“To bestow on them... a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.”
ISAIAH 61:3
**Nigeria**

**Sunday 1 May**
Nigeria has risen to number seven on the World Watch List, as attacks by Islamic extremists grow in severity and number. Last year, 4,650 Christians in Nigeria were murdered because of their faith - more than in the rest of the world combined. Ask the Lord in His mercy to turn the tide of violence and be a shield around His people.

**Monday 2 May**
Pastor Andrew’s church was destroyed when Boko Haram burnt down his village (see Magazine p8). Yet he courageously chose to stay and rebuild with help from Open Doors partners - and the church has now grown even bigger than before! Praise God for Pastor Andrew’s faith and ask God to meet all his needs as he and his family serve persecuted believers.

**Tuesday 3 May**
“Come what may, I won’t turn back because I know there is a reward that awaits me,” shares Pastor Andrew. “Jesus promised He will not leave me or forsake me – and I can testify to that.” Give thanks that God is working through pastors like Andrew to sustain His church in Nigeria. Pray that He will raise up many more ‘Andrews’ to build the faith of His people despite the efforts of extremists to destroy it.

**Wednesday 4 May**
Open Doors partners run training to help pastors to prepare their congregations to stand firm in the faith. Pray that many pastors will be reached and equipped to help their members grow in their understanding of their faith and to be wise and bold in their witness.

**Thursday 5 May**
Keep praying for the release of Leah Sharibu and the Chibok girls who are still being held captive by Boko Haram militants. Pray that the government will step up its negotiation efforts and that the hearts of the captors will be moved to release the girls.

**Friday 6 May**
Agnes was 19 when Islamic militants abducted her from her village in northern Nigeria. Two years later she escaped, but her family refused to welcome her back, seeing her as a ‘Boko Haram wife’. Pray for Open Doors partners offering Agnes trauma care. “I want all believers in Christ to pray for the many girls still in captivity,” she says. “Also pray for me, that God will bring an end to the rejection I am going through.”

**Saturday 7 May**
The Open Doors trauma centre aims to provide care for around 2,880 believers in the coming year, including widows, orphans and victims of violence. Ask the Lord to protect all who work there - spiritually, physically and psychologically – and give them ‘the tongue of the wise which brings healing’ (Proverbs 12:18).

**Burkina Faso**

**Sunday 8 May**
Jihadist violence is increasing rapidly in Burkina Faso. Extremist attacks have displaced over a million people, many of whom are Christian. Pray for wisdom for Burkina Faso’s government as it seeks to bring an end to insecurity in the country.

**Monday 9 May**
Praise God that Open Doors has been able to provide emergency relief to at least 2,100 families displaced by extremist violence and trauma care to 87 widows. Pray for strength and protection for those travelling to deliver relief aid in volatile areas.

**Tuesday 10 May**
Pray for Martine (see p.8), who has been receiving relief aid and trauma care through Open Doors after militants stormed her church, killing her father, husband and brother. “I have rediscovered joy,” she shares. “Please keep on praying so that the teaching we got may diminish our hearts’ burdens and heal our wounds.”

**Wednesday 11 May**
Thank God for giving His people courage to build His church despite the risks. “Tell the brothers and sisters praying for us that their prayers are not lost,” says Pastor Michel. “Because of their prayers, we have access to the Word of God and we preach the gospel and here in Burkina, souls are saved. We see the results and we ask them to continue to pray.”

**Sunday 15 May**
Praise God that He is building His church in Eritrea. “Leaders are arrested, but other leaders come,” says Pastor Gideon*. “Disciples are imprisoned and others rise. The church continues to produce leaders and disciples. Those who are not afraid of jails and death – that is the kind of generation the church has raised.”

**Eritrea**

**Thursday 12 May**
It’s been 20 years since Eritrea’s government closed all religious institutions except those affiliated with the Eritrean Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches and with traditional Islam. Ask the Holy Spirit to change the hearts of President Afwerki and his government so that Christ’s people can worship Him in peace.

**Friday 13 May**
Hundreds of church leaders have been arrested and many have been in prison for more than a decade (see Magazine p.18). Ask the Lord to sustain them spiritually and physically and give them boldness to share His love with their fellow inmates.

