

OpenDoors

MAGAZINE | July/August 2020



STAND WITH YOUR
PERSECUTED
FAMILY DURING
THE COVID-19
CRISIS

“When I was
hungry...”

Feeding Indian Christians



 OpenDoors

STANDING STRONG LIVE

Prayer without borders

Stay connected to your persecuted church family and come together with the worldwide church for worship and encouragement through Standing Strong Live webinars, hosted monthly on Thursdays from 8.15pm.

While we're not able to meet as a church or see extended family, we can take this opportunity to learn from our persecuted brothers and sisters who know what it is to worship in secret and often on their own. Find out more and register today at www.opendoorsuk.org

STANDING STRONG 2020 UPDATE

The Covid-19 crisis has created much uncertainty around the safety and viability both of mass gatherings and of international travel. As the health and safety of our supporters and international partners is our highest priority, we have decided to postpone all Standing Strong events planned for October 2020. Instead, these events will now take place in September/October 2021.

For further information please go to www.opendoorsuk.org/standingstrong or call Inspire on 01993 460015.

What's your legacy?

Give a lifetime of hope to your persecuted family by prayerfully including a gift to Open Doors in your Will.

Find out more and order a pack at www.opendoorsuk.org/legacy or phone 01993 460015.

"Whatever you did for one of my brothers or sisters... you did for me." Matthew 25:40



Open Doors is an international ministry serving persecuted Christians and churches worldwide.

Open Doors supplies Bibles, leadership training, literacy programmes, livelihood support and advocacy services. We also mobilise the church in the UK and Ireland to serve Christians living under religious persecution.

If you have any questions about the work of Open Doors, or would like to reprint any of the articles in this magazine, please do get in touch.

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Open Doors UK & I

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 OpenDoors



Cover image:
Dalit children in India. Christians are often from the Dalit caste, which means they are among the poorest communities in Indian society

Letter from Henrietta

Applause

"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" MATTHEW 5:16

In recent weeks - like you, no doubt - I've been standing outside my house every Thursday at 8pm, to clap for carers out of appreciation for their courage and selflessness during the Covid-19 crisis.

But right now, as we review the past year in this magazine (p14), I want to lead the applause for all who give their support to our persecuted family. Your prayers, gifts and advocacy have equipped them to stand strong, defy persecution and keep sharing Jesus.

This year is set to be even more of a challenge, not only for us in the UK and Ireland, but even more for Christians who are vulnerable due to poverty, discrimination and isolation. The lockdown in India has already demonstrated this. There is little government support for those who are desperately poor. Christians, of whom up to 70 per cent are Dalits (the lowest class in Indian society), are forbidden from entering the local shops to buy food. Those who live in Hindu communities are often prevented from getting aid relief, too.

The shocking thing is the sheer scale of this crisis. It beggars belief. But our God is the God of the impossible and He shows Himself most magnificent when the odds are ridiculously long. This is an opportunity for the church to step up, and for God to achieve remarkable things as we show what it is to follow Jesus. Walking by faith not by sight. Sharing, not hoarding. Responding, not looking away. Like most people, when my resources are scarce, I want to reserve them for those who are closest to me. But it is at these moments that God challenges me most. Do I really trust Him to provide? Can I give out of what I have because, like the widow of Zarephath, I know there is more where that came from?

Once again, the persecuted church is our model for this kind of generosity. I am encouraged and humbled by the loving and courageous actions of Open Doors partners like Akash* (p6). And I'm challenged too by what he says: "This is the opportunity Christians have to be salt and light. We are so glad that the Christians are helping their communities which once rejected them and that we, Open Doors partners, could contribute to it." Such faith deserves our applause, and your support for them is like the sound of clapping in their ears. Let's give them a standing ovation – and pray that people 'will see their good deeds and glorify our Father in heaven'.



Henrietta

Henrietta Blyth
CEO, Open Doors UK&I

*name changed for security reasons

World Watch News

Vietnam

Christians denied official aid

Christian families in northern Vietnam have been denied aid by local authorities because of their faith.

Open Doors partners reported that 107 people - including the elderly and children - were turned down point blank when they asked local authorities for food.

"You are Christians and your God will take care of your family!" officials told them. "The

government is not responsible for your families!"

"These families are poor," says Chau*, an Open Doors local partner in Vietnam. "When they learned that the government's support was coming to their district, they were so happy - but only to find out that they were not on the list because they are Christians."

With their work stopped, these Christians are in

desperate need.

Open Doors local partners are providing food packs and other urgent supplies to these families. But it's another example of how, in many places, this crisis is being used as a weapon against Christians. Please keep praying that our persecuted family will get the supplies they need.

NORTH KOREA

Famine puts millions of people at risk

Officially, North Korea has no recorded cases of Covid-19. But the border lockdown tells a different story: no foreigners have been allowed into the country and North Korean citizens are not permitted to move. And that, in turn, is creating huge economic pressures.

Now Open Doors sources are reporting that food prices are skyrocketing and that, even though markets are open, most people don't have the money to buy anything. Our sources also report that many citizens have already passed away due to malnutrition and starvation. For those who lived through the 'Arduous March' - the 1990s famine which claimed an estimated 2-3 million lives - this is a terrifying prospect.

