

Open *Doors*

PRAYER DIARY | November/December 2021



**“Do not be afraid.
I bring you good
news that will
cause great joy
for all the people.”**

LUKE 2:10

Persecuted children

Monday 1 November

Millions of children around the world face violence, discrimination or bereavement because they or their parents are Christians. This has a huge impact on their faith and self-esteem. Pray for Open Doors partners investing in these children through Christian education, trauma care and schooling, to ensure a better future for them and the long-term survival of the church.



Tuesday 2 November – Nigeria

Sele (13) was just two when his father was shot dead in extremist violence in Plateau State (see Magazine

p10). Sele has to help his mother Cecelia with the farm work, but Open Doors is also funding his schooling. Ask God to bless Sele in his studies. “One day, I want to be a doctor,” he says. “I want to save lives and help people.”

Wednesday 3 November – sub-Saharan Africa

Pray for single parents in Africa, especially mothers whose husbands have been killed for their faith. Ask God to provide for their practical

needs and pray that they will lean on the Lord to help them raise godly children.

Thursday 4 November – North Africa

It can be extremely hard for children to embrace the faith of their parents as they grow up in an Islamic society. Pray for Bible education classes being provided for parents – that they will equip parents to bring up their children ‘in the training and instruction of the Lord’ (Ephesians 6:4).

Friday 5 November – Morocco

Pray for Mohammed* who is facing harassment at school because he is a Christian. Pray that he will know the deep love of his Heavenly Father and receive strength to stand firm in his faith.

Saturday 6 November

Praise God for the many children’s Bibles and Christian books being distributed to children facing persecution. Pray that these books will help children to grow in their faith and understanding of Jesus’ great love for them.

Sunday 7 November – UK and Ireland

Open Doors is joining with CSW, Release International and Evangelical Alliance for an evening of prayer online to mark this year’s International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (see p16). Pray that many people will join the event and that, as we unite in prayer, Christ’s glory will be seen among the nations.

Monday 8 November – China

Chinese authorities are

redoubling their efforts to implement regulations that ban children under 18 from attending church meetings. In response, Open Doors is stepping up its work to equip pastors to disciple young people, providing training seminars and contextualised resources for leaders. Pray that Chinese pastors grasp the enormity of the threat as well as the opportunity to sow faith into the next generation of Chinese believers.

Tuesday 9 November – Central Asia

In some Central Asian countries, it’s illegal to share the gospel with children under 18. Alyana* has been secretly going to a house church for two years. “Recently my mother found out about the church, that I sing, read the Bible, pray and meet other young believers. She forbade me to leave on Saturdays and Sundays. Could you pray for me, that my mother will give me permission to attend church again? Thanks for your prayers!”

| Afghanistan

Wednesday 10 November

When the Taliban took over Afghanistan, many Christians fled. Pray for believers who have chosen to stay to be a witness for the Lord – for safety, strength and opportunities – as they adjust to life under the country’s new leadership.

Thursday 11 November

Practically all Christians in the country are secret believers. Honour killings happen

frequently, if anybody brings so-called ‘shame’ on the family, and the Taliban are actively seeking secret believers. Pray for God’s protection.

Friday 12 November

Girls and women are more vulnerable under Taliban rule. Many fear their education will be cut short, or will be a cause of shame, not confidence. Pray that they will not be robbed of the desire to continue learning despite the Taliban’s stance on education.

Saturday 13 November

The World Food Programme fears that, due to drought and famine, 14 million people could be pushed to the brink of starvation. Jobs have been cut, salaries delayed and many businesses forced to close. Ask the Lord to provide food and other necessities to the Afghan people.

Sunday 14 November

The country’s chief of public health has admitted that healthcare facilities are collapsing and there is a shortage in oxygen supply. Pray for God’s healing for the sick.

Monday 15 November

New Taliban officials include known Islamic fundamentalists who espouse a harsh interpretation of Sharia (Islamic law), as well as one worldwide terrorist wanted by the FBI. Jesus tells us to ‘pray for those who persecute you’. Pray for miracles – ask God to reveal Himself to these leaders through dreams and visions. *Names changed for security reasons

Give thanks for **ANSWERED PRAYER**



“God always hears our prayers”

EARLIER THIS YEAR, WE ASKED YOU TO PRAY FOR BANGLADESH – AND YOUR PRAYERS AND SUPPORT ARE MAKING A HUGE DIFFERENCE. THANK YOU!

