

Open *Doors*

PRAYER DIARY | November/December 2023



**"The people
walking in
darkness
have seen a
great light."**

ISAIAH 9:2

Persecuted children

Wednesday 1 November

Around the world, children face persecution for their family's or their own choice to follow Christ. Many are bullied, ostracised or denied an education. Open Doors supports Christian schools in many countries, providing a Christian education. Pray these schools will be safe spaces where children can learn, receive love and be given hope for a brighter future.

Thursday 2 November

– Ethiopia

Twins Fasil* and Ezana* (7) were vulnerable to persecution in their school in a Muslim-majority village (see Magazine p8). Praise God that they have been moved to a bridge school built by Open Doors. "I am no longer worried about their safety," says their father, Ermias*. "They go there and learn and come back with freedom as they wish." Pray that they will grow in wisdom and knowledge of Jesus.



Friday 3 November – Ethiopia

The school's size means Fasil and

Ezana may need to return to a public school in a couple of years. "When my children graduate, they would transfer into the other school with risks. I worry

about the future," Ermias says. Ask God to provide a way for the twins to continue their education in safety.

Saturday 4 November

– Ethiopia

Pastor Yohannes* runs the bridge school from his church compound. "The families who used to throw stones at the church have now started sending their children to this school," he says. "It's also helping children recover from psychological abuse. Pray for students in the school to grow in the grace of God, so they can change their generation and the world."

Sunday 5 November – IDOP

To mark the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, Open Doors is uniting with CSW, Release and EA for an online prayer event. Pray that many will join the event, and that the prayers of God's people will be powerful and effective.

Monday 6 November – Africa

In parts of sub-Saharan Africa, Christian girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual abuse, forced marriage and missing out on school. Pray that they will be protected by their parents, churches and communities, and will grow up to know they are deeply loved and valued by God.

Tuesday 7 November – Africa

In countries like Nigeria, CAR and Burkina Faso, where violence against Christians is severe, boys often grow up without fathers and take up financial and parental responsibilities at a young

age. Pray they will be cared for and supported by faithful men in the church, knowing their Heavenly Father is always with them.

Wednesday 8 November

Persecuted children are often excluded and hidden because of their faith, making them harder to reach and support. Pray for wisdom and compassion for Open Doors workers as they discern how best to meet these children's needs and show them the love of their Heavenly Father.

| North Africa

Thursday 9 November

– Morocco

Morocco is still reeling from the impact of the devastating earthquake that killed over 3,000 people in the High Atlas mountains. Pray for healing for all who grieve, and for wisdom and stamina for NGOs and aid organisations helping those left homeless and jobless by the disaster.

Friday 10 November

– Morocco

There are believed to be around 31,300 Christians in Morocco – 0.1% of the mostly Muslim population. Since it's illegal to 'shake the faith of a Muslim', telling others about Jesus is risky. Pray that believers will be given wisdom and courage as they seek to share God's love with those impacted by the earthquake.

Saturday 11 November

– Morocco

Nassif* is a believer who tragically lost his father, as well as his home and

possessions, in the earthquake. He's alone and struggling with traumatic memories of the day. Ask the Lord to heal, strengthen and restore our brother, and provide him with fellowship.

Sunday 12 November

– Morocco

Praise God that people are becoming Christians after discovering about Jesus online. The digital sphere is also providing opportunities for believers to connect (something many cannot do in-person). Ask the Holy Spirit to do abundantly more in Morocco, and across North Africa, through online networks to draw people to each other and to Jesus.

Monday 13 November – Libya

Ask for God's mercy on those bereaved and displaced by floods bursting two dams in the eastern city of Derma, killing over 11,000 people. Libya has no central government, making recovery efforts even harder. Pray that the two Libyan governments will cooperate with one another and the international community in efforts to rebuild and restore.

Tuesday 14 November – Libya

Like Morocco, the church in Libya is small and hidden. But despite intense pressure, believers – whether expatriates from sub-Saharan Africa or Libyans from Muslim backgrounds – courageously persevere in their faith. Pray that, amidst the country's mounting problems, they 'shine like stars' (Philippians 2:15), leading people to Jesus.