'MILLIONS OF CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK'

"The shortages of food have

quadrupled market prices", says Timothy*, a North Korean Christian who escaped the country and now works for Open Doors. "Many individual shops are now closed or are unable to sell goods because they simply have nothing to sell."

"North Koreans are dependent on things they can find in the woods or the mountains," says an Open Doors spokesperson. "The official economy was already in a coma, but now the shadow economy has also taken a huge hit, putting the lives of millions of children and adults at risk."

OPEN DOORS READY TO HELP

Open Doors is asking for prayer as they plan food distribution. At the moment, North Koreans are unable to receive help via Open Doors' networks in China. "Our teams are getting ready to distribute food secretly," says the spokesperson closely



involved with the Open Doors North Korea team, "but North Koreans need to be able to come to us. So we really plead for the prayers and financial support of our donors. We need both and can't have one without the other."

He recalls a message from a recipient of aid in the past. "This person wrote, 'Thanks to your help, I know that God hasn't forgotten us.' This is how God reminded me that we don't bring bags with rice. We bring hope."

Please pray for North Korea and for the many secret believers there. Pray especially that the famine will be averted and that Open Doors' networks in China will be able to reach those in need.

SRI LANKA



"They didn't have to help us, but they did. Why did we do so much against them?"

A church in Sri Lanka that was attacked last September has provided food for its neighbours - including their attackers.

In a village in Sri Lanka's Eastern Province, the church led by Pastor Shiyanth* routinely faced opposition from neighbours and relatives. The villagers, who are majority devout Hindus, repeatedly tried to shut down the church. At one point a mob attacked a church member and, when his wife and three other women from the local church rushed to his aid, they were beaten, stoned and pelted with garbage.

Seven months after this incident, Sri Lanka was put under lockdown. And suddenly the villagers had no means of providing for their families.

So the church stepped in. Pastor Shiyanth sent a request to Open Doors for rations for everyone - not just Christians. So, thanks to your support, the whole village - even those who a few months earlier attacked the believers - received essential supplies.

"The church could have just helped their own believers," said one of their opponents. "They didn't have to help us, but they did. Why did we do so much against them?"

"Doing this gave us more opportunities to share the gospel and show the love of Christ to people," said Pastor Shiyanth. "More people are eager to know the Lord."

Please continue to pray for this church, and that they would keep showing generous, forgiving love.

"I see a great renewal within the church," said Pastor Shiyanth. "Even the local government representative has changed in his attitude towards the Christian community. We are building better relationships with the people now. Thank you so much for your partnership."

EGYPT

"They destroyed everything"

3,000 Christians in Egypt have been left without a church, after their building was illegally demolished.

For 15 years, Koum Al Farag Church has served Christians in the community. But on 20 May the church was bulldozed on the orders of the town council.

The argument began when local Muslim extremists objected to the church adding two storeys on the church hall for their growing Sunday school. First the extremists tried to attack the church, then they retaliated by building - illegally - a new mosque on agricultural land right next to the church.

When the council stepped in, they decided, incomprehensibly, to demolish both the illegal mosque and the legal church building. Despite legal appeals from the church, 200 policemen were sent to see the order was carried out.

"They fired tear gas at us church members and attacked us; they even hurt women and children," says Bishoy*, a church member. Fourteen church members were arrested. The demolition of the church took six hours. But when the bulldozer moved on to the mosque - the actual illegal building - all they did was knock down one wall.

"They demolished the altar, Christian sanctuaries, and destroyed Christian books," said Bishoy. Now the nearest church is 15 km away. "Most of us don't have the means to travel out of our village. Please pray for us."

*Names changed for security purposes

For the latest news and stories of courageous faith visit www.opendoorsuk.org

When I was hungry

FEEDING INDIAN CHRISTIANS

"We see people in great need. We have to help, even if it is risky," says Akash*, an Open Doors partner from India.

Akash is facing the risk of the pandemic and the risk of persecution, but he and many other Open Doors partners are courageously going to those in need. He says these words as he's preparing to take another delivery of food to vulnerable Christians in his region. For them, the sight of Akash and his team arriving is the difference between survival and starvation. Things really are that stark for many thousands of the poorest Christians in India. And this is on top of the persecution they already face.

"PEOPLE ARE SO SCARED"

When India went into lockdown to combat the coronavirus, hundreds of thousands of people lost their jobs overnight. Many of these Indians usually work as daily labourers and earn each day what they need to survive: without the day's income,

IMAGE An Open Doors partner delivers food aid to a family of believers in India

*name changed for security reasons



they have no money to buy food. There is no financial safety net or furloughing scheme, and official aid isn't anywhere near enough for the number of people who need it. Even worse, Christians are often deliberately overlooked when this aid is distributed (see p10). As the months have passed, the situation hasn't got any easier for many believers.

"People have tears in their eyes while receiving food, as if we are giving them a treasure."

AKASH, OPEN DOORS PARTNER

"People are so scared," says Akash. "They don't know how long this is going to last. They are not able to provide even a single meal for their family."

Christians are often from the Dalit caste, which means they are among the poorest communities in Indian society. Many live in slums where social distancing isn't possible and even basic hygiene would be a luxury. As another Open Doors partner shares, "In the slum areas, people are now totally dependent upon the food being distributed by the government and social organisations. We constantly receive calls and messages from Christian communities where people have no food for their children or family members. It is heartbreaking to hear about the difficulties our brothers and sisters are going through."