“You have lots of money. You received lots of money when you converted to Christianity, so you do not need relief.”

This is what Kasem* (30) from Bangladesh was told when he sought government aid during lockdown. The local authorities told him to return to Islam, or receive nothing.

Far from having ‘lots of money’, Kasem – who comes from a Muslim background – has always had a low income

as a daily wage labourer. Because he suffers from physical disabilities, Kasem is limited in what he can do and his employers take advantage of him by paying him unfairly. Meanwhile, some Muslims refuse to give Kasem work because of his faith in Jesus.

When the pandemic stopped Kasem from working, the authorities’ refusal to help left the family in a desperate situation. “It was like waiting for death,” he shares. “As a

father of three and husband, it is hard to see my family starving for food. We kept praying and waiting for God to help.”

God answered their prayers – through you! “We’re very happy and thankful to Open Doors for supporting us during our needy moment,” Kasem shares, after receiving emergency aid including rice, oil, potatoes and soap. “It brought peace to my family because there is no peace with hungry stomachs. It was a miracle.”

“God always hears our prayers and answers through His people”

To ensure long-term help, you have also provided the family with two goats to start a goat-rearing business. “Praise the Lord!” Kasem says. “He always hears our prayers and answers through His people. We are very poor; we cannot afford to buy even one goat.”

Since the start of the pandemic, you’ve provided 4,140 Christian families with food aid in Bangladesh. You have also supplied 253 families with either goats or pigs to start their own businesses. “Fulfilling basic needs is a luxury to these believers,” shares Brother Abraham*, an Open Doors local partner. “They are always very thankful and grateful to the brothers and sisters who have supported them in finance, in prayers and other ways.”

Your prayers and support are helping people not only practically but spiritually too. “I felt very hopeless as a father and husband,” Kasem shares. “Without that support it would have been very hard for me to manage food for my family. It also helps us to grow in faith and depend on Christ. He is faithful.”

PRAY

- Give thanks that your support is helping families in Bangladesh both practically and spiritually
- That God will continue to use Kasem’s family to minister to others in their community
- That Open Doors partners in Bangladesh will be equipped to serve families in need and protected from harm.

*names changed for security reasons

PICTURED Kasem – who has a problem with one eye and was born with a leg disability – said your provision was ‘a miracle’



| India

Tuesday 16 November

Persecution is escalating in states with anti-conversion laws. Believers are being falsely accused of forced conversions, churches vandalised and closed, and pastors threatened and beaten. Ask the Lord to soften the hearts of influential local figures so that Christians are more widely accepted.

Wednesday 17 November

In many places, 'Ghar Wapsi' (homecoming) programmes are taking place. These are used by extremists to force people to return to Hinduism. Pray for God's protection over Christians targeted in this way and ask Him to help them stand firm in their faith.

Thursday 18 November

The new Chief Minister of Assam state is from BJP, a Hindu nationalist party. He's seeking to prohibit the sale of beef within a 5km radius of any temple and has asked Hindus to build more temples. This could increase pressure on believers. Ask God to give Christians peace, wisdom and courage amid these potential changes.

Friday 19 November

Thanks to you, a group of missionaries and pastors has been given bikes to reach rural areas to disciple believers and tell others about Jesus (see Magazine p14). "I was praying for a bike, and God has blessed me with this!" shares Abraham*. Praise God for the difference these bikes will make.

*Name changed for security reasons

| Iran

Saturday 20 November

In August, Ebrahim Raisi was sworn in as president, succeeding Hassan Rouhani. He's seen as a hardliner with ultra-conservative Islamic views, which is concerning for the country's Christians who already face severe persecution by the state. Pray that President Raisi will honour the rights of Iran's religious minorities.

Sunday 21 November

Pray for Hamed Ashouri (31), who was sentenced to ten months' imprisonment for activities deemed 'propaganda against the Islamic republic'. He's been allowed to spend the remaining eight months of his sentence at home with an electronic tag. Ask the Lord to direct Hamed as he navigates life under surveillance.

