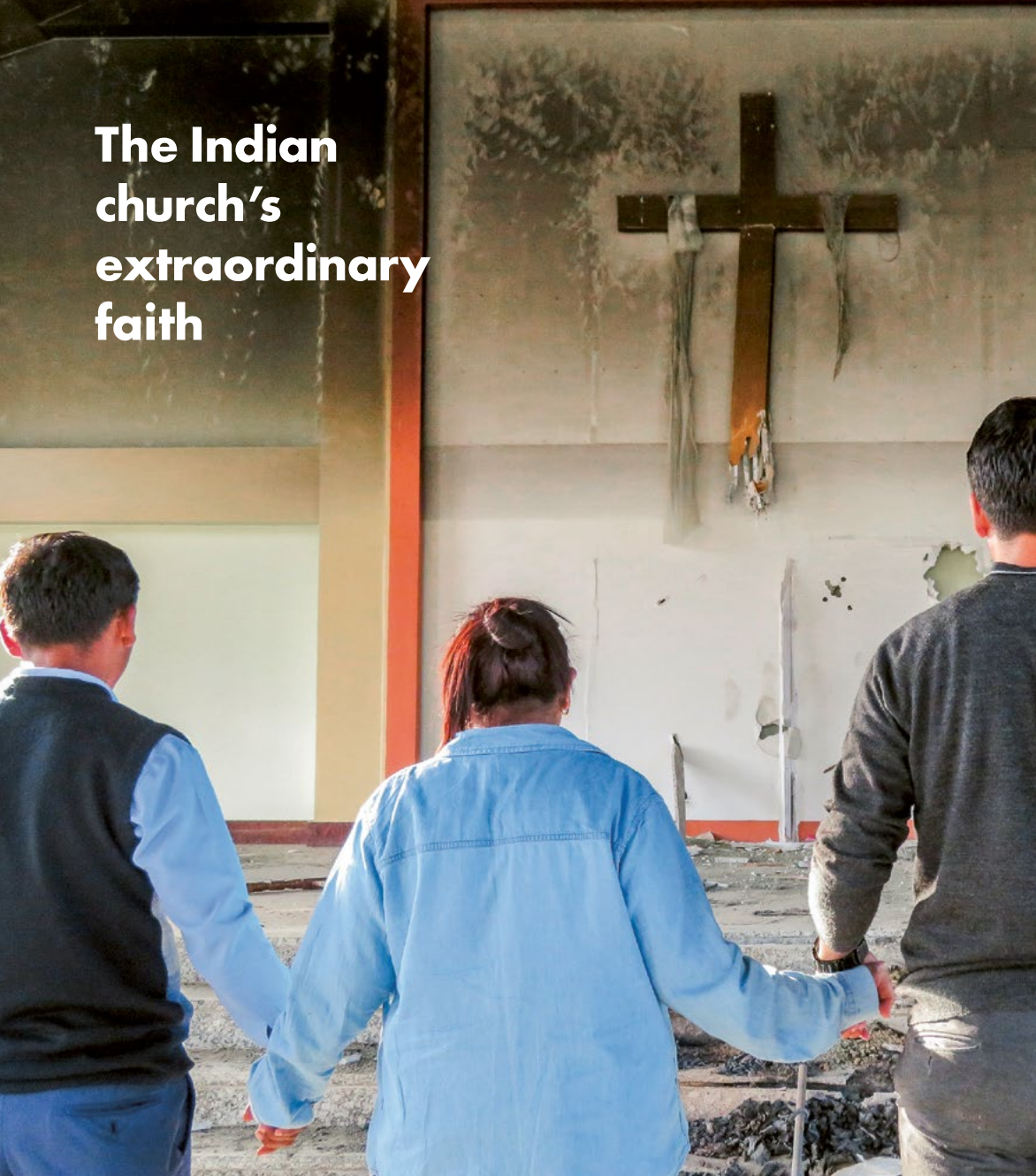


# Open *Doors*

MAGAZINE | May/June 2024

**The Indian  
church's  
extraordinary  
faith**





## WANT TO VOLUNTEER?

Could you use your time, skills and passion to help raise awareness and action for persecuted Christians? Together, we can support those who count the cost of following Jesus. There are so many ways that your help would be greatly appreciated – from being an events volunteer to a prayer group leader to an advocacy rep. Find out more at

[opendoorsuk.org/volunteer](https://opendoorsuk.org/volunteer)

## IN MEMORY GIFTS

When you lose someone you love, you want to make sure that their memory lives on. One meaningful way to do that is supporting a cause dear to them. For many, that is our persecuted church family.