MET WITH TEARS OF JOY

Many hundreds of families are relying on the courage of people like Akash, bravely travelling to bring them vital aid. In India, thanks to your giving and prayers, Open Doors partners can provide relief packs

including, for example, wheat flour, rice, pulses, tea, cooking oil, turmeric powder, sugar, salt, matches, chili flakes, snacks and soap. Where possible, they also include masks and sanitiser.

Open Doors partners are among a small number who are still trying to bring resources to these desperate people, as Akash relates: "Very few NGOs are reaching out to them properly. In fact, agencies are scared to help – scared of the movement restrictions imposed, and also of the disease. God enables us to be strong and courageous and keep serving."

This service is certainly received with gratitude. Akash is emotional when he describes what it's like to arrive with the aid. "In many places, people are so desperate," he says. "We provide them with dry food items sufficient for at least 15-20 days – and people have tears in their eyes while receiving it, as if we are giving them a treasure."

"It was challenging to provide food for the family," says Kabir*, father of a family of five. "Thank you for remembering us in these tough times. I am grateful for your kind and timely help." Sandhil* is head of a household of six, and agrees: "I thank God for rescuing us. We have no job and no food for the family. I thank you for the help you gave to us."

When hearing the response from Indian Christians who have been helped, it becomes clear what a fine line there is between starvation and survival for many. "Due to the pandemic, it was getting difficult for us to survive," says Larisa*. She was met in her home by an Open Doors local partner, (whom she now calls 'our brother'), because she has small children and couldn't travel to receive aid. "Our brother came with relief items and it was encouraging. I thank the organisation for providing us required grocery items."



Persecuted Christians in India receiving vital aid from Open Doors partners

These Christians are just a handful of the many who have expressed their thanks – your gifts and prayers have made an extraordinary difference in their lives. With relief aid, believers can be strengthened to be the light of Christ in their communities. But there are many thousands more who need help just as urgently, and Open Doors partners are ready to take the risks needed to help sustain their, and your, family.

PERSECUTION CONTINUES

It's not just risky because of the virus – though Akash and other Open Doors partners have already made a personal sacrifice on this front, deciding to isolate from their families to avoid spreading the virus. It's also risky because the persecution of Christians is continuing in India, and there are Hindu extremists still attacking vulnerable believers and those trying to reach them with help. In fact, Christians in rural areas are facing more opposition than ever from their communities because of their faith. It's a long-

term problem and it's peaking. Reports have surfaced of our brothers and sisters being falsely accused, threatened and attacked. In perhaps the most

"Thank you for remembering us in these tough times"

KABIR, FATHER OF FIVE

serious incident reported during the lockdown, a Christian girl named Jyothi* was shot twice by extremists. She and her family had previously received threats.

In another incident, a Christian brother named Shyam* and his family have been facing constant opposition from his village, who are abusing them and accusing them of having Covid-19. This is because he and his family have refused to take home-made Ayurveda medicine, made by a black magician in the area. Ayurvedic medicine is a type of alternative medicine associated with Hinduism.

One attack has taken place against an entire community of

believers. Some villagers forced the Christians in the area to come to the village community hall. As the believers gathered, the villagers started beating them. One of the Christians managed to call the police during the attack, but they took no action. Christians in the area are now living in intense fear.

Since Christians have to stay in their homes and communities, they can't get away from these threats. It's particularly hard for secret believers. Kavita* used to spend time praying in the fields where she worked, reading her Bible away from home, because her husband is angry that she is a Christian. Now she has to try to find opportunities to pray, read the Bible and worship in her own home – but faces severe abuse from her husband when she tries to do this.

"A TIME OF WILDERNESS"
Reports like these are likely to be the tip of the iceberg. Open Doors local partners say that many incidents are going unnoticed due to social distancing restrictions, poor connectivity

Christians at the back of the queue

A pandemic and its aftermath don't happen in a vacuum. In many countries, discrimination in aid distribution is another method of persecution. We spoke to Heena*, an Open Doors partner working in India, to find out what sorts of discrimination they were hearing about.

Is it true that Christians are being neglected in the aid distribution?

Heena: Yes. Imagine you're a Christian family in a Hindu village. It's very likely the villagers are socially boycotting you. Even when there isn't lockdown, you're not allowed to buy from the local shop or draw water from the local well. You will have to try to get food and other daily necessities from nearby Christians or go to villages where the opposition against Christians isn't so strong.

But now your village is in lockdown. You've lost your income. Aid is being distributed to the local shop or the local village committee and they won't give you the food, not even when you have a food ration coupon.

Why can't the Christians go to the police?

Heena: The chances are that police won't listen to you if you're a Christian. They might accuse you of trying to convert Hindus – or, even if they don't persecute you, they'll simply tell you to make compromises. 'You have to stay in this village and live with the other villagers. Don't follow Jesus. Just do what everybody else does.'

Do you have examples of Christians being bypassed?

Heena: We know of so many, but here are a few we can share. We have to withhold certain details to not give away the identity of these Christians, or else they will be punished for sharing the information with us. Recently I heard of a family of labourers who'd lost their income who didn't receive help from the local village committee. The Hindus said the Christians already received help from foreigners, which they hadn't.