Monday 22 November

Three Christians convicted of 'propaganda that educates in a deviant way contrary to the holy religion of Islam' have had their appeal rejected but their sentences reduced from five to three years. Pray that Amin, Milad and Alireza will be sustained by God's presence and will be eligible for early release.

Tuesday 23 November

Amin, Milad and Alireza are the first believers charged under changes to Iran's penal code that further restrict religious freedom. Among the amendments, Bible teaching or evangelism deemed contradictory to Islamic

teaching could result in prosecution. Ask God to keep giving His people courage to share their faith.

| Africa

Wednesday 24 November – Ethiopia

Diarra* (28) was beaten and forced from her village when her Muslim family discovered her Christian faith. She is struggling to provide for her children, whilst her health is suffering since the attack. Pray for healing, secure employment and a good church.

Thursday 25 November – Kenya

Andwele* lost his livelihood after his parents discovered that he'd become a Christian. He worked as a farmer on his father's land. Ask the Lord to provide for the family and strengthen their faith.

Friday 26 November – Ivory Coast

A church challenged a group of new Christians to pray for something specific. They asked for a motorbike to help the pastor reach remote believers. They were amazed when Open Doors local partners, unaware of the prayer, asked the church to collect their new motorbike! Praise God for this lovely answer to prayer.

Saturday 27 November – Central African Republic

Charlotte* (12) grew up in a staunchly Muslim family. Her father was enraged when she became a Christian through her uncle's witness. Ongoing

threats made it unsafe for Charlotte to stay at home, but your support has funded her relocation and continued education. Pray that Charlotte's family will come to know Jesus.

| Latin America

Sunday 28 November – Colombia

Over 400 children have graduated from the Children's Centre, which provides education and spiritual support for children affected by persecution. Finding ways to empower students in their faith and witness is a challenge, because of the risks it can entail. Pray that teachers will be given wisdom in this area.

Monday 29 November – Cuba

Churches face increasing surveillance from the authorities. "Government officials have joined some WhatsApp groups the churches have set up, to monitor our activities," says Pastor Jorge*. The pandemic has increased pressure, giving the authorities an excuse to tighten their grip. Pray for wisdom for church leaders.

Tuesday 30 November – Mexico

Pastor Garcia ministers in Loxicha, an area controlled by a guerrilla group. He's preached in more than 100 villages – and has been shot and imprisoned as a result. "But it's been worth it," he says. "Many have accepted Christ." Pray that local church leaders, like Pastor Garcia, will be given wisdom and strong faith as they minister in dangerous areas.



IMAGES ARE ILLUSTRATIVE

* Adel's first Christmas with Jesus

How children's ministry in Egypt is transforming lives, thanks to you

Growing up in deep poverty, and with an alcoholic father, school for 10-year-old Adel* was not an option – he had to start working as soon as possible. His job at a local garbage filtration workshop was unpleasant enough, but, as a nominal Christian, he was harassed, humiliated and paid less than his co-workers. He knew nothing about the faith he was suffering for.

"I hated my life," he says. "I didn't know a lot about God yet, so I didn't know what to say when they said bad things about Jesus. I did not have any answers. Also, I didn't have anyone to ask for the answers. I felt ashamed of my Christianity."

But God had much better plans in store for Adel, who found hope when he discovered a children's ministry class at his local church – it became a haven he could escape to during his lunchbreak.

It was Marta*, one of the leaders, who first noticed him. "He was sitting alone in the corner, while the other kids played around him," she says. "He told me about his life; I felt the pain in what he was telling me."

Marta started to tell Adel what God is like; how God is a good father, that he was uniquely created – and about Jesus. While Adel's circumstances didn't really change, Adel did.

which meant that he could respond to his co-workers' taunts. "I want to talk to people about God. I want to share about Him with lots of people," he says.

Thanks to your prayers and support, Open Doors local partners are committed to walking with Adel and his family as he grows in faith – and supporting children's ministry for thousands of children in Egypt like him. Thanks to you, this will be the first year Adel celebrates Christmas truly knowing who Jesus is, and that he is deeply loved.