At [opendoorsuk.org/in-memory](https://opendoorsuk.org/in-memory), you can set up a tribute page for your loved one, donate a collection from a funeral, or give to remember a special anniversary.

Your gift supports the persecuted church, and ensures your loved one's legacy lives on.



## Meet the risk-takers

Do you want to worship and pray together, and hear directly from the persecuted church? Standing Strong is touring again in 2024 – sharing inspiring stories of courageous faith across the country.

Head to [opendoorsuk.org/standingstrong](https://opendoorsuk.org/standingstrong) to book onto your nearest event.

### STANDING STRONG

11 MAY / GLASGOW 8 JUNE / BRISTOL  
17 MAY / LONDON 15 JUNE / CARDIFF

Check the website for details of autumn/winter events



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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#### COVER:

Believers gather in a church destroyed during violence in Manipur, India

### LETTER FROM HENRIETTA

## Extraordinary hope

**“I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it.” MATTHEW 16:18 (NLT)**

When I go to church, I can be sure that the police aren't going to try to stop me. I can be pretty confident that I'll return home safely, and my church won't be burned down. That's true for almost all of us in the UK and Ireland. It's not true for Pastor Laxman\* in India.

You can read his extraordinary story on p6. He has faced false accusations, arrest and police beatings simply for sharing his hope in Jesus. He's seen his church destroyed by extremists. And his story is just one of hundreds and hundreds from India – where, in some states, the constitutional right to freedom of religion is ruthlessly ignored. Anti-conversion laws are abused to harass and target Christians (see p9) and, if persecuted Christians go to the police, they are often treated as criminals instead of victims.

But Pastor Laxman is determined to defy his persecutors and persist in his calling. “The church is closed, but my ministry continues,” he says. “This is God's work. No one can close it or shut it down.” What inspiring words!

That same defiant faith echoes across India. Despite persecution, the Indian church is growing. The Holy Spirit is moving in extraordinary ways, and that's in response to the prayers of people like Pastor Laxman – and also the prayers of people like you and me, as the body of Christ around the world.

We need to keep praying and keep supporting the church in India, particularly as the country holds its general elections, which could have a real impact on the freedoms of Christians and other religious minorities. The church may be growing, but it's also facing unprecedented challenges. Today, let's join our Indian brothers and sisters in standing for justice, truth and hope.

Every blessing,



*Henrietta*

Henrietta Blyth  
CEO, Open Doors UK&I

\*Name changed for security reasons

# WORLD WATCH LIST BULLETIN



## UK

### And I would bike 500 miles...

In an incredible feat of perseverance, Kyle Harris from Northern Ireland has completed a cycle ride of 500 miles – roughly the same distance as cycling from one end of North Korea to the other! He was joined for parts of the journey by his two boys, Judah and Seth.

Kyle had opportunities to speak to his colleagues in the police force and managed to raise huge awareness and interest with people in the community. He said that, whenever his legs were tired or in pain, he was motivated and encouraged by the stories of our persecuted brothers and sisters.

Well done, Kyle!

Are you inspired? Find all the help and support you need to get started with your own challenge at [opendoorsuk.org/fundraise](https://opendoorsuk.org/fundraise)

## PHILIPPINES

### Linda trusts God to help her graduate college

Linda\* in the southern Philippines is a Christian woman with a bright future ahead of her – but has been set back after facing discrimination at her Islamic college. She was only a few months away from graduation when her scholarship funding was cut off.

### I trust that God's plan for me is bigger than any challenge."

Her scholarship was initially secured by her pastor, who was friends with the owner of the school. But when the owner passed away, the school told Linda that her scholarship was invalid. "The cashier informed me that the scholarship was no longer supporting Christian students," Linda says. "The help was now exclusively for Muslim students."

But Linda has been determined not to let this shake her faith. "In that moment, I was startled, but I realised that God has been my provider since the beginning, and He will be my provider now."

In the meantime, Linda is also receiving leadership training through local Open Doors partners. "With your help, I've learned to be brave and trust God's plan for me. You have really made a big impact on my life," she says. "Even in the toughest times, my faith is a light that helps me. No matter what problems I face, I trust that God's plan for me is bigger than any challenge."

**PRAY** That God will continue to encourage Linda in her faith and provide all she needs for graduate college.

LEFT Kyle and his sons cycled the equivalent of the length of North Korea; BELOW Thanks to you, Linda is being supported in her faith by Open Doors partners



## MOZAMBIQUE

### Islamic extremist violence increases and displaces thousands

More than 70,000 people have been displaced in northern Mozambique after an increase in attacks by Islamic militants. The violence escalated in Cabo Delgado State when so-called Islamic State (IS) attacked security forces and killed 20 soldiers. Since then, they've gone on to destroy whole villages, with civilians kidnapped and even killed.