**Saturday 14 May**
Christians are often monitored and church gatherings raided. Pray for discernment and protection for believers as they meet for worship and seek to live out their faith.

*Name changed for security reasons
as was the declaration that establishing a house church and promoting Christianity are not considered crimes.

This was followed in February 2022 with the good news that the nine men had been acquitted. The decision said that ‘the defendants, according to the teachings of Christianity, worshipped and praised in the house-church, and there was no positive evidence to validate the crime of acting against the security of the country in the case’.

Iranian Christians are encouraged by this decision and the hope it brings for the future – but are calling for continued prayer, particularly for three of these men. Matthias faces a six-year prison sentence for a charge dating back to 2014. Babak and Behnam, meanwhile, have been charged for calls they made for Christian converts to be freely allowed to gather for worship. Other believers remain in prison.

Though signs of religious freedom are tentative, there is much to praise God for – please join with our Iranian church family in asking that He would continue to bring freedom in the country, and keep changing the hearts of those in power.

PRAY

• Give thanks that the nine men have been acquitted of charges and for the encouragement this is to our Iranian family

• That Matthias, Babak and Behnam will be acquitted of the other charges

• That these tentative steps towards religious freedom in Iran will be built upon in the coming months.

Give thanks for

ANSWERED PRAYER

NINE CONVERTS ACQUITTED OF CHARGES IN IRAN

THERE ARE PROMISING STEPS TOWARDS RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN IRAN. THANK YOU FOR YOUR PRAYERS — AND PLEASE KEEP PRAYING.

Going to a house church in Iran carries huge risk. As many Iranian Christians have discovered, involvement can lead to imprisonment. But the recent acquittal of nine converts has given believers welcome encouragement.

Iran is number nine on the latest World Watch List. When this was released in January, we reported that the country’s Supreme Court had ordered the review of the five-year prison sentences given to nine Christians for involvement in a house church.

Abdolreza (Matthias) Haghnejad, Khalil Daeghanpour, Hossein Kadivar, Kamal Naamanian, Mohammad Vafadar, Mohammad (Sharooz) Eslamdoust, Babak Hosseinzadeh, Mehdi Khatibi and Behnam Akhlaghi were arrested in January and February 2019. Later that year, they were each convicted of endangering state security.

In November 2021, the Supreme Court said that sharing the Christian faith in a private home is not ‘gathering and collusion against internal or external security’, as the original verdict alleged. The men were released pending a review. This was a surprising and welcome development,
**Monday 16 May – India**
Pastor Yalam from Chhattisgarh State was found murdered outside his house on 17 March. He was one of 27 local pastors threatened with death if they converted anyone to Christianity. Ask the Lord to surround the pastors with His peace and protection.

**Tuesday 17 May – North Korea**
Several dozen Christians were executed after a secret gathering was raided by security officials. Relatives of the group (around 100 people) have been sent to political prison camps. Ask God to fill our imprisoned family with supernatural peace, strength and courage.

**Wednesday 18 May – Malaysia**
Earlier this year, Open Doors partners ran a Standing Strong Through the Storm programme for new Christians. It was attended by 19 people and included six non-Christians. During the event, four gave their lives to Jesus and got baptised! Praise God for this wonderful news.

**Thursday 19 May – China**
Christians dependent on the internet for discipleship and evangelism have been dealt a grave blow under a draconian ban on online religious content not approved by the state. Online sermons and services are among material affected. Pray that Christians will be given wisdom, boldness and encouragement as they navigate these restrictions.

**Friday 20 May – Indonesia**
Praise God that, in the past year, many young people have become Christians. However, choosing to follow Jesus can bring a lot of pressure from Muslim parents. Pray that God’s Word and the Holy Spirit will guide and encourage these young Christians in their faith and witness.

**Saturday 21 May – Bangladesh**
Mojnu* and Sadik* were beaten up in separate incidents for telling others about Jesus and handing out leaflets. Sadik was left especially badly injured. Both are determined to keep sharing the gospel, despite the risks. Ask the Lord to heal and protect our brothers, and make them fruitful in their ministries.

