



Underground Church Experience

U.C.E. Instructions (For Leaders Only)

Purpose: To emphasize our freedom to worship Christ and how many Christians are persecuted for their faith throughout the world. This is a simulation of what the underground church might encounter.

Who: The U.C.E. occurs in small groups after the initial introduction and instructions (as given below.) Each small group needs at least one adult, a second adult can serve as the secret police and meet with the small group. The band, speaker, and camp directors will set up for the large group worship and help facilitate the experience.

What: The U.C.E. Handout will take the small groups through the first half of the experience as the cell group phase of the U.C.E. The second phase, unknown to the students and which is the conclusion of the U.C.E., is a celebratory candle-lit worship experience followed by a feast.

Leader: Tonight we are going to do something different. Instead of our usual time of worship, we are going to have an activity, an encounter, a simulation called the "Underground Church Experience." Everyone, both adults and students, will be asked to participate and join in this role-playing experience.

The "Underground Church Experience" or U.C.E. is a simulation of real-life Christians who live in countries where it is illegal to practice the Christian faith. In many countries around the world, the Christian faith is considered a crime. As a result, many believers have to meet in secret. Sometimes they meet in houses, forests, alley ways or even caves – hence the name "underground church." They almost never worship in a large building with a cross and steeple.

If caught, Christians are often arrested, beaten, and frequently killed for simply worshipping Jesus Christ. Throughout the world, in countries such as China, Russia, Vietnam and many Arab nations, Christianity is illegal. However, and in spite of persecution, many believers continue to stand up for their faith even in the face of danger.

The purpose of the Underground Church Experience is to help us become aware of and identify with those who suffer for their faith; those who worship in secret, and who are arrested for their beliefs. Please know this is a serious role-playing experience, however no one will be physically hurt or harmed in any way.

Everyone will be asked to participate and to take this experience seriously giving your complete cooperation. It is our promise that if you do so, you will be deeply touched by this experience and be able to identify with those who are suffering today for the sake of Jesus Christ and the Gospel.

Any questions? (after questions, begin the time in prayer.)

At this time, please break up into your small groups. (small group leaders are given the U.C.E. Handout.)

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Underground Church Experience

Task One:

With your small group, please find a quiet place to sit.

Welcome to the Underground Church Experience. You are a part of a secret church movement in a foreign country. You can not speak about Christ in public or carry a Bible, or attend Church.

Question: How does this make you feel?

Remember, what you are doing tonight is illegal. You are in a country that does not allow Christians to meet and worship together. You could be arrested by the police, put in prison, or even beaten and killed for meeting together.

Your first stop is China. Read the prisoner profile below and then follow the instructions.

Prisoner Profile #1



Prisoner: **Ms. Li Ying**
Location: **China**
Arrested: **April 2001**
Days Imprisoned: **2019**

Journalist Li Ying is currently serving a 15-year prison sentence for her role in the publication of an underground church magazine in China. She was arrested April 2001 along with 16 others from the South China Church and condemned to death December 2001. Her current sentence was handed down during a retrial ordered by the Hubei Provincial Supreme Court in October 2002. Arrest and imprisonment are not new to this young woman in her early thirties. She has been arrested many times and spent a year in prison in 1996. Li Ying is the niece of Pastor Gong Shengliang, founder of the South China Church, one of the fastest-growing house-church movements in China. Li Ying cannot have a Bible and is forced to work 15 hours each day on materials to be exported out of China. Please pray for this young woman to remain faithful to our Lord.

Take some time to pray for Li Ying. After you pray, answer these questions. (When you pray, please stand to do so as a sign of your faithfulness and belief in Christ. After you pray you may be seated.)

How does it make you feel to read Li Ying's story?
Can you imagine this happening in America?
In what ways are we persecuted today?
What would you do if you were in Li Ying's shoes?

Visits Halted September 2005:

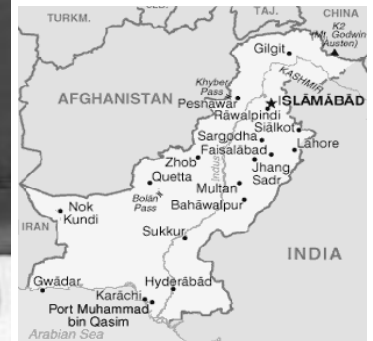
Li Ying was allowed to meet with her mother on a monthly basis. Recently these visits have been halted because she refuses to admit being a member of a cult.

Task Two:

With your small group, find a different place to meet. (Remember, you need to keep moving so that you will not be discovered by the secret police.) This time, you need to find a place that is hidden because you have heard the police are out tonight, looking for Christians who are meeting together for fellowship and worship.

Your second stop is in Pakistan. Read the prisoner profile below and then follow the instructions.

Prisoner Profile #2



Prisoner: **Rhanja Masih**
Location: **Pakistan**
Arrested: **May 1998**
Days Imprisoned: **3078**

Christians comprise only two percent of the population of Pakistan. During a Christian funeral on May 8, 1998, Muslim witnesses say that Rhanja threw a rock at an Islamic sign. Rhanja denies this claim. He has been in prison since his arrest, a victim of Law 295c, blaspheming Mohammed, which normally carries a mandatory death sentence. But on April 26, 2003, Rhanja was sentenced to life in prison and fined 50,000 rupees (\$830). Please pray for protection and spiritual strength for Rhanja while he is in prison.