PRAY

"Knowing God makes me feel happy," he says. "I know I have a Father in heaven who I can always talk to. That's amazing."

"I want to talk to people about God. I want to share about Him with lots of people"

Marta also helped Adel with the answers to his questions,

- * For Adel, that he continues to grow in his faith
 - * That God would transform Adel's work and home life for the better
 - * For Open Doors partners in Egypt as they introduce children to Jesus through their ministry.
- *Names changed for security reasons



Persecuted children

Wednesday 1 December – Middle East

Many children experience persecution through the education system: some are marked down in their grades; some may be legally forced to study Islamic lessons; some teachers will even beat the children of church leaders. Pray for Open Doors partners supporting these children through Christian education classes, family camps and help with schoolwork.

Thursday 2 December – Iraq

Rafif (SEE COVER) wasn't yet born when her dad was killed by Islamic extremists. Christmas is a bittersweet time for her, but she is learning more about the God her dad died for through Christian education classes supported by Open Doors partners. Pray that her love for Jesus will grow as she grows closer to Him.

Friday 3 December – Yemen

Thousands of children in Yemen are struggling with hunger and disease. Many are also recruited as child soldiers. Pray for God's protection and provision – and for an end to the civil war.

Saturday 4 December – Arabian Peninsula

Many children of believers from a Muslim background are raised with two conflicting

worldviews: a Christian one from their parents, and an Islamic one through their school and other family members. Pray that God reveals the truth to them.

Sunday 5 December – Laos

When Soy* was 14, she was imprisoned for six days after her church was raided by the local authorities. She had to move away from her community and is now being supported by Open Doors partners. Pray that she will press on and grow in her relationship with Jesus.

Monday 6 December – Algeria

Many churches here have been closed, cutting off an important source of community for children. Pray that these churches will reopen so that children can continue to grow in their faith.

Tuesday 7 December – Central Asia

Ivan* (9) was severely bullied at a sports camp, where he was the only Christian. He was beaten every day by the other boys but did not deny his faith. Since returning home he has had headaches and dizziness every day and doctors say he may not be able to play sports again. Pray for his physical and emotional recovery, and for the safety of the family.

Wednesday 8 December

Thank God for Open Doors children's workers supporting persecuted children. They often hear difficult stories from children. Ask the Lord to give them wisdom, strength and love to continue their work.

| Missing people | Prisoners

Thursday 9 December – Malaysia

It's been over four years since Pastor Raymond Koh was abducted by Malaysian state police. His wife Susanna has a Christmas tree up all year round in his honour. "It is hard to celebrate without him. Raymond always loved Christmas," she says. Pray that Pastor Raymond will be found, and the family reunited.

Friday 10 December – Nigeria

At least 112 of the 276 girls taken from their school in Chibok by Boko Haram militants in 2014 are still in captivity. Please pray for God's continuing comfort and protection, and that they will be released and restored to their families.

Saturday 11 December – Iraq

There are many Christians in Iraq who have not shared their stories of abducted family members out of fear, including Sanna, whose husband and two sons were taken by Islamic militants in 2014. Pray that more stories will come to light, and for Centres of Hope providing trauma care for these believers.

Sunday 12 December – Syria

In 2013, Jina's husband, Rober, was kidnapped by Islamic militants because he was a Christian. Jina doesn't know if he is still alive, but she has not given up hope. She and their son, Apo, pray every day that he will be found. Please join them in prayer for Rober's safe return.

*Names changed for security reasons

Monday 13 December – Cuba

At the time of writing, Pastor Lorenzo Fajardo remains detained in awful conditions for peacefully participating in July's nationwide protests. Charges include 'disrespect' and 'public disorder'. He could face a prison sentence of up to 20 years. Pray that the charges will be dropped.

Tuesday 14 December – Eritrea

Keep praying for Pastor Ghirmay (75), Pastor Samuel (74) and Pastor Georgio (72), who were arrested in July. Pastor Georgio was too unwell to be imprisoned so is under house arrest. The other two are being held in an unknown location. Pray for their immediate release, and for comfort for their families.