A disabled Christian man and his family of six



Usha's small Christian community didn't get any official aid. Thankfully, Open Doors partners were able to answer her call for help.

were also bypassed. He can't even walk, but still the local people aren't giving him and his family any food. They have been opposed by the village since they came to faith.

We also received a cry for help from a family of five. The police have been threatening them a lot because they are Christians and do ministry. Now everyone in their village received relief aid, except for the Christian families. These are just some examples out of many. In some cases, we have been able to help. In others, we're still hoping to reach them soon.

*Names changed for security reasons

and a lack of resources.

An Open Doors local partner says, "There is no doubt this is a time of wilderness for many of us, and the thing about this pandemic and isolation is that we don't know where it's going to lead, or how long it will last. It seems that there's no end in sight. India needs more prayers than ever during this time."

There's no quick fix to the persecution faced by Christians in India. This is a long-term problem, made all the worse by coronavirus. We know that Jesus says in Matthew 25, "For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat [...] whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of Mine, you did for Me." Will you stand with your family so that they can survive the impact of this pandemic, and grow as a mighty church for the future?

PLEASE PRAY

- For God's provision for Indian Christians facing starvation because of coronavirus restrictions
- For protection for Open Doors partners, and that they would be able to reach those most in need, at the right time
- That believers in India would have opportunities to show the light and hope of Christ to their neighbours.

PLEASE GIVE

Every £28 could provide and deliver emergency aid for two persecuted believers impacted by the Covid-19 crisis.

Every £56 could provide and deliver emergency aid to a family of persecuted believers impacted by the Covid-19 crisis.

You can make a gift at
www.opendoorsuk.org



#We Stand Together

Open Doors partners are doing all they can, with your prayers and gifts, to support persecuted Christians who need food. But we can also influence those with power to bring change, ensuring that they know about and act upon the discrimination our persecuted family face.

MPs love to hear from their constituents – will you tell them about this crucial issue and say #WeStandTogether?

Here's how:

1. AN IMAGE OF SOLIDARITY
Take a photo of yourself with a cross and an empty plate (like the one above). Share it on social media, tagging your MP, @opendoorsuk and #WeStandTogether

2. TELL YOUR MP
Follow the simple online campaign to inform your MP, asking them to urgently write to the Department for International Development.

To find out how go to:
www.opendoorsuk.org/advocacy



CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE



“Every bag of rice says you are not alone”

BRINGING HOPE TO THE HEARTS OF PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

Thank you for all your gifts and prayers in recent weeks. You have been amazing! The response to our Covid-19 crisis appeal has been incredible, and the regular giving and praying of so many is helping persecuted Christians to feed their families and stand strong.

Just before the onslaught of the coronavirus, Open Doors was able to bring hope and relief to 1,500 displaced families in Naka, Nigeria, where Pastor Sule Sunday is a minister. A toxic mix of climate change, politics and an Islamic expansionist agenda has brought militant Fulani herdsmen to the area, causing violence and destruction. Hundreds of people were killed in attacks in 2019, countless homes were looted and destroyed, and at least 12,580 people were displaced, leaving many in desperation.

Pastor Sule was frustrated that he could do so little to protect his people. “Some began to doubt that God listens and cares for us. There was severe hunger and difficulty in the land. We received some food, but

it was so little that only a few families could be helped. What they got was finished in a week.”

‘WE HAVE NEVER RECEIVED THIS KIND OF SUPPORT’

Thankfully, Open Doors partners were able to visit with relief aid just before the lockdown,

“We don’t just bring rice or dahl. We bring a message of hope.”

providing, with your help, enough food to last 1,500 families for three months, with money to help them get back on their feet (PICTURED ABOVE). When the families received their parcels, many women broke out into dance and song.

“Today I am overjoyed!” says

Pastor Sule. “Open Doors has responded to our plight! You can see people are just laughing and happy because we have never received this kind of support before. This has not only solved our physical needs but also our spiritual needs! I kept hearing my people say, ‘God is alive! He has answered our prayers and brought help to us.’ This support has indeed brought hope back to the hearts of the people of Naka.”

SUPPORTING PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Meanwhile, across the world, the spread of coronavirus has had a devastating effect for persecuted Christians, leaving many without income or food. In some places, believers are ignored when official aid is

distributed. But your support is giving them a lifeline, showing them that they are not forgotten. Thank you!

So far, Christians in Asia have borne the brunt of the crisis, so in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Southern Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam,

Open Doors local partners have provided thousands of families with vital food supplies that will last between three and five weeks

- and are preparing to help thousands more.

However, the economic impact of the virus is now hitting other regions, too. In Syria, there is great fear about what will happen in the north east, where the suffering caused by last year’s Turkish invasion is compounded by a health system almost completely destroyed by war. Elsewhere in Syria and Iraq, displaced families have returned home but face the uphill struggle of rebuilding their lives in the face of economic hardship.

SHOWING JESUS’ LOVE IN DIFFICULT TIMES

Your support, however, has meant that the church in Syria has been able to help families in desperate need. As a minister, Pastor George in Qamishli is free to visit people and distribute vital aid (PICTURED).



