has been so far! In the light of the first week of this year globally we wanted to outline how we are praying at the moment regarding what is transpiring in Venezuela and Iran, not from a historical perspective but from what currently seems to be happening and how this relates to the rest of the world and from this, to suggest how to pray.

We are aware that the time of writing things are still unclear but the direction of travel seems to be some level of regime change in Venezuela and perhaps the downfall of the regime in Iran.

What informs our perspective fundamentally when we pray geopolitically is that the people of any nation will have freedom to hear, believe and become disciples of Jesus. It is clear that there are many political systems and structures throughout the world that act to stop this by all sorts of means and these two nations of focus are good present examples of this. Both are autocratic and suppress or kill their opposition and resist the church within their nations.

Whatever you think of President Trump or Putin or Xi Jinping, what goes on in their heads at this time is crucial to how the situation in these two countries develops. And what goes on in their heads is a significant spiritual battle ground. We have learnt and continue to realise the importance of letting go of our personal opinions and emotions in order to be free from personal prejudice that we find hinders discernment in prayer.

Russia, China and Iran had strong interests in keeping Maduro as the nation's leader since he provided them with necessary energy resources; the provision of a drone factory for their military operations worldwide; a place to train Hezbollah terrorists; and general diplomatic support to these nation-states.

Russian and China have strong interest in Iran for both oil, military and diplomatic support as well as a military presence in the Middle East. What happens in Iran will again reshape the Middle East.

Israel's recognition of Somaliland's independence was all part of a larger shift in the minds of Middle East leaders who are and were foreseeing a demise of Shite Islamic influence through Iran to their proxies in Yemen, Lebanon and

Gaza, and a rise in Sunni Islamic dominance - partly seen in the recent events with Turkey's support in Syria.

All in all, the consequences of significant regime change in these two nations has reverberations beyond what transpires in these nations individually.

Our prayers for years have been for the Lord's judgement on the totally wicked regime in Tehran and for the raising up of new leaders of His choosing – this may be happening right now? We need to pray for the church in Iran as they steward in prayer the fast-changing events in their land. There are 85 unreached people groups in Iran, 70 of whom have no known believer or church planting movement. In contrast, Venezuela has 4 unreached people groups, 1 of whom has no known believer.

Likewise for Venezuela so much disturbance within South America has come from the Maduro regime. Reports say between 8-9 million people have fled the country with 900 political detainees in their torture prisons and opposition leaders who have fled to Norway, Spain and Florida respectively since 2019. Interestingly Maduro's departure puts Cuba in a more vulnerable situation as both these nations were working closely together, providing Cuban bodyguards for Maduro's household.

Typically, China and Russia tend to be fair weather friends as soon as their own interests are greater than the cost of supporting allies. They have responded with typical hypocritical statements. It has even been reported that Putin offered Venezuela to Trump if Trump kept out of Ukraine – thankfully the offer was not taken up as far as we know.

One interesting observation is that the regime shakings in these two countries is significantly impacting China and Russia economically. You won't hear much of this on the news, but Ukraine's drone attacks on Russian oil refineries has had enormous impact on its economy. Venezuela is the largest oil producer in the world and the current circumstances are blocking both Russia and China in receiving oil they so desperately need. We are praying for the Lord to isolate Putin and his regime globally and to bring it down but to raise up those who hunger and thirst for righteousness who are in Russian prisons as political dissidents. Russia hosts 115 unreached people groups, 63 of whom have no known believer or church planting movement.

Going back to Trump, Putin and Xi Jinping. There are numerous calculations going on in their heads fed by their advisors that relate to their own personal legacy, their spheres of influence and the power struggles between them. Other issues like President Trump's goals for Greenland fit into this. Apart from the minerals and metals in the soil of Greenland that each of these three superpowers want to get their hands on, Greenland is strategically positioned at exactly the right point to shoot down any Russian intercontinental ballistic missiles from their base north of Finland should they decide to target the USA. This is why the USA increasingly wants to put its own missile defence systems into Greenland in order to block Russia and China from using this nation for their own interests.

In effect what is transpiring in Venezuela and Iran is another reflection of Cold War 2. The superpowers are not in direct military conflict (yet) but they are contesting against each other's interests in smaller nations to strengthen their spheres of influence. The prevention of a Third World War is one of our major prayer foci since this would significantly delay the fulfilment of the Great Commission.

Alongside this overview, we must add that there are significant mission movements within South East Asia and Africa to reach unreached people groups. What has precipitated these surges has been the move of the Holy Spirit in these nations that has developed strong prayer for the Great Commission and the discipling and training of believers into mission. As the old hymn goes,

*“God is working this purpose out, as year succeeds to year;
God is working this purpose out, and the time is drawing near;
nearer and nearer draws the time, the time that shall surely be:
when the earth shall be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the
sea.”*

What days to be alive! Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope FULLY upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ! Amen and amen, more on this verse in our next update...
Richest blessings,
Pete and Pip.