

# Open *Doors*

MAGAZINE | July/August 2026



**Meet the  
underground  
church in China p8**

## ARISE AFRICA: SIGN AND SHARE!



Open Doors supporters like you have ensured that we're well over halfway to our global target of 1 million signatures on the *Arise Africa* petition. So far, more than 615,000 people have signed, calling for peace, justice and restoration for our family in sub-Saharan Africa.

### Let's get all the way to a million!

Do keep sharing the *Arise Africa* petition with your church, family and friends. Find out more at [opendoorsuk.org/ariseafrica](https://opendoorsuk.org/ariseafrica).



## FREE CHILDREN'S RESOURCES

Looking for activities to entertain children this summer holiday? Hoping to gently introduce them to their persecuted church family?

Order your free resources for children, grandchildren, godchildren or children in your church! You'll find a wide range of thought-provoking and enjoyable ways to help them learn, pray and engage with their brothers and sisters around the world.

Order today at [opendoorsuk.org/children](https://opendoorsuk.org/children)



## LEAVE A LEGACY OF HOPE

You can give your persecuted family hope of a brighter future by including a gift to Open Doors in your Will. Your gift will mean a lifetime of support for those who suffer for following Jesus.

If you have not yet made a Will, you can make one for FREE using our partner *Farewill*.

To find out more, go to [opendoorsuk.org/legacy](https://opendoorsuk.org/legacy) or phone 01993 460015.



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: Jinyi\* runs an underground house church in China, and knows the authorities could raid at any time (reenactment image)

\*Names changed for security reasons

## LETTER FROM HENRIETTA

### Take heart and wait

**“Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.” PSALM 27:14**

When I read Jinyi's\* story from China (p8), I am strongly reminded of the early church. She and her church community are shamed as trouble-makers, targeted by the authorities, even imprisoned – and they still keep going. I'm reminded not just of Paul, Peter, Silas and other New Testament figures who spent time in prison – but of their communities outside, often unnamed, who were faithfully worshipping, praying and waiting expectantly for God to move.

Jinyi's husband, Zhang\*, is still in prison – and Jinyi has experienced so many of the weapons that the enemy uses against God's people. She has experienced isolation, grief, doubt and loss. But her story also shows how God uses Open Doors local partners to bring life where the enemy tries to steal, kill and destroy. Our partners bring community, hope and faith to people like Jinyi. God is working through us to restore and renew their ministry.

You and I can learn so much from people like Jinyi – and we can also be part of God's plan to encourage and strengthen the underground church in China and in other countries where the church faces the smash and squeeze of persecution. Your support and prayers today show Jinyi, and others like her, that they may have to meet in secret and underground – but they are still a vital and cherished part of the global body of Christ.

Every blessing,



*Henrietta*

**Henrietta Blyth**  
CEO, Open Doors UK&I

P.S. I'll say a proper farewell in the next magazine, but I wanted to give a heartfelt thank you to all of you who got in touch after I announced I would be stepping down as CEO in September. Your messages enormously touched me – just as, throughout my years with Open Doors, your prayers have massively encouraged and strengthened me. Thank you so much.

# WORLD WATCH LIST BULLETIN



A group of young believers gather to pray in China

## CHINA

### Hope reignited

Your support has reignited the faith and calling of a youth worker in China after persecution left him drained and discouraged.

Yong Shi\* is a youth worker, serving in an environment where under-18s are forbidden from involvement in religious activities. Despite the risks – with meetings underground and parents hesitant of involving their children – Yong Shi has bravely persevered.

**“The light in my heart turned on again.”**

However, when the authorities raided a meeting, seized materials and arrested him in 2024, Yong Shi was forced to disband his youth group.

“My deep love for the ministry, my concern for the teenagers, my confusion about God’s calling, my self-doubt and my unwillingness to accept the oppression – it left me heartbroken, drained, depressed and lonely,” he admits.

Open Doors local partners heard about Yong Shi’s situation, visiting him frequently to provide practical, spiritual and emotional support. “A great relief came to my heart after sharing my burdens with friends from Open Doors. The light in my heart turned on again, and the hope of belief came back. I was inspired and the whole new person in me was ignited by the love of the Lord.”