Each relief pack to Asia contains these essential items

He also gives out food coupons for the Good Shepherd Centre

- a Centre of Hope funded by Open Doors - for those able to make an essential trip. Prior to the Covid-19 crisis, Open Doors partners - who had been distributing emergency food in the area for a long time - were planning to reduce emergency aid in favour of longer-term programmes, but with lockdown this has had to change.

“When we saw the increased need,” says Pastor George, “we restarted the distribution. Our church saw that now was a time

to stand by the people, support them and show Jesus’ love in difficult times.”

This sentiment is echoed by Hana* who personally delivers supplies to families in the Gulf: “We don’t just bring rice or dahl. We bring a message of hope. Every bag of rice says that

there is hope. The Christian families know that we are standing with them. This makes a massive difference. As people receive food and vitamins, they function better and make better decisions. We are building their dignity, too.”

YOUR GIFT IS THEIR JOY

Please pray for Pastor Sule, Pastor George and Hana, as they minister to believers in their communities. Open Doors will continue to stand with them, and all our persecuted family, through persecution and pandemic, for as long as they need support. Your gift is their joy – and your prayers are their power and strength.

*Name changed for security reasons



Greater impact for His glory

"When we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God. So two good things will result from this ministry of giving – the needs of the believers will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God."

2 CORINTHIANS 9:11-12 (NLT)



For 65 years Open Doors has served the persecuted church worldwide. Each year it seems we see an increase in persecution, and 2019 was no different.

But when I look back over the year, I am deeply thankful to God for the amazing prayerfulness, generosity and compassion of the many supporters who have given, prayed and spoken out for our persecuted family with such passion and commitment.

Your support has enabled

our teams and partners in the field to persevere through great challenges, knowing we are not there to provide a quick fix. We are grateful to God that, despite increased persecution, and with your help, He has multiplied our efforts as a ministry and enabled us to have a greater impact for His glory.

So thank you for enabling your persecuted family to stand strong, defy persecution and share Jesus, no matter the cost. Your support is what makes this ministry possible - we really can't do it without you!

As the world faces

unexpected and unprecedented challenges, we must keep pressing forward, trusting in the Lord's protection and provision. And with your help, we will continue to strengthen our persecuted family, so that 'the needs of the believers will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanks to God'.

Henrietta Blyth
CEO, Open Doors UK&I

Thank you for strengthening your persecuted family

In 2019...

£12,646,541

was donated in support
of the persecuted
church

Over 96,000

people prayed regularly
for the persecuted
church

Over 16,000

supporters added their
names to the handmade
petition, saying 'I
see you' to women
persecuted for their
faith and gender

£789,014.00
Speaking out in advocacy

£1,341,681.00
Raising awareness
and encouraging
prayer

£3,312,800.00
Training for
leadership and
discipleship

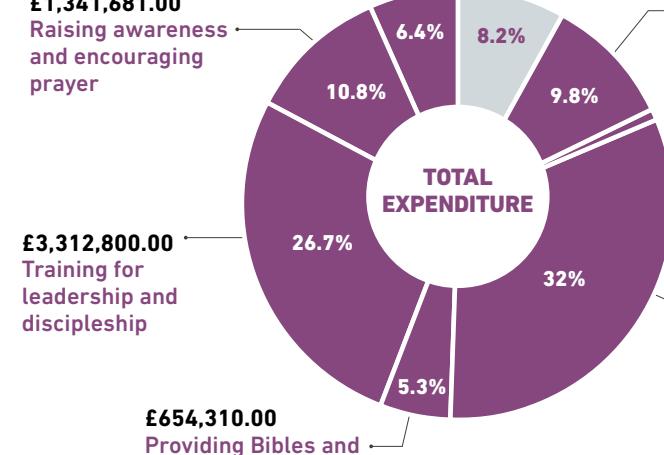
£654,310.00
Providing Bibles and
Christian literature

£1,013,756.00
Raising funds

£1,223,850.00
Engaging and
mobilising the church

£97,747.00
Preparing the
next generation of
supporters

£3,974,420.00
Sustaining lives, supporting
livelihoods



The above figures are extracted from the full financial statements. If you would like to receive a copy of the audited financial statements, they are available on request from: Open Doors, PO Box 6, Witney, OX29 6WG.

Seeing Change for persecuted women

The invisible plight of persecuted women is now visible to those in power, thanks to 16,000 supporters who added their names to the handmade petition, and prayed for its impact.

Open Doors partner Tirham*, a trauma care worker

from Nigeria who attended the petition exhibition in Westminster Abbey's Chapter House, said: "This handmade petition will allow every woman to see that everyone is seeing them." The exhibition was also attended by Prime Minister's



*name changed for security reasons

Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Rehman Chishti, who tweeted that he was 'delighted to attend the exhibition highlighting the strength and suffering of women who have been doubly victimised by religious persecution and gender-based violence'.

Supporters also gave generously to support persecuted women, helping

over 33,000 women to receive livelihood support, persecution survival training and trauma care.

Women like Ijandana (PICTURED), who was just 14 when she was abducted by Boko Haram militants. She was forcibly married and had two children. She eventually managed to escape and was able to attend a trauma care programme run by Open Doors partners in Nigeria.

"I found new life here," she says. "I learned how to forgive those who have offended me and have forgiven those who have mocked me, because they don't know what they are doing."