**Sunday 22 May – Sri Lanka**
An elderly couple have been stripped of all local social welfare support because they converted to Christianity. When a flood damaged properties, including the couple’s, government aid was given to all affected residents but them. They’re struggling with daily living and the lady is disabled. Pray for local people providing care for this couple.

**Monday 23 May – Philippines**
Christians from the Tausug tribe have their own translation of the New Testament. This year, Open Doors local partners began work on translating the Old Testament. Ask the Lord to sustain the team and guide them in their choice of words.

**Central Asia**

**Tuesday 24 May**
After becoming Christians, a group of brothers from a Muslim family led some villagers to Jesus, much to the anger of the local imam. When the brothers’ elderly mother died, shortly after becoming a Christian, the imam blamed their new faith. The family is in severe danger. Pray for their protection.

**Wednesday 25 May**
Maria* was in a taxi on her way home from church when her Muslim driver, realising Maria’s Christian faith, sexually assaulted her and then beat her. She nearly died. Maria needs long-term medical and psychological support to recover from this horrific ordeal. Pray for complete healing.

**Thursday 26 May**
Last December, Sabir* and his family fled their home after villagers surrounded their house. The hatred was stirred by a Muslim leader, who said the family’s Christian faith defiled the land. Pray that the family will quickly find a place that they can again call home.

**Friday 27 May**
On Christmas Eve last year, 17-year-old Talitha* was baptised – just two weeks after giving her life to Jesus. She’s the only Christian in her family. Praise God for Talitha’s courage, and pray that she’ll grow in understanding of her God-given identity and calling.

**Saturday 28 May – Kyrgyzstan**
A Christian family has refused to stop hosting house church meetings, despite threats from villagers. This hostility is especially risky to the father who has heart problems. Pray that the opposition will cease and ask the Lord to heal the father.

**Sunday 29 May – Turkmenistan**
Following elections in March, Kurbanguly Berdymukhamedov will be succeeded by his son, Serdar, as president. It means that the government’s autocratic rule of Turkmenistan – which is number 25 on the World Watch List – is likely to continue. Ask the Lord to pour fresh hope into the hearts of our Turkmen family.

**Monday 30 May – Kazakhstan**
There are proposals to make it harder to hold meetings away from state-registered places of worship. This would especially affect Protestant churches. It comes amid political instability in the country. Pray that the Kazakh church will grow stronger and brighter despite these fresh challenges.

**Tuesday 31 May – Uzbekistan**
Church leaders are often targeted for persecution because it spreads fear in their congregations. Punishments include fines and detention, and this could be for offences such as illegal gatherings and having worship songs on their phones. Ask the Lord to sustain the health of church leaders.

*names changed for security reasons
“...Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength.” (Isaiah 40:31)

Martine was standing outside her church after the service one Sunday, chatting with other members of the congregation, when Islamic militants approached the church.

“They took the Bibles, the wooden pulpit and threw everything together and burned it all,” Martine remembers. “They told the men to follow them. And they took them behind the church. They made them lie on the ground to shoot them.”

Martine lost her husband, father, brother and brother-in-law that morning. She and other members of her church also lost their homes.

Since 2016, many Christians and moderate Muslims in Burkina Faso have fled their homes in the face of increasing jihadist attacks. Men are usually killed in these attacks, leaving women and children widowed, fatherless and homeless. Many live in camps for internally displaced people, which is where Martine ended up.

“THE TEACHING YOU GAVE ME HAS RENEWED MY LIFE”
Thanks to your prayers and support, Open Doors partners were able to deliver much needed emergency relief aid to Martine and 2,100 other displaced families. Martine and 87 other women widowed in similar ways have also benefited from trauma care.

“The trauma care training has helped me. The teaching that you gave me has renewed my life. And it has renewed my strength.

“You came to help us, so that we may have strength again.”

“I say, thank you for the fact that you thought about us. You also did not forget that our hearts have been hurt. You came to help us, so that we may have strength again. May God bless you and renew your strength.”