**PRAY** for wisdom, courage and protection for youth workers in China, like Yong Shi.

## UK

### Sophie’s cycle smashes target

A young supporter in Northern Ireland emphatically smashed her fundraising target of £105 for a 50km cycle ride by going on to raise an incredible £3,425 for her persecuted family!

“I learnt about Open Doors in Sunday Club,” says Sophie McKinstry (BELOW), who attends Maze Presbyterian Church. “This inspired me to celebrate my ninth birthday with a fundraiser to support their work. I feel very fortunate for my freedom, but sad for those who are persecuted for their faith in Jesus.”

Do you have a fundraising story to share? Let us know by emailing [contact@opendoorsuk.org](mailto:contact@opendoorsuk.org). If you’d like to explore a challenge of your own, get started at [opendoorsuk.org/fundraising](https://opendoorsuk.org/fundraising).



## NIGERIA

### 386 criminals brought to justice

In good news from Nigeria, 386 people have been brought to account for terrorism-related offences. The development helps meet a key aim of the *Arise Africa* campaign, namely a call for justice through fair prosecution of those who violently attack Christian communities.

The charges included taking part in attacks, funding them, supplying arms or giving logistical support. Of the 508 cases considered, 386 were convicted, eight discharged, two acquitted and 112 cases kept for future trials.

“We welcome the Nigerian government’s increasing efforts to hold perpetrators accountable,” said John Samuel\*, Open Doors legal expert for work in sub-Saharan Africa. “However, given the scale of violence and the persistence of insecurity, we urge the government to do more in ensuring protection of civilians and intensify its actions to ensure accountability.”

**PRAY** that this development will be a building block for greater justice in Nigeria.

## PAKISTAN

### Outrage for Christian girl

A 13-year-old Christian girl has been sent back to live with her captor under a government order, sparking outrage across Pakistan.

After being abducted in July 2025, Maria Shabaz was forcibly converted and married to a 30-year-old Muslim man. Her father filed a petition to rescue his daughter. However, the Federal Constitutional Court has since ruled against the parents.

Christian rights advocates and civil society groups state that key evidence has been disregarded, whilst a 37-member national consultative committee has been created to review the case and current legislation around forced conversions and marriages. Christian girls are particularly vulnerable to forced marriage, and it is used as a tool of persecution.

**PRAY** for the decision to be overturned and for stronger legislation to prevent similar incidents.



## IRAN

### Believer released from prison

In a wonderful answer to prayer, Amir-Ali Minaei (ABOVE) has been released from Tehran’s Evin Prison as part of an annual amnesty.

As you might recall, Amir-Ali was sentenced to three years and seven months in prison in March 2024 for involvement in establishing a house church. It was later reduced to two years and six months.

During his imprisonment, Amir-Ali suffered physical assault by a prison guard and developed a serious heart condition, believed to be caused by the stress of his detention and ongoing pressure. He also went on a hunger strike in protest against his treatment.

**PRAY** for Amir-Ali’s recovery and for the release of more Christian prisoners.

### More stories

- 5 ways to pray for Mali
- Hope amidst despair in Sudan
- Christians in India given ultimatum

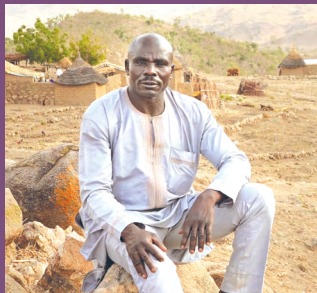
Head to [opendoorsuk.org/news](https://opendoorsuk.org/news) or follow us @[opendoorsuk](https://twitter.com/opendoorsuk) for more news and updates



# A CRUCIAL MOMENT OF PRAYER FOR OUR PERSECUTED FAMILY

Every year, thousands of Christians around the world join together for the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church (IDOP). This year's day of prayer comes at a crucial time for Open Doors – shortly before we present the *Arise Africa* petition to the UK government and the UN, calling for peace, justice and restoration for the church in sub-Saharan Africa.

**This is a pivotal moment for the campaign. Will you and your church join in prayer?**



ABOVE Pastor Hamza supports his community in Cameroon, where they face violence and displacement

The *Arise Africa* campaign has already had a major impact in raising awareness of the terrible persecution that is happening in sub-Saharan Africa. When the

African church first called for the campaign, nobody was talking about it. But thanks to your support, people are starting to sit up and take notice.