*Name changed for security reasons

Give thanks for **ANSWERED PRAYER**

Offering hope through hospitality

By opening up her home,
Dhea from South East Asia
is leading people to Jesus

In May last year, we shared the story of Dhea*, who grew up in a strongly Islamic country (see Prayer News edition 290). Thanks to your prayers and support, Dhea is making a real difference in the lives of others through her gift of hospitality.

FROM PRISON TO HOSPITALITY

When Dhea was a teenager, she was sent to prison for two years after she was raped by an older man – because

she'd become pregnant out of wedlock. But that was where she encountered Jesus after being sent a Bible.

She says, "When I opened it, the first thing I read in that book was: 'I saw your unformed body in your mother's womb. And I knew the very first day of your life before that day was.' I never burned that book. And for the next nine months that I had in prison, every day I read that book."

After she was released, Dhea returned to her parents and tried to keep her faith a secret. But she couldn't! After being interrogated by the authorities about Jesus, she was sent back to prison for four months. Upon release, she fled the country and now has a ministry of hospitality to visitors from her home country.

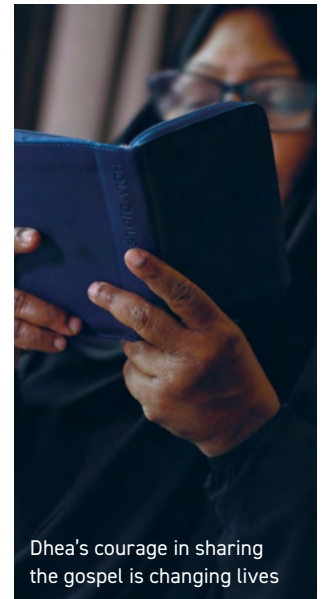
DHEA SHARES HER HOME – AND HER FAITH

Recently, Dhea met 14-year-old Saloma*. She'd come with her mother for a medical check-up and stayed with Dhea – who helped them get to the hospital and provided them with other necessities. Sadly, Saloma was diagnosed with an advanced-stage tumour, which greatly distressed her and her mother. But, through Dhea's hospitality, Saloma learned about Jesus.

One night, Saloma saw a bright light shining from a Christian poster on her bedroom wall. The next morning, she asked Dhea how to get to heaven. Dhea began to tell her about Jesus, and Saloma's mum also listened with interest.

**"For the next
nine months in
prison, every day
I read the Bible."**

But when Saloma's father visited and heard about their conversations, he took his wife and daughter back home. Sadly, Saloma's condition only worsened over the next two years – and, eventually, her parents asked her if there



Dhea's courage in sharing the gospel is changing lives

was anywhere she'd like to go, or anyone she'd like to see. "I only want to see Dhea again," Saloma replied.

Dhea went to meet the family at the airport. Saloma took a joyful look at her, held her hand, smiled, and breathed her last. Dhea helped to arrange the funeral, and still talks with Saloma's mother about her and Saloma's Saviour.

PLEASE PRAY

- Give thanks for Saloma's life – and that she put her faith in Jesus
- For Saloma's parents, that they will be comforted in their grief and come to know Jesus
- That God will continue to bless Dhea and her ministry.

*Names changed for security reasons

Wednesday 15 November

There are Christians from North Africa stuck in detention camps after being blocked from entering Europe. In the camps, they're vulnerable to persecution for their faith. Pray that God will enable them to move on 'into a spacious place' of safety and freedom (Psalm 18:19).

| Middle East

Thursday 16 November – Egypt

In recent months, three Christian women have gone missing. Miriana Boutros (27) was shopping when she disappeared, while Miriana Shahhat (17) was heading to church and Nada Jerjes (17) was on her way to school. Pray for their safe return.

Friday 17 November – Iraq

Unemployment is high, and drug addiction is increasing among young people. Pray for Open Doors partners helping people to build businesses through Centres of Hope. Pray that these businesses will thrive, and bring dignity and hope to many.

Saturday 18 November

– Israel/Gaza

Cry to God for mercy on all those bereaved or injured in fighting following October's attack on Israel by Hamas militants. Pray for an end to hostilities, for a just and lasting peace, and for Christians in Israel and Gaza to be beacons of Christ's love and forgiveness to their communities.