After receiving trauma care, Martine longs for other widows to experience the healing that she has: “If I can take those words of love that I heard and have victory, I also want other widows to have the same. If the others get the same, I don’t believe hatred and troubles will ever be in our widow-hearts.”

Below Despite all she’s been through, Martine is determined to keep following Christ, thanks to your prayers

Thanks to you, Martine’s faith remains strong. Please pray with her that her church will continue to follow Christ no matter the cost. “Pray for our faith to be strong,” she asks. “We want to remain in Christ. Deviate not to the right nor to the left. Pray for us so that we may have victory in our faith fight.

“We also ask you to pray for our nation so that peace may be back in Burkina Faso.”

PRAY

• That Martine will continue to lean on the Lord in every circumstance

• For an end to the violence in Burkina Faso

• That Open Doors partners delivering trauma care will ‘run and not grow weary’ (Isaiah 40:31).
**West Africa**

**Wednesday 1 June – Nigeria**
Pastor Shuaibu was murdered after he tried to help a Muslim.

“Right now, it takes an immeasurable risk to be a Christian especially in the northern part of Nigeria,” says an Open Doors partner. Pray for God’s comfort and healing for Pastor Shuaibu’s family and congregation.

**Thursday 2 June – Mali**
Pray for the family of a pastor who went missing last September in an area where an armed group is active. Shortly after he disappeared a man contacted the family to say that extremists had taken him. Pray for God’s presence to sustain the pastor’s family and pray for his release.

**Friday 3 June – DRC**
Ten Christians were shot dead when a rebel group attacked a church near Bunia in January. Eight others were injured. Pray for comfort for the bereaved, healing for the injured, and courage and resilience for the church to continue to follow Jesus.

**Saturday 4 June – DRC**
Pray for Esther (27), whose husband Pastor Baraka was murdered in North Kivu Province last November. Open Doors is providing Esther and her three children with practical aid and livelihood support. “I know I will not lack anything because my brethren are there,” she says. “They will continue to help us and pray for us. Thank you for doing us this good.”

**Sunday 5 June – Pentecost**
As we celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, ask God to pour out His Spirit on church leaders who share God’s Word in extremely volatile areas of West Africa. Pray that they will be ‘filled with the Holy Spirit and speak the Word of God boldly’ (Acts 4:31), despite the threats of those who oppose them.

**Monday 6 June – Cameroon**
Baldina has lost both her sons. One was killed by Boko Haram and the other fled to escape the militants. Baldina and her husband are elderly and are too weak to farm for themselves, and are being cared for by their local church. Pray for God’s guidance and protection for their son and that he will be reunited with them safely.

**Tuesday 7 June**
The Open Doors team in West Africa is aiming to strengthen nearly 600,000 persecuted Christians by 2025 through training, trauma care and relief aid. One partner shares: “Pray that the Lord will establish the work of our hands and those we equip and that it will bear fruit to the glory of God.”

**East Africa**

**Wednesday 8 June**
Thank the Lord that many Christians in East Africa are diligently sharing the gospel in Muslim communities and that many are coming to faith in Christ. Ask the Lord to protect new believers and help them to connect with Christian communities that can give them the support they need to overcome persecution.

**Thursday 9 June – Sudan**
Pray for the Khartoum Bahri Evangelical Church which has been closed after a court ruled that part of its building should be demolished. The church has been in a long-standing dispute with the authorities over its properties since 2013. Pray for wisdom and grace for the church’s leaders in dealing with the authorities and that the church will reopen.

**Friday 10 June – Kenya**
Pray for Jaali*, a believer from a Muslim background and a qualified teacher who is struggling to get a job because he is a Christian. He has a wife and two children to provide for. Ask the Lord to provide Jaali with a placement as a teacher and pray for safety for his family.

**Saturday 11 June**
Pray for joy and spiritual strength for the Open Doors team as they serve the church in East Africa. Pray for God’s continued protection over them and their families and for refreshment to sustain them in this challenging ministry.

**North Africa**

**Sunday 12 June – Algeria**
Officials have started proceedings to close a church in Ait Atteli, a village in Tizi Ouzou. Pray for the Spirit’s wisdom for the church’s pastor and his father (who owns the land where the church is built) in dealing with the authorities, and pray that the church will win the court case and remain open.