### PRAY FOR THE PETITION

This year's day of prayer is Sunday 1 November. With the *Arise Africa* petition due to be presented to the UK government, the UN and other important decision-makers shortly afterwards, you and your church are invited to spend this year's IDOP praying with our African church family.

Could you include a time of prayer in your service on the day, or perhaps even organise a special IDOP prayer event?

To help you and your church in your prayers, you can order or download a set of free resources at [opendoorsuk.org/idop](http://opendoorsuk.org/idop):

- An outline for prayer during your church service or prayer event
- An inspiring PowerPoint and video
- Prayer requests from our African church family



- Resources suitable for children to join in
- 'I'm praying for...' cards with the names of real, displaced sub-Saharan Christians for people to take home and keep praying.

And, of course, you can pray any time – you don't have to join in on the day itself. Whenever and wherever you pray, thank you for engaging with this journey. And if you haven't yet signed the petition – it's not too late!

### DOWNLOAD YOUR FREE IDOP PRAYER RESOURCES

Sunday 1 November  
[opendoorsuk.org/idop](http://opendoorsuk.org/idop)



## "THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE": trauma care in the Horn of Africa

Netsebraq\* is a Christian working as a trauma caregiver at a centre in the Horn of Africa. Here's how she is helping transform the lives of our persecuted church family.

Around the world, many Christians suffer deeply for following Jesus. Inevitably, these experiences bring with them wounds and scars that can remain long after the initial act of violence. That's why Open Doors provides trauma care – a vital support in addressing the long shadow of persecution.

The Horn of Africa is a part of the world where followers of Jesus can face fierce and violent opposition to their faith. "We need a lot of trauma counselling in the Horn of Africa because we are vulnerable to so many traumatic incidents in the region," explains Netsebraq. "It's not one

incident that's going to happen to Christians; it's a chain of incidents."

**"We want people to pray that we feel the hand of God working in this house."**

### NEW IDENTITIES

"When the Christians we treated came to Christ, they faced total community isolation and an identity crisis," Netsebraq says. "Many times, you will find them blaming themselves for how they feel. We help them to accept the rejection because Christ also faced rejection, and we emphasise the point that they are now part of the Kingdom of God, and whatever desperate situation they are in, God is always in that situation. There is always hope to move forward.

"As long as this centre is here, we want people to pray

that we feel the hand of God working in this house," she says. "Stand with us while we are working with these persecuted believers and strengthening the church. Pray with us so that believers will know that they have brothers and sisters out there as well."

### HAVE YOU SIGNED AND SHARED YET?

Join us in giving thanks for over 615,000 signatures worldwide for the *Arise Africa* petition. If you haven't shared with your friends, family or church yet, please do so and keep raising your voice for the sake of our family in the African church. Sign and share at [opendoorsuk.org/ariseafrica](http://opendoorsuk.org/ariseafrica)

# UNDERGROUND.

在地下  
在压力之下

## Meet Jinyi's secret house church in China

Imagine you are meeting in a house church with more than 100 people. You're all crowded into a room together. Most of the people are young, attending a local college, and all are keen to learn more about Jesus and worship Him together. Bibles lie open around the room. There are joyful faces surrounding you. You are in the middle of a familiar hymn – and then the door suddenly slams open.

This isn't a normal house church. There's a reason that the windows are closed and the floor-to-ceiling curtains are drawn. The church worships in the dark, in secret, because it is

# UNDER PRESSURE.

Reenactment images of Jinyi's story

not allowed to exist. And now you've been discovered by the police.

### **"EVERYTHING FELL APART"**

Jinyi\* vividly remembers the terrifying day that this happened to her. She and her husband, Zhang\*, had planted a church in central China a couple of years earlier, and the numbers steadily grew as more and more young people joined the church. But leading the church was always dangerous. Jinyi and Zhang knew this day could come. Because their church was illegal.

In China, Christians are only allowed to attend registered churches in the Three-Self Patriotic Movement or the Catholic Patriotic Association. In practice, these denominations are heavily monitored, with the Chinese authorities determining who can lead services, censoring what is preached and sometimes even filming the congregation. Many Christians start underground house churches, so they can preach the gospel and learn about Jesus without the Chinese Communist Party intervening (see box). Sometimes the house churches are left alone. But, increasingly, they are targeted by the authorities.