Please stand and read the following prayer which is part of an actual prayer sent to a persecuted Christian.

"I gave thanks for you when I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus. I pray the eyes, ears and hearts of those who persecute you may open to Jesus. Philippians 1:29 For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake. Romans 8:18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time

are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Amen.

Answer the following questions:

Why do you think the prayer above included two Bible verses?

Can you imagine being put in prison for 3078 days? (that is 8 ½ years)

What did Rhanja do to get put in jail?

How best can we help Rhanja today?

What can you do to take a stand for Christ in your schools, community and in your home?

Task Three:

It is time to move again. Although the secret police are out, you are unable to find a hidden place to meet this time. (Find a place that is more in the open, exposed to others.)

Being a part of the underground church means to meet together for fellowship, community, prayer and now worship. As faithful Christians you want to worship and you know God is calling you to do this every time you meet, regardless of the risk.



Begin your time of worship by singing the first verse of "Amazing Grace", and the chorus of "Here I Am to Worship" (or another song of your choosing).

Continue your worship with prayer. You may do so by assuming one of the postures: standing with arms raised or kneeling.

Please pray for the following:

Those who are persecuted for their faith.

Those who do not yet know Jesus as Savior.

The leaders of our government.

Family members and friends who are not Christians.

Yourself.

End your time by praying the Lord's Prayer together.

Task Four:

You were unaware of it, but one of you is a member of the secret police. This is a serious matter because now you can not hide the fact that you worship Christ.

(At this time, the secret police asks the small group leader if he/she is a believer of Jesus and is a Christian. The police take the leader away, not too gently, from the group to a secret location.)

Task Five:

An unexpected turn of events has occurred and the police have taken your small group leader (who is also your underground church pastor). You and your fellow believers are now exposed. They know who you are, where you live, and that you believe in Jesus. Persecution will begin. They will visit your house, they will question your family, they will put a stop to your worship. They will interview your teachers and fellow students at school. There is a good chance that sometime in the near future, you too will be put in prison for being a Christian.

As you continue to meet together, please read and pray for the next prisoner report.

Prisoner Profile #3



Prisoner: (name of your small group leader)

Location: State of Texas, United States of America

Arrested: __, __, 2007

Days Imprisoned: 1

_____ (name of youth leader) is a local church youth worker who has been attending United Methodist related retreats and spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ to students. As in most persecuted countries, this is a crime and _____ (name of youth leader) will be punished. _____ (name of youth leader) has been accused of meeting together as a Christian and will be sentenced to 10 years in prison at the maximum security penitentiary in Huntsville, TX, a prison that holds 2000 other "criminal inmates."

You now have a decision to make. Will you continue to worship, risking being arrested? Or, will you stop praying, meeting, and singing together and deny that you believe in Jesus Christ?

If you decide to risk persecution for your faith, please stand, take the hand of the person next to you and pray for your imprisoned leader, as well as those around the world who are persecuted in the underground church. (Li Ying, Rhanja, others...)

(Please remain where you are, praying, singing, or reading Scripture until you have been notified as to the next task. Please remember the seriousness of this experience and the potential threat of danger if you claim to remain a believer in Christ.)



Underground Church Experience

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Underground Church Experience

Underground Church Experience / Worship

[Small Groups have just been "arrested" by members of the secret police. They have all been brought to the Underground Church. (the secret police were actually believers in Christ.) Have members enter in silence, hand them a copy of the Gospel of John in English & Chinese (www.pocketpower.org) have them sit in small groups.]

Leader: Welcome to the underground church. You have just experienced in your small groups a glimpse of what it means to be the underground persecuted church. Christians all over the world suffer for their faith, are persecuted because they believe in Jesus. Many are not allowed to worship in public, and some are not allowed to worship at all.

As you entered the worship center tonight, you were given a copy of the Book of John from the New Testament. This is written in English and Chinese. This was given to you as a reminder that many Christians around the world would die for just one book of the Bible. The Chinese translation reminds us that there are those Christians in other parts of the world who suffer for their faith. Although they may look different, or speak other languages, our common love, commitment to Christ, and unity of the Holy Spirit keeps us as one. This copy of the Book of John, which is yours to keep, should also be a reminder that you are a part of the larger body of Christ throughout the world committed to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the nations.

As a tribute to those who at this very moment are persecuted for their faith, let us now in this moment of silence each light a candle and place it on the altar. As we do so, please offer up prayers for those who are imprisoned, locked up, or are suffering in physical, spiritual or emotional ways because of their faith in Jesus Christ.

**Give each participant a chance to take a candle to the altar and spend a moment in prayer for those who are persecuted. The cross, lighted from beneath, is to be wrapped in chains, a reminder of those imprisoned for their faith.*

*** After the candles, the worship band can begin to play, and bring up the somber mood. After a time of worship, the speaker gives a message and then a response time for 4 Responses: 1) First time commitment to Christ, 2) Rededication of life to Christ, 3) Call to Full-time ministry, 4) Feel God close to me.*

**** End worship on up note, celebrating the freedom we have in Christ.*

Supplies needed: A cross, chains, spot-light under cross, candles for each participant, lighters, Gospel of John booklets.

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