Maria\* (20) was living with her father and her uncle when Islamic militants burned down their home. She fled with her two-year-old daughter, but later learned that her father and uncle hadn't survived. This isn't the first time she's suffered at the hands of extremists – she lost her mother in an attack four years earlier. Maria has since found refuge with a Christian family.

"We are horrified by the latest attacks in northern Mozambique," says Joshua Williams\*, who leads Open Doors' work in sub-Saharan Africa. "These attacks confirm... the IS expansionist agenda to systematically gain control of large swathes of strategic land.

"We call on Mozambique and her international partners to acknowledge the scale and seriousness of the situation, while transparently and diligently working at addressing the root causes through both military and non-military means," he continues. "The situation in northern Mozambique has the potential to destabilise the larger region and break down cohesion among people of different faiths."

**PRAY** That God will restore peace to Mozambique and bring healing to those affected by these attacks.

\*Names changed for security reasons

ABOVE The majority of the tens of thousands of people displaced in Mozambique are women and children

## MYANMAR

### Mother and daughter have new start thanks to you

When Daw Mar\* and her daughter Lyn\* became Christians, their Buddhist family felt insulted by their decision to accept a 'foreign faith'. They were thrown out of their home and became extremely vulnerable to abuse and hardship – but thanks to you, local Open Doors partners stepped in to provide a home, groceries and spiritual support.

"The journey for Daw Mar and Lyn is just beginning," explains one partner. "They were courageous to accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour."

**PRAY** For Daw Mar and Lyn to heal and find a new Christian community.

## MORE STORIES ONLINE

- India steps up 'anti-Christian' laws
- Hope and restoration for women in Cameroon
- Indian couple threatened and attacked

Head to [opendoorsuk.org/news](https://opendoorsuk.org/news) or follow us @opendoorsuk for more news and updates



A man in a white shirt is seen from the back, holding a brown Bible. He is standing in a sunlit forest with trees and a path. The background is bright and slightly blurred, suggesting a peaceful outdoor setting.

# The church built on *miracles* that extremists tried to destroy

Pastor Laxman\* won't abandon the vision that God has given him. That's not a commitment he makes lightly. His church in north India has been destroyed by extremists. He's been imprisoned, beaten and falsely accused. But he is determined to serve God in his community. With your help, he can keep going.

#### MIRACULOUS HEALING

It's clear that God has a plan for Pastor Laxman and his church. The path has been hard, with much opposition – but it is also a path of miracles.

"I was born and brought up in a strong Hindu family," he says. Nothing challenged this faith until his wife, Latika\*, got very ill. Doctors couldn't help her, and the prayers of Hindu priests and occultists made no difference. Finally, reluctantly, he took his wife to a church. Latika was already a believer, but Laxman was very resistant. What happened at the church would forever change Laxman's life.

Christians prayed over Latika – and she began healing! "When my wife received healing with just one prayer at the church, I understood that her God was a God who answered prayers," Laxman says. "As I began to understand the

\*Names changed for security reasons  
Images are from a re-enactment of Pastor Laxman's story, unless stated otherwise

power of this God, I was determined to spread His message of truth to as many people as possible.”

**GOD’S VISION**

Laxman was keen to start a church. “God showed me a vision about a place – I had never seen that place before,” he says. As the couple prayed, it became clear this was where God wanted Laxman to build.

The church started out small – just three people. But Laxman knew he was telling people about an active, living God. Having witnessed a miracle in his own life, he started praying for miracles for others.

The Lord blessed this ministry. “I met a man who was suffering from epilepsy,” Laxman remembers.

**“I was determined to spread His message of truth to as many people as possible.”**

“He used to have attacks five times a day. I met and prayed with him – after a few months, he was completely healed.” The man decided to follow Jesus.

This is just one of many miraculous healings Laxman saw – including his own unborn baby daughter, who was declared dead in Latika’s womb. “I did not lose heart and I continued to pray,” he says. “What I witnessed was another miracle: the doctors helped my wife deliver a live baby girl.”

**CHURCH GROWTH**

Word spread about what God was doing in Pastor Laxman’s church. From a handful of believers, the church grew to hundreds. Across India, many churches are reporting the same extraordinary growth. But growth has a flipside: it catches the attention of extremists.

In the area where Laxman lives, Hindu extremists are trying to eradicate Christianity. People like Laxman and others in his congregation, who’ve chosen to leave Hinduism and follow Jesus, are particularly vulnerable to persecution. These extremists were angry – and had an underhand method of targeting Laxman.