Sometimes that means being invited for 'tea' – a seemingly innocuous message, which in reality comes with the threat of interrogation and a warning that the church



Jinyi's church was raided by authorities and her husband was arrested

leaders are being closely watched. Sometimes there is no warning at all.

### **"With surveillance everywhere, even a visit or a message to me can bring danger."**

"Everything fell apart quickly," Jinyi remembers. The church was immediately shut down and the police detained the assembled believers. Most of those arrested were released after 24 hours, but some were kept for a full week. Zhang was singled out. As often happens with raids, the church leader bears the brunt of the punishment. He was fined 60,000 renminbi (£6,500, about six months' average salary in China) and sentenced to 3.5 years in prison.

### **"KILL THE CHICKEN TO SCARE THE MONKEY"**

Since 2018, when religious regulations in China started

to be enforced more tightly, such raids are an increasing danger. "Raids, forced entries, mandatory ID registrations and arrests have become common tactics," explains Le Xin\*, China expert. "By shutting down or penalising a few prominent churches, authorities send a warning to others – a strategy often described by the Chinese proverb, 'Kill the chicken to scare the monkey.'" These threats have driven the church even further underground.

Sadly, the warnings can work. Jinyi found that, when her church was targeted, other churches were too fearful to offer support. They knew they might be implicated by association. "With surveillance everywhere, even a visit or a message to me can bring danger," she explains. Jinyi understood their reasoning, but it was still hard to experience. "In my heart, I felt betrayed, hurt, disappointed," she says. "I felt isolated. I was struggling with my faith and found myself sinking into silence."

### **NEW HOPE**

In the midst of this isolation, Open Doors local partners stepped in to support and spend time with Jinyi. When you feel targeted and isolated, knowing that somebody cares for you and makes the journey to be with you is crucial. Open Doors partners see time and again the transformative power of simply being present with those who are persecuted. They began to see this transformation in Jinyi.

### **"The calling I once received from God came alive again."**

"I began to think about the young adults who once attended our gatherings," she says, "how these young people, driven by fear, were scattered like lost sheep without a shepherd." Jinyi became a Christian at university, and has long had a passion for seeing young people encounter Jesus. She and Zhang served in student ministry for years, and Jinyi knew that this was her purpose. Buoyed by continuing fellowship with Open Doors partners, and despite the significant risks, Jinyi determined to be there for those whom God had entrusted to her and her husband.

"The calling I once received from God came alive again," she says. "I knew I must help these

young people stand firm in the Lord once again."

Over meals, Jinyi met one-on-one with several young people to encourage them. Inspired by Jinyi's faith, several of those young people stepped up to lead small groups, eventually followed by youth gatherings held in different homes. The house church ministry has begun, once more, to flourish. There are now ten underground small groups with a total of more than 70 young people who are growing in faith and extraordinary courage. They look to Jinyi as their guide.

"During two years of accompanying Jinyi with our presence, prayer and support, we have witnessed her life being rebuilt and renewed," says a local Open Doors partner. "Behind her, the faith of many others is being reignited."

### **"HE HAS NOT FORGOTTEN ME"**

Open Doors partners continue to spend time with Jinyi, and she is clear that these visits are crucial in her ministry. "Thank you for your prayers," she says. "There have been countless moments when I

Jinyi has a ministry to disciple youth in China



## Why are Chinese house churches under threat?



An underground house church meets in China

**Le Xin\*, China expert, explains the dangers and restrictions faced by Chinese house churches:**

“Historically, unregistered churches met in homes because they were not legally recognised. Over time, many grew significantly and local authorities often tolerated their existence. As restrictions on worship loosened in some areas, many unregistered churches began renting or purchasing large buildings. Although they no longer met in houses, they continued to be labelled ‘house churches’ because they remained outside the state-sanctioned system.

“This relative tolerance began to change in 2018, when religious regulations were enforced more strictly nationwide. Although the constitution guarantees freedom of religion, unregistered churches face more monitoring and harassment. Many churches divide into multiple small groups, or regularly change locations to avoid detection.