I am free of bitterness and unforgiveness."

Your support is restoring hope, dignity and a future to many sisters like Ijinanda. Thank you for seeing them and bringing change to their lives.



Your support keeps the church around the world standing strong

Communities changed. Lives restored. The lonely comforted. The broken healed. Thanks to your support, Open Doors is able to reach out to some of the most hostile and challenging places in which to live as a Christian, and strengthen the church to be the church, shining the light of

Jesus where that light is needed most.

Without your constant and generous support, our courageous teams would not be able to do the vital work they do to keep the body of Christ standing strong in the faith. Because our teams are not only

serving the persecuted church - they are part of the persecuted church. Our teams cannot stand with our brothers and sisters without your support - so thank you for continuing to stand with us, and with them, as we work together to 'strengthen what remains' (Revelation 3:2).

Last year, thanks to you...



Open Doors distributed 1,873,503 Bibles and Christian books



Open Doors trained 3,840,306 persecuted Christians through leadership and discipleship courses, trauma care training and persecution survival seminars



Open Doors helped 718,770 persecuted Christians with emergency relief, community development, education and medical care



Your support has helped Open Doors to distribute 750,000 Bibles and Christian books in Central Asia in 2019.

"Thank you for sharing the gospel with our children, with us all, we would never hear if you wouldn't come," says a parent whose child attended a celebration in a remote village in Central Asia. "Now the children have hope, they know that they are not alone. And they also can know more about Jesus from the books you brought to us."



With your help, Open Doors trained around 4,000 refugee Christians from North Korea in China last year.



Open Doors provided emergency relief to 2,800 believers displaced by the Islamic militant uprising in Burkina Faso, in 2019.



Bibles are distributed at a youth camp in Malaysia. "Some [young people], when they see the Bible for the first time, they kiss it," says Open Doors partner Lukas*. "They tell me this is the first time they have seen a Bible."

ARE YOU READY TO JOIN THE [SECRET] CHURCH?

How is your church worshipping at this time? Are you watching services on YouTube? Sharing a house group over Zoom? Relying on the phone to keep in touch?

Being church at home is a challenge for us all. But it also gives us a glimpse of what life is like for the secret church. Because, for millions of Christians across the world, this is their 'normal'.

In many countries, Christians know that meeting together is dangerous. So, they gather under the cover of darkness; in caves, forests and cellars, under the arches

of bridges and even in prison camp toilets.

But wherever they meet – they find Jesus there.

That's why we've put together *Secret Church* – a new, interactive resource for churches, families and small groups.

Step into the world of the secret church – without leaving your home!

Secret Church takes experiences and approaches from underground church meetings all around the world and translates them into a simple session outline for churches, small groups and youth groups.

And there's a companion version specially designed for children and families.

In a *Secret Church* gathering, you might create a hiding place in which to worship, or sing a worship song in whispers. Maybe you'll find yourself hurriedly having to hide the evidence of your faith, or sharing communion with one another in the most unusual way.

Secret Church is a great way for people not only to experience something of the life of the underground church, but to also experience the presence of God, wherever they are. Lockdown doesn't mean we are alone. Even though we are separated, we can still be the church.

Because, where two or three are gathered together, Jesus is there.

(BELOW LEFT) A house church gathering in North Africa; (BELOW RIGHT) Believers in Central Asia study the Bible



SECRET CHURCH: LOCKDOWN EDITION

- Worship with the world's hidden Christians
- Activities designed to work on services like Zoom or Skype
- Stories from secret Christians in places like North Africa, Eritrea, North Korea and Iran.
- With prayer, worship, Bible reading and even communion, *Secret Church* can serve as a complete, interactive church service.



SECRET CHURCH: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- Interactive activities for families to do in their own home
- Build a secret place to meet in and a secret place to hide your Bible
- Read a Bible story so secret it doesn't mention Jesus
- Help your children engage with and pray for secret believers.



You can find *Secret Church* – and many more resources for worship and prayer – in the Church at Home section of our website, www.opendoorsuk.org.



ONLINE MEETINGS IN IRAN: 'THE CHURCH IS STILL ALIVE'

One of the things that we discovered during lockdown is the power of digital communications to bring us together as church. But this is nothing new to secret believers who have been using these tools for years.

In Iran, even covert church meetings are impossible due to Covid-19 restrictions. So Christians are going online.

"We created a special prayer schedule that we call 'Frontline' where prayer members can virtually walk in and out to come to pray together," says online worker Salomeh*.