“They made a police complaint against me, accusing me of luring people to Christianity using money,” he says. “I was called to the police station, where I was told that – if I continued my ministry – I would be buried alive on my land.” Pastor Laxman remained defiant. He retorted, “I will build a church on this land.”

**“SIGN THIS PAPER”**

Why were extremists able to make this complaint? Pastor

Laxman’s state is one of 12 in India that have passed anti-conversion laws (see box). These are mostly in states where the BJP are in power, and Christians in India know the national elections could impact religious freedom more widely. On the face of it, these anti-conversion laws exist to prevent forced conversion. In reality, they’re often abused to falsely accuse religious minorities, disproportionately Christians.

When the police couldn’t find any evidence against Laxman, they decided to fabricate some. “The extremists called a believer from my church to



Police coerced a member of the congregation into incriminating Laxman

Pastor Laxman has baptised many new believers into his church



**WHAT ARE ANTI-CONVERSION LAWS?**

*Priya Sharma\*, an Open Doors partner in India, explains how anti-conversion laws are being abused to target Christians.*

“Under Indian law, citizens are free to choose their religion. Anti-conversion laws were introduced with the intention to ban conversion by force or by offering incentives to change faiths. But Hindu extremist groups misuse the law.

“These extremists lodge false complaints at the police station, getting the pastor arrested, enmeshed in legal battles and even sent to prison. This causes people to believe that Christians and other religious minorities are ‘anti-Indian’.

“In 2023, more than 2,300 pastors, leaders and believers were falsely accused, arrested and detained for forceful conversion.

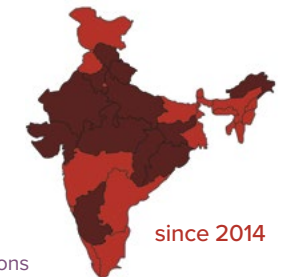
“Anti-conversion laws already existed in several states before the BJP came into power in the national government, but since they formed their government, anti-conversion laws or bills have been imposed in five more states. There have even been several attempts to pass a national anti-conversion law.

“The main prayers of the church are to have a safe place to gather and worship, freedom of religion and for the nation to know Christ and His love.”

\*Name changed for security reasons

**States of India with anti-conversion laws**

■ States with anti-conversion laws



the police station,” Laxman says. “He was threatened that his house would be destroyed unless he signed a blank piece of paper.”

He was terrified and agreed to sign. The persecutors now had all they needed to fake a confession. “The ‘confession’ said I had lured him to Christianity, promising him money,” Laxman says.

**“The church is closed but my ministry continues. This is God’s work. No one can close it or shut it down.”**

The next day, the police came to the church to seize Pastor Laxman. He remembers: “We were conducting a prayer meeting with 250 people when six or seven policemen came all of a sudden and arrested me. They started beating me.” Laxman was put in jail, where police continued to beat him brutally. While he was in prison, extremists destroyed his church building. “They attacked it the same day I was arrested,” he says.

**GOD’S FAITHFULNESS**

Laxman’s hope for his ministry was under threat. But God had given Laxman a vision for his church and wasn’t going to abandon him now. In his cell, Laxman heard the Lord speaking.

“I hear a sweet voice, saying, ‘Do not be afraid, for I am with you,’” Laxman remembers. God used the words of Isaiah 41:10 to encourage and sustain Laxman. “I felt a rush of peace inside my heart, and I found strength to go through all the pain.”

After six days, Pastor Laxman was released. Most of his congregation had dispersed – fearful of what the police or extremists might do to them. When Open Doors local partners heard what had happened, they came immediately. It was vital to show Laxman he wasn’t alone.

The persecution also had a severe impact on his family’s income and ability to survive. “I was entirely dependent on tithes for my family and I faced a lot of problems with housing,” he says. “We were even struggling for food. Open Doors partners – whom I never knew before this incident – provided my family with groceries and helped us start a

small farm. They helped us financially and strengthened us with prayer and the Word of God.”

**THANK YOU**

He is so grateful: “We had been so mentally traumatised and their presence revived us. Had they not been there, we would have been completely shattered and would have suffered in so many different ways.

“I would like to thank God firstly, who sent strangers to help me in such a way – and these people who are helping us so much, I would like to thank them from the bottom of my heart.”