Sunday 19 November – Syria

Open Doors partners are providing trauma counselling

training to people scarred by years of war and persecution. "I aspire to help build a healthy society capable of taking care of itself with the right Christian foundations," says George, a participant. Pray that many will be healed through this ministry.

Monday 20 November – Iran

On the day that Joseph Shahbazian was released from Evin Prison, Iranian-Armenian pastor Anooshavan Avedian was summoned to begin a ten-year sentence. Both were convicted for leading a house church. Give thanks for Joseph's release, and pray that Anooshavan will soon join him.

Tuesday 21 November – Turkey

"God is at work in this suffering, confusion and grieving," says Fardin*, who had to flee Iran because of his faith. He's helping channel aid to those affected by February's earthquake. Christians are often viewed with hostility in Turkey; pray that people like Fardin will help change perceptions.

Wednesday 22 November – Lebanon

About 30,000 copies of Francine Rivers' *Redeeming Love* – a novel about God's love based on the book of Hosea – were printed in Lebanon and distributed across the Middle East. Praise God for the role publishers in Lebanon have in strengthening the church, and pray this can grow.

Thursday 23 November – Middle East

Many Christian children must learn about Islam at school, including memorising parts of

the Quran. Some of their peers are even trained by radical parents to intimidate them with difficult theological questions. Pray these children will have a deep revelation of God's love, enabling them to stand firm and share the gospel.

| Latin America

Friday 24 November

– Nicaragua

"God has the solution - may God's name be glorified," said Walter* after his son Jacobo* was given 13½ years' imprisonment for criticising the government on Facebook. He's since been released but deported to the US. Walter ask for prayers that Jacobo remains strong in the Lord.

Saturday 25 November – Colombia

Two women and an 11-year-old girl were seriously injured when believers in Cauca were attacked while gathering for prayer. Although not a direct attack on Christians (the illegal armed group mistook them for dissidents), believers in Cauca are being affected by localised fighting. Pray for protection.

Sunday 26 November – Mexico

A church recently baptised young people from five families expelled for their faith. They've since returned home, but are forbidden from expressing their faith publicly. Praise God for their courageous faith – which has led to two more families coming to know Jesus!

Monday 27 November – Cuba

This year, Open Doors partners have helped run leadership training for more than 600

Christians. "These workshops come at a critical time," says a participant. "Leadership needs to be strengthened with in-depth understanding of the gospel and how to apply it." Pray church leaders will be bold amid rising pressure from the Communist authorities.

| Open Doors partners

Tuesday 28 November

"We are here because we never left; we will remain here with our people – serving God and washing their feet," says a partner in Pakistan following the attacks on Christians in Jaranwala. Praise God for the sacrificial service of local partners, and pray that each will be nourished as they seek to nourish others.

Wednesday 29 November

"We are working against unseen spiritual forces," says Daisy*, a local partner in Myanmar. "We want churches to grow and thrive; therefore, we know we will always face opposition." Pray that Open Doors local partners worldwide will 'be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power' (Ephesians 6:10) as they serve our persecuted family.

Thursday 30 November

The rising, urgent needs of our persecuted family mean that many places often desperately need more partners. "Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field" (Luke 10:2), and pray for God's sustaining love.

*Names changed for security reasons

Gifts from God

In Central Asia, where many deaf children are rejected, your gifts are telling a different story

Elnura* is used to not being seen. That's because she's deaf and, where she lives in Central Asia, this carries a stigma that brings isolation and rejection. But a Christmas present has shown her that she is seen by you, and above all, by God – and what joy it's bringing her!

"So many deaf children are ignored and not seen," explains Naira*, an Open Doors local partner. "Many of them are depressed and are not attending a school." The difficulties can be exacerbated by being a Christian. Many parts of Central Asia are mostly Muslim, and leaving Islam to follow Jesus can bring pressure from families, local communities and the authorities.

"SO MANY DEAF CHILDREN ARE IGNORED AND NOT SEEN."