“One of the greatest dangers is sudden shutdown. Underground churches can be raided without warning, and their leaders are often targeted for detention or long-term imprisonment. Arrests are frequently arbitrary, without warrants or notifications of families. In some cases, detained leaders temporarily disappear, leaving families unable to contact them.

“These risks create a constant uncertainty for Chinese Christians in underground churches, forcing them to worship under the persistent threat of surveillance, intimidation and punishment. Praise God, large numbers remain faithful in worship and prayer.

“Open Doors partners support the underground church through biblical and discipleship training, persecution survival training and spiritual, emotional and practical support to the most persecuted – like Jinyi.”

wanted to give up. I felt like I really couldn’t carry the burden of leading these young people, but God’s calling was always there, and He upheld me. Your visits help me realise that the Lord has not forgotten me. He still loves me. He must have a good purpose for my husband and me.”

**“Your visits help me realise that the Lord has not forgotten me.”**

Zhang has also been encouraged by hearing about the ministry. He is still in prison, but his hope and faith are strong. Zhang was scheduled to be released from prison a few months ago – but the date came and went, and nothing changed.

“Please pray for us,” Jinyi asks. “My husband is still in prison, and our youth gatherings must remain underground. Our youth are young, both in age and understanding of the truth. People are still overshadowed by persecution and remain fearful of gatherings.

“As a leader and the eldest, I too feel isolated and in need of support as others avoid us out of fear,” she shares. “I am deeply grateful for your support and encouragement, which have made me feel less alone and less afraid.”



Your prayers and support help give Jinyi the strength to persevere

Watch Jinyi’s story at [opendoorsuk.org/videos](https://opendoorsuk.org/videos)

## HELP THE UNDERGROUND CHURCH STAND FIRM

Through discipleship and leadership training tailored to their specific needs, Open Doors is walking with church leaders, in China and in other countries where the church must meet underground. These believers are under constant pressure as they face the threat of being watched, exposed and persecuted. With your prayers and gifts, Open Doors partners can keep providing training and keep making the encouraging visits to underground Christians that are so vital. Without them, courageous leaders like Jinyi feel isolated and disconnected from the body of Christ.

The dangers they face are stark and real. In addition to surveillance and church raids, the government continues to introduce legislation to stunt the growth of the gospel and the future of the church. In 2018, China passed legislation banning anyone under 18 from affiliating with any religion and its activities – in some regions, this is being strictly enforced.

The mere act of gathering for worship and Bible study can be treacherous for the students in Jinyi and Zhang’s ministry. In addition to the risk of police raids, students can be denied access to graduate programmes and applications for government positions. Simply going to church can determine their whole future.

As China continues to crack down even further on the church, and other countries follow the same threatening pattern, more believers will be forced underground now and in the coming years. Your support is needed now more than ever. Today, will you help the secret church stand firm?

### PLEASE PRAY

- For Zhang to be released from prison, and for both Zhang and Jinyi to be strengthened and comforted with God’s presence
- For the student groups to continue growing, and to remain bold and hopeful despite China’s increasing restrictions on religious freedom

- For Open Doors partners in China and other countries as they support, strengthen and love the underground church.

You can find more prayer points for the underground church in China and elsewhere in your prayer diary.

### PLEASE GIVE

You can give to support underground Christians in China and other countries at [opendoorsuk.org/underground](https://opendoorsuk.org/underground)

- **Every £21** could help provide practical, medical, legal and pastoral support to an underground believer
- **Every £32** could help train underground believers to persist through persecution and, in turn, support other persecuted Christians
- **Every £50** could help build the next generation of the underground church through a youth leadership programme.



# A WINDOW ON WESTMINSTER: CHINESE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM DEBATED

Open Doors research shows the increasing persecution faced by Chinese Christians in recent years. While many fear that China’s global influence is stopping the international community from raising human rights concerns, a recent parliamentary debate gives us some encouragement about the UK’s position, as well as reminding us that there is more to do.

On Wednesday 18 March, MPs debated freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) in China. Marie Rimmer MP opened the debate, describing Chinese police action against an unregistered church summer camp, and the harsh interrogation and imprisonment of pastors. She noted that: “What is taking place in China is not merely the sporadic mistreatment of a few isolated believers, nor is it the meddling of local officials. What we are seeing is the rolling out of a sophisticated system of repression, in which law, administration, surveillance, propaganda and coercion

are all being weaponised to subordinate religion to the Chinese Communist party.”