With your support and prayers, Open Doors partners can continue to sustain Pastor Laxman and his family with encouragement and have helped him set up a chicken farm, for ongoing income for him and his community. Laxman has hope that his church building will eventually be rebuilt. For now, he is still shepherding his congregation. “There are

Believers are still meeting in secret, as police are monitoring the church

You can watch a video of Pastor Laxman’s story at [opendoorsuk.org](http://opendoorsuk.org)



Open Doors partners are helping Pastor Laxman and his community set up a chicken farm to generate income (image shows real Laxman)

only 40 people now, who secretly gather for prayers,” he says. They meet in small groups, because the police continue to monitor Laxman and his church.

**You can support Pastor Laxman’s vision**

Laxman remains defiant and faithful. “They can break the church building and send us to jail and beat us up. But they cannot separate us from Jesus or stop us from following Jesus,” he says. “It is only in my God that you can find peace, joy and healing. The church is closed but my ministry continues. This is God’s work. No one can close it or shut it down. It is for the Kingdom of the Lord.”

Pastor Laxman is determined to persevere. He can do that with your support and your prayers. Across many parts of India, there are countless pastors like Laxman who also need your help – who

are defying persecutors and faithfully praying. Will you stand with them today?

“If Open Doors supporters stopped caring, praying and giving, the situation would worsen in India,” says a local Open Doors partner. “Christians will continue to live in a miserable state, the perpetrators will continue to persecute and Christians could be wiped out completely.”

Extremists are trying to destroy the church in India. You can join courageous Indian believers like Pastor Laxman in making sure they don’t succeed.

**PLEASE PRAY**

Please join with the prayer that Pastor Laxman shared with Open Doors partners:

*“Thank You, Living Lord, we praise Your name and we pray for India. Lord, we pray for the church as we are in sad and persecuting times,*

*and are not able to minister properly. Please change this situation so we may be free and pray openly, that there may be no problems and hurdles, and we may spread Your Word to all corners of India. Please bless us, Lord, and have mercy on us. Amen.”*

You can find more prayer points for India in your prayer diary.

**PLEASE GIVE**

You can make a gift to support believers like Pastor Laxman at [opendoorsuk.org](http://opendoorsuk.org)

- **Every £20** could provide training for ten believers, equipping them with a biblical response to persecution.
- **Every £30** could provide emergency food aid to two believers in India affected by violent persecution.
- **Every £47** could help a persecuted community establish their livelihood, giving them long-term financial security.

**PLEASE SPEAK OUT**

You can ask your MP to act now on global freedom of religion or belief and freedom to worship – find out how at [opendoorsuk.org/advocacy](http://opendoorsuk.org/advocacy)

**PLEASE WRITE**

You can show Pastor Laxman that he isn’t alone by sending him a message of hope online. Find out how you can encourage this faithful brother and other Indian Christians at [opendoorsuk.org/write](http://opendoorsuk.org/write)



# A day in the life of an Open Doors partner

## Cho's dangerous journey in Myanmar

What do we mean by 'Open Doors partner' and how do they respond to the needs of persecuted Christians? You're invited behind the scenes to see how Open Doors partners like Cho\* serve the persecuted church – thanks to your prayers and support.

Across the world, Open Doors partners take great risks to visit persecuted believers – with emergency aid, trauma care, presence ministry or vital training. Sometimes that means getting on a motorbike.

Cho is undeterred by long distances, dramatic weather conditions or terrible roads. He's determined to get to brothers and sisters who need his help. "There are times I need to cross rivers without a bridge, even at night,"

he says. "Even though the journey is hard, there is joy."

What does Cho do? As a local Open Doors partner, he sets off on dangerous, 12-hour journeys to support vulnerable Christian communities in remote places. In his luggage is a precious box of Open Doors materials to equip his church family with persecution survival training.

### "Your prayers are our protection."

#### COUNTING THE COST

Sometimes whole churches or organisations act as Open Doors partners – and sometimes it's people like Cho, travelling alone or in small groups. For each, ministry comes with cost. For Cho, leaving his wife and five children is always tough.

"When we are preparing for the journey, my wife is always worried about me," Cho shares. "She advises me to be careful about how I speak when I preach the gospel. She urges our children, 'You have to pray for your father.' She worries about me facing dangers like persecution."

The caution is understandable. The civil war in Myanmar has increased dangers for everyone, and it's also exacerbated the persecution Christians face. Cho has to pass through checkpoints almost every kilometre – manned by either military or civilian rebels. Young men with guns check for identification and take tolls. It's a tense experience. But the journey is worth the cost.

#### DAILY PERSECUTION

Even before the coup, Christians in Myanmar faced

daily persecution. "On our identity card, it's written that our tribe is Chin and our religion is Christian," he says. "When people in Myanmar see it, we are discriminated against."

The Myanmar military also has a long history of oppressing Cho's Chin Christian tribe. Chin churches have been forcibly closed and believers are beaten and threatened constantly. Cho says, "When the military comes to our village, they make us carry heavy loads day and night without pay. We need to obey them. We don't have a choice."

