

We pray for all members in **Katsina, Nigeria**. (*A candle is lit*).

Katsina is in the north of Nigeria, near the Niger border and has a hot semi-arid climate. It is about 270 miles from the capital, Abuja.

Katsina is enclosed within a city wall, about 900 years old and 13 miles in length. Sadly, these days most of the wall is in ruins. The city is believed to have been founded around 1100AD. In pre-Islamic times, Katsina's semi-divine ruler was known as the Sarki, who faced a summary death-sentence if found to be ruling incompetently. In 1903, Nigeria accepted British rule, which continued until Nigerian independence in 1960. In current times Katsina has emirs who retain traditional and advisory roles and reside in the palace of the Kangiwa ("Elephant's Head"). Due to its unique architecture the palace is also a tourist attraction.

Modern Katsina is a major collecting point for peanuts, hides and skins. In Katsina's central market, sorghum, millet, onions and other vegetables, peanuts, indigo, goats, poultry, sheep, cattle, and cotton are traded. Traditional crafts of the town's predominantly Hausa population include weaving and dyeing of cotton, working in leather and metal, and the design of pottery, embroidery, and calabashes. Modern industries were introduced in the 1970s and include vegetable oil mills and a steel-rolling plant.

Katsina is one of the few states in the country where crops are grown all the year round. Apart from farming during the rainy season, dry season farming is done along riverbanks and along the numerous dams built by the State.

Nigeria is the most populous African country (with a population of over 200 million in 2018). It is nearly equally divided between Christianity and Islam, though the exact ratio is uncertain. The majority of Nigerian Muslims are concentrated in the northern region of the country, where Katsina is, while Christians dominate in the south. Most of Nigeria's Christians are Protestant (broadly defined) though about a quarter are Catholic. The relationship between Christian and Muslims in mainly Muslim areas is very important and there are tensions between the two religions.

There are just 60,000 MU members in Nigeria. These members are at the heart of local churches, supporting couples as they get married, upholding the couple in prayer and providing pre-marital support and counselling. This moves through the generations as members continue to support and celebrate the marriages of their children and, in turn, their grandchildren.

Cultural practices, especially against women and girls, present a major challenge to the Mothers' Union all over Nigeria. Many of these practices are considered normal or are hidden within communities, such as marriage at a very young age, no or limited access to education, and widows lack of rights.

MU members in Katsina live in a very much Muslim dominated area. *We pray for the members in Katsina and the work they carry out in very challenging and difficult circumstances. We also pray for their safety and for the safety of all Christians there. Amen*