Wednesday 15 December – China

Four Christians in China have been handed prison sentences of between 15 months and six years for selling audio Bibles. Ask the Lord to strengthen them with His loving presence, and pray that Bibles will continue to reach believers.

Thursday 16 December – Vietnam

Harassment and arrests of Christians are documented in the 2020-2021 Human Rights report by the Vietnam Human Rights Network. More than 30 of the 288 known prisoners of conscience in Vietnam are Christians. Pray for their release and that human rights abuses will cease.



“Do not be afraid”



DESPITE PERSECUTION, CHILDREN ARE DETERMINED TO CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS

What are you doing for Christmas this year? It's a question many of us are asking, not just in the UK and Ireland but around the world.

For children living in countries where believers are persecuted, it's a question that reveals not only the traditions precious to them, but the strength of faith they have in the face of opposition and suffering.

* SHARING FOOD AND FAITH

In Kenya, the word associated with Christmas is 'Together'. "After the Christmas service, we eat and drink together because there are those who do not have money to buy food to

celebrate in their homes," says Mary (13) (ABOVE).

The sharing doesn't end there. "Christians from all churches go around sharing the gospel," Mary continues. But opposition is never far away. Believers are pushed, insulted, even attacked with water. But Mary is undeterred. "My prayer is for the church to be so full that we don't all fit in anymore."

* DANCING FOR JOY

The activity that perhaps best expresses joy is dance – and that's exactly how a group of young Christians celebrate Christmas in Laos. "We celebrate Christmas by dancing," says Deng (12), as



Deng and her friends rehearse their dance

she rehearses for a Christmas service. "To show glory to God, sing songs and worship God with the adults."

This desire to celebrate the birth of Jesus is even more inspiring given that, in Laos, Christian activities are heavily monitored by the Communist authorities, with many believers at risk of severe persecution.

* CHRISTMAS STORY INSPIRES PRAYER

In the Iraqi city of Qaraqosh, once occupied by so-called Islamic State, Lydia and Youssif learn about the Christmas story before Advent has begun. "We start on 1 November to learn about the story of the birth of the Jesus in my Christian education class," shares Lydia.

For Youssif (BELOW), one of the familiar refrains from the Christmas story inspires a prayer that reflects the



dangers that still lurk in Iraq. "The Lord said, 'Do not be afraid,'" he says. "I pray to Him and say: We need You today and every day, lend a helping hand and protect us from the harms,

we are begging and trust in You to bless the coming year."

* NEW CHRISTMAS RESOURCE

Discover more about the traditions of persecuted children in other countries and celebrate the Christmas story with them using our new Christmas resource, *Do Not Be Afraid*. Includes

a service sheet, videos, speaker activities and giveaway cards (ideal for giving to visitors to your service). Order your FREE Christmas resource today at opendoorsuk.org/christmas



PRAY

- * That the Christmas celebrations savoured by persecuted Christian children will be protected
- * That these children will know afresh the joy, hope and wonder of Christmas
- * For opportunities for them to share the gospel with others.

| Refugees

Friday 17 December – Central Asia

Pray for those working with Afghans who have fled to neighbouring countries to escape the Taliban. "Refugees, especially women, are emotionally broken, very stressed, and often crying because they lost their homes," says Aysha*. "We need prayer for wisdom, strength and new opportunities to serve the women, such as trauma counselling, and help them assimilate in this new country."

Saturday 18 December – China

Each year, Open Doors field workers provide support and training for around 150-200 North Korean women who have been trafficked into China. Pray for protection for those attending these secret meetings, that they will not be anxious about their safety but will be able to focus on God's Word and receive His healing love.

Sunday 19 December – Africa

Pray for children in Africa in internal displacement or refugee camps who have lost a parent or siblings. Pray that they will always know their Heavenly Father holds them in His hands and no one can snatch them out of it.

Monday 20 December – Turkey

According to the UN, Turkey currently hosts around 3.6 million refugees from Syria, 142,000 from Iraq and 39,000 from Iran. Among them are many Christians. Pray for a

community centre that opened this year to provide a safe place where Christian refugees can receive practical and spiritual support. Pray for more of these centres to be opened.