#### CHO'S TRANSFORMATION

Even though Cho's heart was filled with anger, the Lord transformed him when he attended Open Doors persecution survival training. "What really struck me was the teaching to not take revenge, and to love our enemy," he says. "When I see from the Bible that persecution is part of a believer's life, I learned that



Cho strengthens Christians in remote communities across Myanmar, praying with them and teaching them

we need to accept whatever happens to us. So, that's why I can forgive them."

Many Open Doors partners choose to connect with the organisation because they know how persecution feels. They aren't outsiders to these vulnerable communities – rather, they have a knowledge of the context, needs and lives of the persecuted church. Cho wants to help people facing what he faces.

#### "YOUR PRAYERS ARE OUR PROTECTION"

That's what makes these risky journeys worthwhile. He is taking valuable training to vulnerable Christian communities – and he is bringing encouragement and joy too. "After travelling 10-12 hours, when we finally meet each other, we are so very happy!" he says. "When we see the people smiling and eagerly waiting for us, it strengthens me to be able to teach. We love our people,

so the things we know, we want to share with them."

Like all Open Doors partners, Cho is sustained by your prayers. "Though we do not know [Open Doors supporters], though they do not know us, they are praying for us and they are supporting us. We are in the body of Christ, united with each other.

"Your prayers are our protection and we feel your presence. Prayers back us up, push us during the journey, and encourage us to go on."

#### PLEASE PRAY

- For all Open Doors partners as they count the cost of serving the persecuted church
- That persecuted believers would know they are in a worldwide body of Christ.

\*Names changed for security reasons

# God's love on display in Manipur



On 3 May 2023, ethno-religious violence between Kuki and Meitei groups broke out in Manipur, India. Christians on both sides of the conflict were disproportionately affected. More than 400 churches were burned down, and tens of thousands of people have been displaced. Thanks to you, Open Doors partners are continuing to meet the needs of these believers.

"Life is tough in these camps. People want to go back home but cannot."

As Ravi\* took Open Doors partners around the relief camp on their latest trip to distribute aid, he explained the situation. "Though it seems that the violence has subsided, strife at the border areas between Kuki and Meitei people groups still persists. People are afraid to

return to their houses, hence they continue staying in the refugee camps."

**"I saw the love of God through what people all over the world were sharing with us."**

## GATHERING FOR WORSHIP IN THE CAMPS

"Since there is no proper income source for people in the camp, they continue to depend upon relief distribution programmes," says Ravi. "Sometimes they are out of food, but God has always sent someone to meet their needs. We are thankful that Open Doors partners have continued to help these camps with food and basic needs."

"Amidst the war and violence, these people continue to

gather every evening for prayer and fellowship," he continues. "I think God wants to gather His people to listen to Him and trust Him more, despite the disheartening circumstances."

Among those who fled were pregnant women, like Esther\*. "I was eight months pregnant; it was the most difficult time of my life," she says. "I had to run through jungles. I had a four-year-old daughter also with me, but I was extremely worried for my unborn child; I wondered whether I would be able to keep him alive."

"By God's grace I gave birth to my baby recently. It gives me so much joy to hold him in my arms and see him safe. Thank you so much for your help with all the relief items; they are so much needed."

## TRUSTING IN GOD'S PLANS

In another camp, Hoinu\* shares how she escaped

from her hometown of Imphal, currently occupied by Hindu extremists. She now lives in a hall with 63 Kuki families – around 270 people in all.

Something particularly painful for Hoinu about the 3 May attacks is that she knew the attackers. "We shared festivals," she says. "Meitei festivals or Kuki festivals, we share our goods, our food together. I recognise them. They are the ones smashing our windows, our vehicles, our goods and our things."

Although traumatised, Hoinu is choosing to put her trust in Jesus. "Whenever I read the Bible, I have peace in my mind that God is planning something good for us. I trust in God and my hope is that God will help us, God will guide us."

She is grateful, not just for the relief aid, but for the presence of Open Doors partners and your prayers. "It's not just the

groceries, not just the food, but you have come to listen to us. Sharing with you, it takes away our mental pressure. Thank you."

## "PLEASE CONTINUE PRAYING FOR US"

Thanks to your ongoing prayers and support, Open Doors partners are continuing to reach out and provide for our brothers and sisters from Manipur.

In Ravi's camp, Thang\* says, "Violence was extreme in my village. They burnt down our houses, churches, and everything. One of my friends was also murdered brutally."