But a community of deaf Christians, supported by Open Doors local partners, is showing deaf children how much they're loved by God. It's where Elnura has spent time learning sign language – and where she received the gift that meant so much to her. "The Christmas gift really gave

her the feeling that she is seen and loved, not only by us, but also by God," says Naira. "I really see Elnura being more open because she received love and attention from the deaf Christian community."

"THE CHRISTMAS GIFT REALLY GAVE HER THE FEELING THAT SHE IS SEEN AND LOVED."



Amazingly, the deaf community is home to one of the fastest growing group of believers in Central Asia. Some interpretations of Islam believe that deaf people cannot go to heaven, meaning there is a greater openness to the hope of the gospel.

Since many deaf Christians are isolated and cannot fully integrate into society, local Open Doors partners like Naira also come alongside the community to provide trauma counselling, as well as training in vocational skills such as computing, beauty therapy and phone repair for those struggling to find work because of their disability.

The community is one of several ways through which



Elnura knows her global family love her, after receiving a Christmas gift from Open Doors supporters

local partners in Central Asia distribute gifts to people during the festive season. Others include hospitals, orphanages and house visits to local families – many of whom are very poor. Not all are Christians, making it a wonderful way to introduce people to the love of Jesus and, in some cases, it's the first Christmas present people have ever been given.

To Elnura and so many others in Central Asia, your gifts truly are a gift – and in more ways than one. Thank you!

WRITE A LETTER

There's another way you can show children at the deaf

Christian community the love of God – by writing to them! Head to opendoorsuk.org/write to find out more.

PLEASE PRAY

- Give thanks for the impact of this community. Pray for the safe distribution of gifts this Christmas
- That Elnura will continue to flourish in her faith and giftings
- That, this Christmas, more deaf people in Central Asia will see how loved they are by God.

*Names changed for security reasons

Persecuted children

Colombia

Pray for wisdom and strength for all involved in expanding the Open Doors Children's Centre, which provides shelter, pastoral care and an education for Christian children who are at risk of persecution.

Colombia

Pray that children from the Children's Centre who can return home this Christmas will have a joyful time of reunion with their families, and ask God's blessing on celebrations at the centre for those who cannot safely go home.



Apo, Syria

Indonesia

Adi (6) is mocked by other children because he's a Christian. "They said, 'Let's stay away from this Christian. Bye-bye, Christian kid,'" he says. Ask God to honour Adi's courage and protect him from harm, and pray that those who mock him will be changed by his witness.

Indonesia

Christian pupils in public schools are often forced to attend Islamic classes. They also face pressure from classmates to attend the mosque and recite the Muslim creed. Pray that they will remain strong in faith and be equipped to share Jesus with their classmates.

Bibles

Praise God for the thousands of children's Bibles and Christian books given this year. Pray that these resources will be a source of encouragement to young people and their families and help deepen their faith in Jesus.

Syria

Keep praying for Apo (11), whose father Rober was abducted by extremists for his faith. Christmas is a poignant time for Apo and his mum, but he's learning more about his father's faith. Pray he'll know the love of his Heavenly Father in this season.

Syria

Pray for children like Apo who've lost so much during the Syrian war. Give thanks for the many children's programmes run through Centres of Hope, and pray they will bear much fruit in children's lives this Christmas and in the year ahead.

Central Asia

Open Doors partners show Jesus' love to children in rural areas by holding Christmas outreach events and distributing Christmas gifts. Pray that this will be a powerful and effective way of helping children and their families to understand the true message of Christmas.

Bereaved families

Central Asia

Makin* and his three daughters (aged two, eight and 14) recently lost their mother Dilya* after a prolonged illness. Makin's Muslim relatives are saying that Dilya's death is a 'punishment from God' for their conversion to Christianity. Pray for God's comfort, and that Makin's family will have compassion on them.

Single parents

Pray for single parents – especially for mothers whose husbands have been killed for their faith. Ask God to provide for their practical needs, and pray that they will stand firm in their faith for themselves and their children.

Uganda

Waswa* (p12) cares for many orphans in his community. "I decided to teach them the Word of God, restore their hope and raise them as God-fearing children," he says. Pray that these children will know God as their Heavenly Father and will find family at the orphanage.