**“Children are the future of any nation.”**

### A THREAT TO THE NEXT GENERATION

MPs covered many topics in their speeches which Open Doors researchers on China often highlight: from churches facing forcible ‘Sinicisation’ – ‘being made Chinese’, in practice having to align with the Chinese Communist Party – to surveillance and

digital persecution, to the suppression of illegal house churches. Jim Shannon MP, chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on FoRB, highlighted Open Doors’ work, commenting on the persecution of the rising generation in China. “Children are the future of any nation; we all know that,” he said. “Preventing them from attending worship is not accidental. It is a deliberate attempt to shape the future by erasing faith from the next generation.”

Christians are not the only minority who suffer in China. Open Doors research

highlights that other religious groups in China also suffer human rights violations. Speakers in the debate noted China’s failure to uphold FoRB for groups such as Tibetan Buddhists, Uyghurs and Falun Gong practitioners. FoRB matters for many groups, and MPs emphasised the UK’s role as a defender of human rights – as well as the risk that China’s failure to uphold human rights would set a global precedent. In response, the UK Minister, Chris Elmore MP, reaffirmed the UK government’s commitment to raise human rights violations with the Chinese government.

## China is number 17 on the World Watch List

### WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THIS DEBATE?

First, the debate and government response show how much progress has been made on UK FoRB advocacy. Concerns around violations of FoRB, including persecution and discrimination faced by Christians, are not niche issues. Instead, MPs are very interested in these reported rights violations, and they will raise them in Parliament. As a result, the government is also keen to show that it is not failing to respond. China is now a priority country under the UK’s recent Freedom of Religion or Belief Strategy, indicating a welcome commitment



Notices are put outside Chinese churches forbidding under-18s from entering

to engage the Chinese government on this issue.

Secondly, the stories of persecution highlighted in the debate show there is still more we need to do. As global security and trade become more fragile, there will be a temptation to sideline rights concerns in favour of other needs. The UK government must be held to account regularly for how it promotes human rights – including FoRB – around the world.

## There are 96.7 million Christians in China: 6.7% of the population

Open Doors is asking the UK government to resume publishing an annual *Human Rights and Democracy* report, and to include FoRB as one of the core topics. In the past, this report gave valuable detail on UK global human rights advocacy, creating opportunities for parliamentary debate and accountability, as

well as for wider dialogue with organisations like Open Doors. Please pray this call is answered.

Finally, the debate shows the need for us to be thankful for MPs, including Christian MPs, who are faithful in raising the persecution of Christians in Parliament. On 7 July, Christian MPs will gather for the national parliamentary prayer breakfast. Open Doors will be distributing resources and running a seminar. Please do pray for the MPs who will be there, that it will be a fruitful time, and thank God for those who use their voice in Parliament for the persecuted church.

If you are an advocacy rep or have spoken out, progress on this issue is partly a result of you using your voice – thank you!

Sign up for advocacy emails, and find other ways to speak out, at [opendoorsuk.org/advocacy](https://opendoorsuk.org/advocacy)



WWL 28 / LAOS

Exiled by their community for their faith, Kanya and Phonesay now live out their lives in the forests of Laos. Though their church's existence is fragile, they worship the Lord boldly.

In the forests of rural Laos lies a handful of huts made of tarpaulin and planks of wood. From within one of the buildings comes the faint sound of singing.

It may not look like it, but it is, in fact, a church. But all around the huts are invisible boundary lines and markers designating government property. At any moment, the inhabitants could be chased away, their homes demolished.

Two amongst them, Kanya\* and her husband

Phonesay\*, already know what that feels like.

**MIRACULOUS HEALING**

In many parts of Laos, culture and identity are largely shaped by animist belief – the idea that spirits dwell within almost everything living and non-living. Angering a spirit is believed to be disastrous if expensive sacrifices are not offered.

Kanya and Phonesay lived out such rituals until Kanya fell ill. Already impoverished, questions about how they would restore her health pressed upon them. Their sacrifices weren't working. And then a friend suggested a different approach.

"If you believe in God, He can help you," he said.