"When I had to flee from the village, I was terribly angry, I wanted revenge. However, when we came to the relief camp, I saw the love of God through what people all over the world were sharing with us. We want to thank everyone who has helped us through prayers and

emergency support. Please continue praying for us."

## PRAY:

- For God's continued provision for those sheltering in refugee camps and that they will soon return home
- That God will comfort believers, bring healing and renew their faith
- For strength and wisdom for local Open Doors partners as they serve believers in Manipur.

## JOIN US IN A WEEK OF PRAYER FOR MANIPUR

From 3-9 May, you can join in praying for our persecuted church family from Manipur. Go to [opendoorsuk.org/india](https://opendoorsuk.org/india) to find a week of prayer points.

\*Names changed for security reasons



Thanks to you, Open Doors partners are supporting believers in Manipur, such as Hoinu, Esther and Thang PICTURED, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT





# Meet the risk-takers of the persecuted church

You're invited to join us for a unique and uplifting experience as Open Doors supporters gather across the UK and Ireland to hear from our persecuted family, pray with them and worship God.

**Would you like to deepen your relationship with your persecuted family and be strengthened in your faith? Would you like to be encouraged at the extraordinary difference your prayers and support are making worldwide?**

Standing Strong is again coming to a region near you, giving you the precious opportunity to gather with others to meet your persecuted family. They'll share their inspirational stories and answer your questions, and you'll be able to pray with them.

## MEET JOSEPH AND MANGA

This year's speakers include Joseph\* from Vietnam, who will be at the events in Bristol and Cardiff in June. Having worked as a missionary and in church planting, Joseph now works to strengthen the persecuted church and will share challenging and encouraging stories of his

ministry. The past year has seen an increase in the number of violent attacks on believers and church buildings in Vietnam, and more church leaders arrested for their faith.

**"I would urge everyone to attend Standing Strong this year!"**

- STANDING STRONG ATTENDEE, 2023

Later in the year, Manga from Nigeria (PICTURED OPPOSITE) will be speaking at the

Northern Ireland and East Midlands events. He survived being knifed when Boko Haram militants attacked his family home in 2012, but his father was tragically killed. "At first, we were shy of these scars," says Manga, whose brother was also wounded. "But later we came to realise it is a testimony. It is evidence of the existence of God."



attended Standing Strong in Cambridge last year," shares Rev. Bethany Burrage from Cheshunt. "The testimonies were deeply moving and we felt humbled and honoured to hear those who have suffered so much and yet walk in such faith."

She adds: "The interactive prayer time had a huge impact. As a result, my friend began a monthly prayer meeting for the persecuted church, and I am now leading a Bible study for a couple of asylum seeker families living in our local hotel. I would urge everyone to attend Standing Strong this year."

## A DEEPER CONNECTION

This year's World Watch List shows that the persecution of Christians worldwide continues to worsen, but the church keeps growing. It's testament to the power of the gospel, as well as the crucial role you play in helping believers to persevere in following Jesus and telling others about Him.

## "The speaker's faith and joy were infectious."

- STANDING STRONG ATTENDEE, 2023

That's why events like Standing Strong are invaluable, because they drive a deeper connection to your persecuted family that increases your impact on their everyday lives – and that helps the kingdom of God to keep growing, even in places where the dangers of following Jesus are most extreme, like North Korea.

"My teenage daughter and I, along with a friend,

## BOOK YOUR PLACE!

Tickets for the day events are £10 (£7 for under 18s) and it's £7 for the evening event in London. A 10% group discount is available when buying five or more tickets. To book your place and find out more about your nearest event (including updates on confirmed speakers), head to [opendoorsuk.org/standingstrong](https://opendoorsuk.org/standingstrong), where you'll also find an FAQ section for any questions you might have. We'd love to see you!

\*Name changed for security reasons

## STANDING STRONG Where's your nearest event?

### SCOTLAND

Saturday 11 May  
Findlay Church, Glasgow

### LONDON

Friday 17 May  
Kensington Temple Church

### SOUTH WEST

Saturday 8 June  
B&A Church, Bristol

### WALES

Saturday 15 June  
Rhiwbina Baptist Church, Cardiff

### SOUTH EAST

Saturday 21 September  
Christ Church, Tunbridge Wells

### NORTHERN IRELAND

Saturday 5 October  
Lagan Valley Vineyard, Lisburn

### EAST MIDLANDS

Saturday 12 October  
Alive Church, Lincoln

### WEST MIDLANDS

Saturday 2 November  
Anchor Point Church, Birmingham

### NORTHERN ENGLAND

Saturday 9 November  
City Church, Newcastle



## The power of persevering prayer inspires Khamla's courageous faith

Khamla\* and his wife have seen both miracles and persecution as Christians. When they had their first child, the doctor told them either mother or son would die – but both survived. It was yet another answer to persevering prayer for the couple from Laos, helping fuel a faith that has brought opposition from even their own family.