**Monday 13 June – Algeria**
Since 2017, at least 16 churches have been closed under a 2006 ordinance that requires non-Muslim worship to be held only in buildings licensed for that purpose. The licensing commission established under the ordinance has yet to issue a single licence. Pray that these regulations will be amended and justly implemented, so that Christians can worship freely.

**Tuesday 14 June – Egypt**
Pray for Magdy Awad Allah, a Coptic Christian and human rights activist who was stabbed while trying to rescue his son Thomas (17) who was being held against his will by a Muslim neighbour. Pray for complete healing for Magdy and for his son Thomas, who is suffering from trauma.

**Wednesday 15 June – Egypt**
Pray for Marco Gerges, a Coptic Christian who has been sentenced to five years in prison for blasphemy after being found guilty of ‘contempt for Islam’. Ask the Lord to sustain Marco and pray for wisdom and influence for the rights group who are representing him.

*Names changed for security reasons
When David* was born, his whole life had already been planned out for him. As the son of a Mamo authority in his community, he was supposed to follow in his father’s footsteps. But God had different plans...

The Mamos are religious leaders of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in Colombia. They follow an animist religion, worshipping different spirits. David’s father introduced him to the different rites and rituals from an early age. But David began to question him about the different religious aspects – and he never heard a satisfactory answer. “I never wanted to be a Mamo,” David recalls. “I wanted to be different, believe in other things. I never saw the result of what my father did.”

“I STARTED TO BELIEVE”
David desperately wanted to leave to study, and eventually convinced his father to let him attend a Christian school outside of the community, where he learned to pray, worship and seek God. One day, he was hit in the stomach by a ball, which caused a hernia. A Christian man prayed for him, and he was healed. “Because the Lord healed my illness, I knelt down before God and said, ‘I always doubted, but You are with me, the Lord has healed me,’” David says. “At that moment, I started to believe and preach my testimony.”

“We strive to remain in the faith to attain eternal life”
When David returned to his hometown, his father had died, and a new Mamo leader was in place. David began to share the gospel, and his testimony drew many to Christ. That’s when the persecution began.

Due to the difference in beliefs, indigenous Christians in the community are deprived of basic rights. “Christians are denied a space to meet and worship,” David says. “The taunt goes this way: ‘If you believe in God, ask God for a piece of land.’”

“This shows us the way”
Thanks to you, David is receiving spiritual and practical support from Open Doors, and he is not giving up – he is fighting to give everyone the chance to seek and find the living God.

“We strive to remain in the faith to attain eternal life,” he says. “God shows us the way of truth, of life. We fight for it.”

Jesus promises that, like David, we will find Him when we seek Him with all our hearts. Where do you long to see more of God? And where can you encourage others to seek the Lord for themselves?

Lord Jesus, help me to hunger and thirst for more of You in my life. Open my eyes to see You. Amen.

*Name changed for security reasons

Below David didn’t give up seeking the true God. Where do you long to see more of Jesus?
Thursday 16 June
“There’s a huge humanitarian problem,” shares Hana*, an Open Doors partner in the region. “Large numbers of families are living together in hiding – when the electricity goes, when something is broken, families in hiding can’t ask anyone to help with the repairs.” Pray for God’s continued provision and protection for secret believers.

Friday 17 June
“These days there is relative peace, but uncertainty reigns in the hearts of people as the days unfold,” says Hana. “The economy is debt-ridden and completely dependent on foreign aid. Thousands have lost their jobs in the political upheaval.” Pray for those who have no access to jobs, that God will make a way for them to have an income to sustain their families.

Saturday 18 June
Hana continues, “The door search is continuing. Intimidation is going on – any (other) kind of religion in the country won’t be tolerated. Many live in hiding for fear of being found out and killed. Please pray for those in positions of leadership; may the Lord open their eyes to see the Truth and lead the nation with righteousness.”

Sunday 19 June
In March, the Taliban closed secondary schools for girls at the last minute, after promising that they would reopen. Many of these girls are devastated that they cannot continue their education. Pray that the Taliban will reverse this decision, so that girls and young women can continue to learn and invest in bright futures.