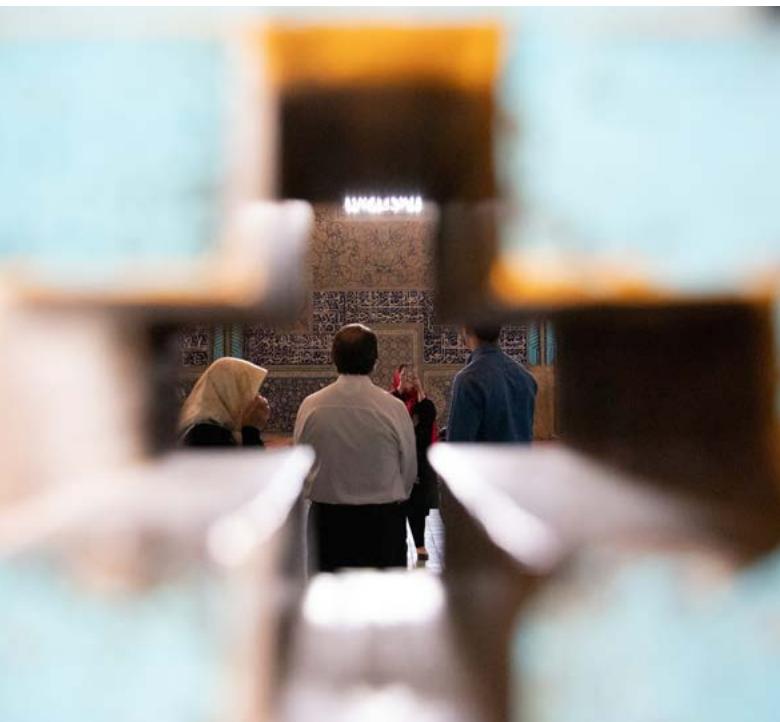
"Our people are sitting at home now all day long. We help them to overcome fear and anxiety and spend extra time with them individually. Apart from teaching, prayer and worship sessions, we also have group meetings in which we share our testimonies to help us deal with the reality of these days.

"Your support and prayers result in the growth of the Kingdom," says Salomeh. "The church in Iran is still alive. I pray that one day we will all be standing in front of God's throne knowing we've done our part in the Kingdom."

*name changed for security reasons

FROM SHARING GOOD NEWS TO BEING GOOD NEWS

The resilience of the church in Iran



Christians who convert from Islam have to keep their faith completely hidden

For Christians in Iran, isolation is nothing new. But, although Iran is struggling with the impact of the coronavirus, believers there are seeing the pandemic as an opportunity to be salt and light in their communities. The church is not despairing; rather, they are more active than ever!

"Iran is one of the countries hit hardest by the coronavirus: apart from the many who have sadly died, the already fragile economy was hit hard as well," says Open Doors field worker Steve*. At the beginning of the crisis, a house church leader contacted him with this message: "We are dying here and no one seems to care. A lot of people around us fall ill and end up in hospitals or die. We have

exhausted our ministry resources to help others in practical ways, and we are unable to continue for much longer."

However, the house churches inside the country seem quite resilient. "They have become used to living in difficult circumstances," explains Steve. "So, when Covid-19 reached Iran, they were of course afraid that it would hit them or their loved ones, but at the same time they were undaunted. They felt it was their calling to take care of people around them - not only other believers but neighbours, colleagues or others nearby who were struggling."

One church leader says, "We used to mobilise volunteers to make sandwiches and feed the street children who try to earn a little to support their families on empty

In prison I learned to depend on the Lord

stomachs. But, after the coronavirus outbreak, we had to prioritise provision of masks and sanitising gels to help them stay safe."

Another house church leader says, "We are doing all we can to provide food packages for the elderly and vulnerable who are unable to go out these

days or for those who have lost their job in these difficult circumstances. Throughout the year we shared the good news of Christ with our neighbours and community; now we have a chance to be good news."

"THIS MADE ME APPRECIATE MY CHURCH MORE"

It's dangerous for Christians in Iran to be so visible – the country is number 9 on Open Doors' World Watch List. Christians who convert from Islam have to keep their faith completely hidden. Secret house churches are monitored and frequently raided, and dozens of Christians are imprisoned in appalling conditions. Christianity is seen as a Western influence and a threat, and all ethnic Persians are seen as Muslims. An ethnic Persian who leaves Islam can face the death penalty or imprisonment for 'crimes against national security'.

As a former prisoner for his faith, Pastor Wahid* from Iran knows how painful isolation can be. But his previous experiences have helped him to see the coronavirus lockdown in a different light.

"I have had to miss my fellow believers on several occasions - when the government shut down our church, when I was in prison and now again with the virus," he says. "This has made me appreciate my church more.

Steve says, "First, they used their own resources but, when those ended, they reached out to our partners, who in turn contacted us. They thought that no one cared about them.

Love grows during the absence of those we love. But each time I am also reminded of my dependency on the Lord. Outside of prison I might depend on myself, or others. But in prison I learned to depend on the Lord."

showed that the worldwide church is standing beside them." Open Doors supports the church in Iran through partners – as well as trauma training, this is done through distributing Bibles and other Christian



Christians in Iran distribute food and sanitary items during the Covid-19 crisis

"THEY THOUGHT NO ONE CARED"

A lot of Iranians have lost their jobs due to the crisis. The economy is hit hard while already being weak due to the US-imposed sanctions. Christians, as well as many other Iranians, worry about their future. Some are struggling to provide the basics for their families. But Iranian believers continue to work tirelessly in the emergency and chaos that has arisen from the pandemic.

Steve says, "First, they used their own resources but, when those ended, they reached out to our partners, who in turn contacted us. They thought that no one cared about them. But, through our partners, we

literature online, advocacy for those in prison and various forms of training.