They were first drawn to Christianity when a friend, knowing that both suffered from long-term sickness, visited them to tell them

about God's healing power. After giving their lives to Jesus, Khamla – who was diagnosed with a heart condition growing up – began praying for his health. A year later, he felt healthier and stronger.

Inspired by this, Khamla began praying fervently for his wife, who had severe pneumonia. "We waited for two years and the Lord answered our prayers," he recalls. "My wife was healed."

### FEAR AND FAITH

The couple dreamt of having their own child but, because

of their health issues, they feared it would never happen. But seeing God's healing power encouraged them to try. Khamla's wife fell pregnant, much to the astonishment of their doctor. "Are you guys crazy?!" he asked them. "She will give birth, but either she or her child will die."

As fears resurfaced, Khamla felt God speak to him: "Believe in Me, My son; you know I can do all things." His wife went on to give birth to a healthy son. "They no longer needed treatment," he says. "I have seen God's presence

and how He worked miracles."

Overjoyed, Khamla couldn't stop telling villagers about Jesus. This was when they first encountered persecution. They were even driven from their home, ending up hundreds of kilometres away with relatives. But they weren't safe there either. After sharing the gospel with them, they were thrown out again – and this time they had to live in the forest for two months.

### THE SOLACE OF PRAYER

"I never considered giving up on God, but there was a time when I wanted to die, asking God to take my life, because this world is too much for me to handle," admits Khamla, adding that prayer has been a lifeline for him. "Every time I'm feeling down, I pray to the Lord, and His voice is always with me."

### "I have seen God's presence and how He worked miracles."

Today, helped by training by Open Doors local partners, Khamla is an itinerant preacher. It's risky and he must be discreet, but Khamla is undeterred. He knows that the persecution he faces is a cost worth paying for knowing Jesus and sharing the good news. "Despite occasional exhaustion and loneliness, I enjoy travelling and sharing God's Word," he says. "I must tell others about the gospel."

\*Name changed for security reasons

## PAUSE

Read James 5:13-20

The passage is often used to highlight the power of prayer, but what's sometimes overlooked is the reference to praying 'earnestly' – which can be challenging.



ABOVE Open Doors local partners pray with Khamla and his family

## PONDER

- It was a year before Khamla saw his prayer for health answered, and two years for his wife. But he persevered in prayer – just as Elijah did in 1 Kings 18:41-46, the story referred to in James. In what situations do you need to persevere?
- Notice the role prayer plays in Khamla's life when he's sad. His prayer life is rich because he has wrestled in prayer with God, deepening his relationship with the Lord. How can this encourage you when you feel your prayers are unanswered?
- On 19 May, many of us will be celebrating Pentecost and the power of the Holy Spirit in not just the early church, but the church worldwide today. Khamla's life is a lovely reminder of this. How can you open yourself up more to the work of the Holy Spirit in your life?

## PRAY

"When I see people, I share how the Lord healed my family as my testimony of God's love for us," says Khamla. **Ask the Holy Spirit to lead Khamla to people with receptive hearts.**

Laos was one of the biggest risers on the latest World Watch List, jumping ten places to 21, largely due to a sharp increase in violence. **Ask God to protect believers and comfort those affected by persecution.**

The rise in persecution coincides with more people coming to know Jesus. **Praise God for this, and pray that more people will encounter Jesus through people like Khamla.**

Engage with more devotions based on courageous believers, like Khamla, in the *World Watch List Top 50* booklet. **Order your free copy at [opendoorsuk.org/wwl](http://opendoorsuk.org/wwl)**



**Something extraordinary**  
**is happening in India.**

**Be part of it.**

Re-enactment image

## **Help ordinary Christians in India facing intense persecution.**

Pastor Laxman\* was falsely accused of forcing people to be Christians. He was arrested and sent to jail, and his church was destroyed by extremists. "We were even struggling for food," he says. Ordinary church leaders in parts of India face this brutal persecution every day. But your support can help them persevere.

"If Open Doors supporters stopped caring, praying and giving, the situation would worsen in India," says

an Open Doors partner. "Christians could be wiped out completely."

**Your gift of £30 could do something extraordinary today** – providing emergency food aid to two believers in India affected by violent persecution.

Visit [opendoorsuk.org](https://opendoorsuk.org) to make a gift today, return the enclosed envelope or phone **01993 460015**. Thank you.

\*Name changed for security reasons

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