Iraq

In September, a fire broke out at a Christian wedding in Qaraqosh. Tragically, more than 100 people died. Open Doors partners have been walking with the affected families since then, offering spiritual and practical support. Pray that God will 'comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve' (Isaiah 61:2-3).

Nigeria

Na'aman Stephen Danlami died in September when he was caught inside the rectory of St Raphael's Catholic Church after Fulani militants set the building on fire. Please pray for his grieving family, that God will comfort them this Christmas season and strengthen them in their faith.

Malaysia

This will be Susanna Koh's seventh Christmas since her husband, Pastor Raymond, was abducted by secret state police. The family are currently suing the Malaysian government to seek justice and answers over his disappearance – the trial is ongoing. Pray that Susanna and her children will know God's peace, protection and provision over the next few months.

Syria

Aasif*, Behnam*, Gulraiz*, and Yasaman's* husband were martyred this year for their faith by people in their communities, workplaces, and even their own family. Pray for their families, that God will protect them from discovery and renew their hope in Him this Christmas.

*Names changed for security reasons



From orphan to father of many: Waswa's story

Waswa from Uganda now shares his testimony with vulnerable children – and it's giving them hope

When Waswa* was young, he assumed he would follow in the footsteps of his father – a prominent Muslim leader in the community. But when his mother, Tusiime*, became a Christian, his world turned upside-down. Waswa's father chased him, his mother and his siblings out of the house, and they fled to another region.

For a time, they were homeless. "We slept in unfinished buildings, and we had to beg for food," Waswa remembers. "I felt miserable. It felt like my world was crumbling."

UNBREAKABLE FAITH

One night, Tusiime was beaten and raped by a stranger. It was a traumatic experience for the family – but Waswa was taken aback by his mother's reaction.

"Even after everything she went through, my mother kept trusting in God; we saw her faith and decided to follow Jesus too. We started praying for our situation, and every time we prayed, God sent strangers who gave us food or other help. It gave us hope and made us trust God even more."

Eventually, a church leader took the family in. Tusiime started preaching to their community – and 80 Muslims decided to follow Jesus!

Sadly, the family still had enemies, who bribed one of Waswa's relatives to poison Tusiime. When she died, Waswa and his siblings were plunged into uncertainty again. "We became like orphans," he says.

RESTORING HOPE TO ORPHANS

When Open Doors partners heard about his story, they immediately stepped in to help. Thanks to your prayers and support, Waswa received trauma counselling and was able to complete a degree in Business Administration and Accounting. But his heart was drawn elsewhere.

"Whenever I testify about my life, their hope in Christ is renewed."

"I developed a strong passion for serving vulnerable children," Waswa, now 29, says. He runs an orphanage, caring for and educating the children who live there. "I understand the pain these children go through because I felt it myself. I decided to teach them the Word of God, restore their hope and raise them as God-fearing children."

Waswa's own story is giving hope to many young people in his community: "Whenever I testify about my life, their

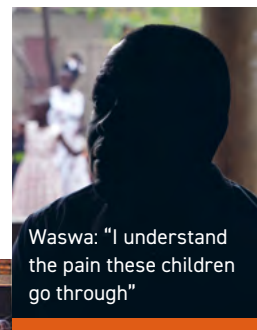
hope in Christ is renewed." He's thankful for the part you played in his story. "I am deeply grateful because you stood with me in prayer."

See Waswa tell his story on Prayer News: opendoorsuk.org/prayernews

PLEASE PRAY

- That God will continue to bless Waswa in his ministry and speak powerfully through his story
- That the children Waswa serves will know God's great love for them
- For Open Doors partners in Uganda as they seek to serve persecuted believers.

*Names changed for security reasons



Waswa: "I understand the pain these children go through"



Waswa saw God transform his life – and now he's helping to transform the lives of others

Refugees and the displaced

Mexico

16

Several believers who were displaced from Plan de Ayala, Chiapas, for their faith are receiving persecution survival training. Despite their situation, they faithfully wait on the Lord. Please pray that they will receive compensation after losing all their belongings when they were displaced.

Niger

17

Many Christians living near the Burkina Faso border have fled their homes after threats by Islamic militants: "Christians should leave within 72 hours or accept Islam." Ask the Lord to strengthen the church in Niger and help believers to remain strong in their faith amid this uncertainty.