Thanks to your prayers and support, Christians in Iran continue to spread the love of Christ in their community. Not in words, but in deeds. And God sends them where they are needed, says Steve: "A local Christian told our partner that one lady she visited was in tears: the lady had used all her supplies and didn't know how to get food on the table for her children that night. Right at that moment the local Christian rang the doorbell to deliver a food package. The lady was so thankful!"

*names changed for security reasons



SHARE COURAGEOUS FAITH USING CHURCH AT HOME RESOURCES

Inspired by the church in Iran? Share their stories and many more from around the world with your church using our free online Church at Home resources, including Faith and Danger – perfect for a slot in your church service – Isolated Church for youth, and lots of colouring sheets, activities and videos for children. Download today at: www.opendoorsuk.org/churchathome

DO TRY THIS AT HOME

Fundraising events may have been put on hold – but there's been no restriction on the imagination of Open Doors supporters. Take inspiration from these brilliant people who've kept fundraising through lockdown.

"Early on in lockdown, I realised that for millions of persecuted Christians, lockdown was having a devastating impact," says mum-of-three and Open Doors supporter, Emma. "For me and my family, it's been a bit of discomfort – school at home, change of social patterns and postponed holidays. We're really very cushioned from the reality and depth of the hardship of this season."

Emma decided to turn her habit of regular running into a challenge that would raise money for persecuted Christians. She challenged herself to run the equivalent of a marathon over a weekend. Setting up a JustGiving page to organise

the sponsorship was simple to do and easy to share on social media.

WEEKEND MARATHON

She says, "Incredibly my friends responded and even my builder, who isn't a Christian, sponsored me £50!"

Emma's marathon effort raised over £2,500 to support our brothers and sisters who have struggled most to survive during the isolation of lockdown. Many persecuted Christians were already isolated from their communities and cut off from their families because of their faith.

Emma was delighted with the final total. She says, "All it cost me was a bit of time, a small amount of effort and sore legs for a few days!"

KEEP DANCING

Meanwhile, 11-year-old Jemimah recreated the marathon in a different way. She read in *The Week Junior* that people were fundraising with the numbers 26 or 2.6 because the London Marathon couldn't happen – and so many charities usually get money from sponsored runners. She says, "I decided that I was going to dance non-stop for 2.6 hours as I like dancing and 26 hours would be too long."

Jemimah planned the event carefully in advance. She says, "I set to work making a playlist on Spotify. I made sure there was a slower song every now and then to make sure I had a few times where I could get back my energy."

Supported by her family, Jemimah managed the challenge and raised £350 for persecuted Christians. She says, "I watched a sermon about how richer Christians helped poorer Christians. My Dad told me how Open Doors were helping Christians who were struggling at this hard time and I decided to support them. The danceathon was quite tiring but I am so glad that I did it."



JEMIMAH DANCING IN HER LIVING ROOM



ELLA SPENT 35 HOURS BAKING CAKES TO SELL!



EMMA DID A MARATHON IN A WEEKEND, RAISING OVER £2,500!

WHAT COULD YOU DO?



MEMBERS OF THE CONGREGATION AT CORNERSTONE CHURCH DONATED £3 AND PLANKED THEIR BEST TIME, RAISING OVER £16,000!



NON-STOP BAKE SHOP

Fifteen-year-old Ella, from Oxfordshire, tried a different type of endurance event to raise money for persecuted Christians during lockdown. She spent 35 hours baking cakes to sell! She says, "I designed a takeaway cake service offering a wide range of baked treats. I called it 'Baking for the Broken.' I spent three days in the kitchen baking non-stop!"

Ella's own experience of lockdown inspired her to empathise with her Christian brothers and sisters in other parts of the world. She says, "Knowing how hard it was for us in lockdown made me think how much worse the situation would be if you were denied something as simple as food. I wanted to encourage Christians that they are not forgotten or alone."

Ella's efforts certainly weren't in vain – she has raised over £750 from her brilliant bakeathon!

Finally, in Kingston, a whole church got

involved in raising money. Cornerstone Church challenged its congregation to donate £3 and plank their best time under the hashtag #1suffersallssuffer. Using JustGiving and spreading the word on social media, they smashed their target of £2,000 and raised over £16,000.

FEELING INSPIRED?

There are so many simple ways to raise money for our persecuted brothers and sisters – and it's easy to raise awareness on social media too. If you're feeling inspired, why not get started today?

Go to www.opendoorsuk.org/fundraise for more ideas of how you can fundraise for your persecuted family.

**CORONAVIRUS
CRISIS**

Christians in India are often last in line to get food and aid.

**WITHOUT HELP, THEY FACE STARVATION.
COULD YOU MAKE THEM YOUR FIRST
PRIORITY TODAY?**

Many Indian Christians lost their jobs when lockdown restrictions came into place. Most are daily labourers, depending on their daily wages to survive.

With no money, they have no food. When government aid is distributed, they are often overlooked.

They urgently need your help.

Open Doors partners like Akash* are courageously reaching persecuted Christians in India who desperately need food. "We see people in great need," says Akash. "We have to help, even if it is risky."

Will you help Open Doors partners reach more believers who are waiting for help today?

A gift of £56 could provide and deliver emergency aid to a family of persecuted believers impacted by the Covid-19 crisis.

To make your gift, return the enclosed envelope, visit www.opendoorsuk.org or phone 01993 460015. Thank you.

*Name changed for security reasons