And God answered their desperation.

"The Lord revealed something to me that made me want to follow Him," says Kanya. "So, I put my faith in God, regained my strength and was healed – thanks to the Lord."

**"MY HEART SOUGHT THE LORD"**

But with the healing came repercussions. After Kanya's conversion, she and her Christian brother were celebrating. The authorities immediately confiscated her brother's motorbike. "The officer said, 'If you don't recant your faith in Jesus, you must leave,'" Kanya recalls. "I firmly answered that I would not. Even if I die, I will never renounce Jesus."

Pressure was arising from within her home, too. In the face of an ultimatum given by his family, Phonesay turned his back on Kanya.

"They forced me to leave the village," Kanya says. "So, I fled and stayed with my relatives. During that time, I didn't feel anything. My heart sought the Lord. Every moment I sobbed, I prayed – crying and asking God for help. But I was willing to sacrifice my husband and children for my faith."

**OVERCOMING EVIL WITH GOOD**

Over five years of separation, Kanya never stopped praying for her husband.

"Every time we'd have a call, she'd share the gospel with me," Phonesay says. "She said, 'Believe in Jesus, and we will be free.'"

**"Even if I die, I will never renounce Jesus."**

Though Phonesay had turned to alcohol and drugs and was even remarried, God had not given up on him. His heart gradually softened – until he too decided to follow Jesus. His new wife left him and Kanya and Phonesay were reconciled.

When Kanya returned home to celebrate with other believers, the rebuttal from their neighbours was swift. With no help from the police, Kanya and Phonesay could only

watch as their home was torn down. Then they were expelled from the community.

"I wasn't afraid at that time," Kanya says. "The Lord commands us not to repay evil with evil, but to overcome evil with good."

**A FRAGILE EXISTENCE**

The persecution spread to other villages and eight other Christian families were exiled. The authorities permitted them to move to a farm in the forests. With the help of Open Doors, they built homes. But life is still very fragile.

"The villagers made a boundary around the land and do not allow us to expand the area," Kanya says. "This land belongs to the government, but I am not afraid; I just lean on the Lord."

Despite their poverty, Kanya and Phonesay had become rich in a different way. "Living in the forest with other believers made me happy because we shared the same faith," Phonesay says. "The Lord gave us time to worship Him every day."

Now, they want to build a bigger church and enable more people to receive life in the gospel. A church forced into the forests, hidden away – but growing by the power of God.

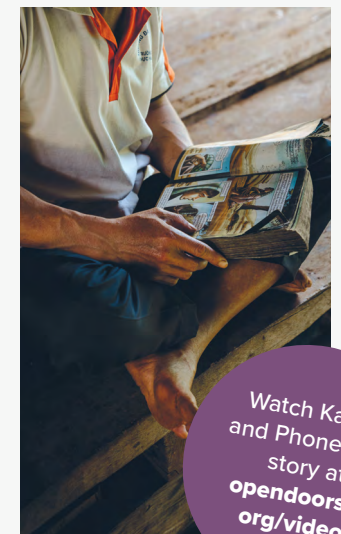
**† LISTEN**  
 "Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:13-14)

**⌚ LINGER**  
 Kanya and Phonesay once looked elsewhere for answers. What things are you tempted to look to for satisfaction in life? How is Jesus a better answer?

**➡ LIVE**  
 What can you do this week to drink in the living water Jesus provides?

**✋ PRAY**  
 Pray for Kanya and Phonesay's church, their endurance in the face of persecution and for God's protection.

BELOW Despite persecution, the family still worships and reads the Bible



Watch Kanya and Phonesay's story at [opendoorsuk.org/videos](http://opendoorsuk.org/videos)



# 茶?

## Where an invitation to tea comes with a threat


When the Chinese authorities call you for 'tea', you're in grave danger. It's a warning that you and your underground church are being watched – and could be arrested at any time.

In countries like China, Open Doors partners help the underground church with much-needed training and practical support. Today, will you help the secret church stand firm under every pressure?

**Every £32 could help train underground believers to persevere through persecution and, in turn, support other persecuted churches.**

Visit [opendoorsuk.org](http://opendoorsuk.org), phone **01993 460015** or use the enclosed envelope to make your gift today.

Thank you.

 **OpenDoors**