Tuesday 21 December – Myanmar

The tiny minority of Christian Rohingya have faced ethnic cleansing from Myanmar's authorities and rejection from their own community, which is predominantly Muslim. Pray for those in refugee camps – for God's protection from persecution by their fellow Rohingyas, and for the provision of basic needs such as food, water and medical care.

Wednesday 22 December

The UN estimates that there are now over 26 million refugees and four million asylum seekers worldwide. Pray for the global church to take the opportunity to show Christ's love to those forced to flee their countries to escape war and persecution. Pray that we will be God's hands and feet in welcoming the stranger (Leviticus 19:34).

* Christmas

*** Thursday 23 December – Asia**

Pray for Christians and churches holding Christmas outreach events this week. Ask the Lord to give them boldness and wisdom in sharing the Christmas message and pray that the hope of the Saviour will be born in many hearts.

*Names changed for security reasons

*** Friday 24 December – Christmas Eve**

Sadly, the Christmas season often sees an increase in attacks on churches and Christians. Pray for churches celebrating Christmas openly – for vigilance and that the Lord will be a shield around them.

*** Saturday 25 December – Christmas Day**

"Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people" (Luke 2:10). Remember secret believers who can't meet openly to celebrate Jesus' birth for fear of persecution. Pray that they will know Immanuel is with them today, and that His perfect love will drive out fear and bring joy.

*** Sunday 26 December – Boxing Day**

Pray for Open Doors partners in Central Asia distributing Christmas gifts and food parcels to children during Christmas events. This is a wonderful opportunity to visit families who've stopped going to church or don't yet know Jesus. Pray that these visits will bring hope to many.

*** Monday 27 December – China**

Since 2018, Chinese authorities have restricted Christmas celebrations in favour of promoting traditional Chinese culture. Many schools have been told only to teach Chinese history and culture, and most shopping centres don't dare display Christmas trees or advertise Christmas presents. Pray that Christians will find alternative ways to celebrate

Christmas and share its powerful message with friends and neighbours.

*** Tuesday 28 December – China**

Keep praying for imprisoned Uyghur pastor Alimjan Yimit, his wife Gulnur and their two sons, as they spend a 13th Christmas apart. Alimjan's 15-year sentence is due to come to an end in 2023. Pray for an early release.

*** Wednesday 29 December – Iran**

Pray for families who are separated this Christmas because one or both parents are in prison for their faith. Pray especially for the children of these believers, that God will comfort them and restore their parents to them.

*** Thursday 30 December – Nigeria**

According to the Open Doors World Watch List, over 3,500 Christians were killed for their faith in Nigeria in 2020. Pray for God's comfort and healing for families for whom Christmas brings painful memories of loved ones they have lost.

Friday 31 December – UK&I

Praise God for the courageous witness of our persecuted family who have held fast to Christ this year through pandemic and persecution. Pray that, as Open Doors continues to connect the church in the UK and Ireland to their persecuted family, more people will be inspired to follow the example of our brothers and sisters, and stand with them to defy persecution and share Jesus no matter the cost.



REGISTER
TODAY

JOIN US FOR **IDOP ONLINE 2021**

Let's unite in prayer for our
persecuted family

Sunday 7 November - 7.30-8.30pm

We are very excited to invite you to an online prayer event to mark this year's International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP).

Once again, we will be joining together with our friends at CSW, Release International and Evangelical Alliance for an evening of prayer for our persecuted church family. This jointly hosted webinar will feature the latest news, testimonies and prayer requests from Nigeria, Eritrea and India. We will also be especially praying for Afghanistan.

We believe that when God's people unite together in prayer, God's kingdom breaks through in new and powerful ways. So please join us on this special day of unity with the global church, as we stand together with the most persecuted and cry out to God.

"Truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven."

MATTHEW 18:19

To register, go to
opendoorsuk.org/idop



Open Doors, PO Box 6, Witney,
OX29 6WG
T 01993 460015
E inspire@opendoorsuk.org

FIND US ON:

opendoorsuk.org



Open Doors UK & I is a registered Charity in England and Wales No. 1125684,
Scotland No. SC043710, Republic of Ireland No. 20140984 © Open Doors 2021