Monday 20 June – World Refugee Day
According to the United Nations, there are over 26 million refugees around the world – of which many hundreds of thousands are Christians displaced by persecution. Please pray for Open Doors partners as they continue to meet the growing needs of displaced believers with emergency relief aid and spiritual support.

Hope for the Middle East

Tuesday 21 June – Iraq
“There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). Rates of sexual violence, harassment and child marriage are high in Iraq. This is having a devastating effect on the lives and futures of many women and girls. Pray for equality to come and that these violations will stop.

Wednesday 22 June – Iraq
Although Iraq has declared a ‘final victory’ against so-called Islamic State (IS), extremists continue to carry out regular attacks against previously liberated villages, including bombings, assassinations and kidnappings. Please pray that IS will not regain a stronghold and pray for the protection of civilians who are living in areas of conflict.

Thursday 23 June – Iraq
Thank the Lord for Open Doors local partners who are building structures to support Christians and Christianity in Iraq. Pray that God gives them wisdom and strength to face all the challenges ahead and that their work bears fruit as He desires.

Friday 24 June – Iraq
After the parliamentary election held in October 2021, efforts to form a new government are ongoing. Despite the political and security challenges, there is hope that this government will serve and make decisions with the Iraqi people’s best interests at heart. Please pray that this new government will protect the rights of Christians and other minorities.

Saturday 25 June – Syria
Due to the war, many children are behind in their schooling. And even after children have left school, often they must go straight into work to help support their family, rather than going on to further education. Pray for the restoration of the education system and that young Syrians will have opportunities to learn and develop their full potential.

Sunday 26 June – Syria
In Damascus, 35 college students who receive help with tuition fees from Open Doors started visiting lonely, elderly Christians, to care for their needs and spend time with them. Pray for God’s blessing and strength for these students, and that they will bring comfort and happiness to those whose children have left the country.

Monday 27 June – Syria
The war and its after-effects are not over. There is a lot of desperation; nearly seven million people have left the country, and more than six million are displaced within the country. Pray for Syrians to find Jesus and receive the peace He brings.

Tuesday 28 June – Syria
Security measures put in place by the authorities sometimes make it difficult for Open Doors partners to carry out their work. But recently security clearance was given for holding several training initiatives in the country – praise God! Pray for protection for local Christians who are involved.

Wednesday 29 June – Lebanon
“The trees of the Lord are watered well, the cedars of Lebanon that he planted” (Psalm 104:16). The Bible speaks highly of Lebanon, but the current political and economic outlook for the country is bleak. Pray for Christians to remain hopeful and churches to continue to be beacons of light.

Thursday 30 June – UK&I
Please pray for our amazing volunteer speakers as they travel and speak on behalf of the persecuted church. Pray for open hearts to receive the encouragement and challenge they bring, and that many across the UK and Ireland would encounter the Lord Jesus through all that’s shared.

*Names changed for security reasons
Prison, persecution and the power of God

Twenty years ago, the Eritrean government ordered all religious groups not belonging to the Eritrean Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Lutheran churches or Sunni Islam to close. Christians like Yael* from other denominations face intrusive surveillance and risk arrest and imprisonment.

“We plan our Christian activities very carefully,” Yael says. “That includes choosing the places where we meet and the people we invite. If they catch you taking part in these things, you will immediately be arrested.”

Yael’s husband was imprisoned while she was eight months pregnant. “He was in prison for one year and nine months. If your husband is in prison, you are indirectly involved in his suffering. Because you do not know what is happening to him or when he will be released, you always worry about him.”

But during that time of trial, Yael knows that she was sustained by God – and by your prayers.

“Now when I think back about that period, I can only say that the grace and power of God were abundant over me. Since your prayer is a great help in our persecution, I would beg you to keep praying for us until the end.”

Lord Jesus, strengthen and comfort our church family in Eritrea today – especially believers who are in prison. Help the church to continue to fix their eyes on You, and may Your justice reign over all. Amen.

*Name changed for security reasons