Laos

18

Around 16 families were expelled from their communities in 2023, including Vong*, whose tireless evangelism helped bring 40 people to faith. But he and his family lost their house when other community members demolished it in anger. Ask God to provide a new home for them.

Central Asia

19

Thank God for the hospitality of local house churches, which shelter new believers thrown out of home. Pray they reach more Christians in need, and that their love and generosity will be a shining light in their communities.

Armenia

20

In September, Azerbaijan launched a military operation in Nagorno-Karabakh, home to 120,000 ethnic Armenians – including many Christians. Hundreds have died and thousands have fled. Pray for peace and that God will sustain all who are grieving and homeless.

Myanmar

21

Tun Maung*, a local Open Doors partner, was displaced when the coup began in 2021. He and his family fled to a camp for internally displaced people, but many camps have turned into conflict zones. "We are asking for God's protection and our safety," he says.

Natural disasters

22

Pray for all persecuted believers displaced by natural disasters this year – in Afghanistan, Syria, Turkey, Morocco and Libya. Ask God to provide all practical and spiritual support, and pray that the churches in these nations will be strengthened to keep following Jesus.

Central Asia

23

Pray for Open Doors partners serving Afghan Christian refugees with practical and spiritual care. Pray that many Muslim refugees will also hear and receive the gospel through their ministry.

Christmas

Christmas Eve

24

Attacks on Christian communities often happen around Christmas time. Pray that Christmas services will be peaceful and full of hope, and that many will be drawn to Jesus' light through the persecuted church's witness.

Christmas Day

25

"I am very happy during Christmas," says Roshan* (7) in India (see p18 of the Magazine). "I like to sing songs and dance!" Praise God for the joy of Christmas, and pray that it is felt and celebrated by persecuted Christians around the world.



Roshan (re-enactment image)

Boxing Day

26

Pray for families who are separated over Christmas time due to persecution, including those imprisoned, abducted or under house arrest. Pray they know Jesus near to them, and that their hope in God will be renewed and strengthened.

Secret believers

27

Many Christians can't celebrate Christmas publicly for fear of being cast out of their homes or communities. Please pray that God will show them creative ways to connect with other believers over the Christmas period.



Laos

28

Last Christmas, three families committed their lives to Jesus. However, in July, local authorities forced them out of their village. Pray that these believers will not be discouraged in their faith, and that they will find new homes and rebuild their lives.

Philippines

29

Jenny (12) experiences discrimination for her family's tribal group - and their Christian faith. Despite this, she knows her joy comes from Jesus. "I love Christmas because it fills me with happiness," she says. Please pray that Jenny and her family will have joy and peace this Christmas time.

Philippines

30

Literacy classes run by Open Doors partners, thanks to your support, mean Jenny now hopes to be a teacher. "I want to make a positive difference in the lives of others and help others grow in faith," she says. Pray that God will establish His good plans for her.

UK&I

31

Thank you for your faithful prayers for our persecuted church family in 2023. Praise God for His faithfulness! As we step into 2024, pray that we and our persecuted family will be reminded that Jesus' 'goodness and mercy will follow us' all the days of our lives (Psalm 23:6).

*Names changed for security reasons

GOD'S BIG FAMILY

New resource for Sunday school and all-age services

As Christians, we have over two billion sisters and brothers worldwide – that's one BIG family! This wonderful truth is at the heart of a free resource aimed at introducing children to their persecuted family.

God's Big Family is a set of six fun and interactive session outlines centred around the idea that each one of us is a child of God, and therefore we are all brothers and sisters. Aimed at children aged 7-11, the resource introduces children to their church family in Iran, Colombia, North

Korea, Nigeria and Eritrea. Each session includes a short teaching outline, games, videos, crafts, prayers and a take-home resource.

The series is ideal for use by Sunday school teachers and children and family workers. It can also be adapted for all-age services.

Visit **opendoorsuk.org/resources** to download and order everything you need.



OpenDoors

Open Doors, PO Box 6, Witney,
OX29 6WG
T 01993 460015
E contact@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 2023