70 years of serving persecuted Christians

July 2018

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  Inspire your church with faith, hope and love
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“I thought we were alone and forgotten”
- Karunia*, Indonesia

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17 November
Letter from Lisa: Faithfulness

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 & 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

What does faithfulness look like? To me, it looks like the persecuted church. In the Horn of Africa, where every country is on the Open Doors World Watch List, persecution is intensifying with the kind of radicalism, violence and fear that we see in the Middle East.

While in Garissa, Kenya, a few years ago, I saw the risks that Somali believers are taking to be faithful. Their witness inspires me, as do the stories of Muktar, Ayaan and others (pp. 7-13). It feels like a real gift to be connected with such brothers and sisters who give us the incentive we need to be faith-filled and bold.

I see this, too, whenever I meet our amazing supporters, so full of passion and love for God and ready to go the extra mile for their persecuted family. It gives our field teams huge encouragement to know that believers here are supporting them and those they serve and the enclosed annual review shows that same spirit – of Christians standing together, shoulder-to-shoulder.

Nevertheless, the need remains much greater than we are currently able to meet. Just look at Syria. Thank God, an increasing number of churches are stepping up to the challenge, but I’d love something to click so that every church sees it’s not just another good cause. It’s family – and it’s for all of us. Trying to get our persecuted family on the radar of 51,000 churches is a massive job – but we’re much further on than we were. And we’re in a new season, where government and media are approaching us to hear the authentic voice of persecuted Christians, so we all need to be ready to share their stories, in our churches, on social media, backing up all we do with a groundswell of prayer.

As I hand over the baton to Henrietta Blyth, I am so grateful for all the wonderful staff and volunteers who are committed to continuing this tremendous work. I first met Henrietta at a conference in 2016, where we shared a platform, leading a joint seminar on women and leadership. I was struck, at the time, by her passion for the Lord and her love for people – and am excited to see what she will bring to Open Doors.

Meanwhile, I won’t be disappearing, but look forward to working together as colleagues in my new global role as Chief Development and Advocacy Officer; my role is to make sure brilliant teams like this have everything they need.

Thank you for your continued support for your persecuted family. May your love and faithfulness never leave you – for the glory of God and His people. Amen!

Lisa Pearce
CEO, Open Doors UK&I
Open Doors has launched an advocacy campaign on behalf of kidnapped pastor, Raymond Koh, after the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia resumed its inquiry into his disappearance.

Pastor Koh was kidnapped on 13 February last year. His abduction, which was caught on CCTV, was conducted with military precision and implies a coordinated attack by trained individuals. At least ten men in black SUVs blocked a major road in broad daylight and abducted him. He has not been seen since.

In May, three changes took place which gave Koh’s family new hope that he might be found and released:
• Malaysia voted in a new government
• This government reopened the inquiry into Pastor Koh’s disappearance, which had been halted after police arrested an alleged suspect in February
• A whistle-blower came forward with evidence of police complicity in the abductions. The informant made it clear that Raymond Koh was targeted for having a minority faith.

However, it has been reported that since coming forward the whistle-blower has backtracked on some of his statement. Many are worried that this is out of fear of a backlash from the perpetrators.

Three others were abducted around the same time as Raymond Koh. Christian husband and wife, Joshua Hilmy and Ruth Sitepu, were last seen in November 2016, while Shia Muslim activist, Amri Che Mat, was abducted in a highly professional operation similar to that of Raymond Koh.

The inquiry will investigate all four disappearances.

Pastor Koh’s wife, Susanna Liew, says she is optimistic that he ‘will be released soon.’ “Thank you for all of your efforts,” she said. “I believe God must have a reason why his release is delayed. I am reminded by today’s verse that God will fight for us. Exodus 14:14.”

Speak out for Pastor Koh
We are running an advocacy campaign for Pastor Koh asking supporters to sign a letter to the Malaysian High Commissioner to the UK and the Malaysian Minister for Home Affairs, urging them to expose the truth about the abductions and secure the release of all four missing persons. To take part today, go to www.opendoorsuk.org/advocacy

PRAY
• That the reopened inquiry would lead to Raymond Koh’s swift release
• For safety for Pastor Koh, Amri Che Mat, Pastor Hilmy and Ruth Sitepu, and the whistle-blower
• For God’s strength and peace for the families of those who are missing
• For wisdom for the new Malaysian government as it responds to these appeals.

For the latest news and stories from the persecuted church visit www.opendoorsuk.org
“I was a Muslim, now I’m a Christian, and the Bible teaches us to love those who harm us.”
- Erwin, father of 8-year-old Clarissa (left) who suffered burns in a church bomb attack in Indonesia

INDONESIA: Victims of Indonesian church bombings receive support

Following the bombings of three churches in Surabaya, Indonesia, Open Doors has been able to provide financial support for victims and their families, thanks to your support and prayers.

One of those injured was 8-year-old Clarissa. She was with her mother, Fenny, in a room where the Sunday school was taking place when the bomb went off. Fenny suffered 85 per cent burns, but was able to muster the strength to find her daughter and carry her to safety. Clarissa’s father, Erwin, says, “My wife was burning, but she kept searching for our daughter. Such is the amazing power of a mother’s love.”

Clarissa was not as badly burned as her mother, but was injured and traumatised by the attack.

When asked if he is angry at the Islamic extremists who carried out the attack, Erwin says no. “I was upset – after all, I’m still human. But I don’t have any resentment towards them. I was a Muslim, now I’m a Christian, and the Bible teaches us to love those who harm us.”

Rev. Yonathan Budiarto, the pastor of the Surabaya Pentecostal Church, one of the churches which was bombed, has received training from Open Doors on preparing for persecution. He says, “We pray for the victims and church members. I am worried that they may be fearful of going to church after this bombing. We must continue to support them in prayer so that they grow stronger in their faith.”

• For continued healing for Clarissa, Fenny, and others in body and mind
• For courage for our brothers and sisters in Indonesia to continue to meet together and be bold in their witness.

SOUTH SUDAN: Ten killed in attack on Christian college in South Sudan

At least ten people have been killed in an attack on Emmanuel Christian College (ECC) in Goli, Yei County, a training college Open Doors built in partnership with the Sudan Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

Witnesses blame the Sudan People’s Liberation Army for the attack – it’s unclear why they chose to target the college.

Those murdered include three ECC guards, five children, and a displaced father and son who had sought refuge in Goli. The attackers also raped the 14-year-old daughter of a staff member.

ECC offices, library, classrooms and staff houses were vandalised and looted. The management of the college reported the incident to state authorities and are working with them on next steps.

Open Doors’ Regional Director for sub-Saharan Africa said, “We call on the international Christian community to rally in prayer around staff at the ECC and the church in South Sudan. We also call on the international community to do whatever it can to help bring an end to the hostilities in South Sudan and on the South Sudan government to take swift action to bring the perpetrators to justice.”

• PRAY
  • For comfort for the bereaved, and healing for the injured, violated and traumatised
  • That the attackers will be brought to justice
  • For an end to the hostilities in South Sudan.

FROM LEFT: Bomb damage at Surabaya Pentecostal Church and Rev. Yonathan Budiarto

OPEN DOORS magazine July 2018 | www.opendoorsuk.org
So-called Islamic State has claimed responsibility for a shooting in a Russian Orthodox Church in Grozny, Chechnya’s capital, where a church member was killed.

Four men broke into the church during a service on 19 May. Seven people were killed in the attack – two police officers who were guarding the church, one church member and the four militants. Two more security officers and another church member were injured.

The attack took place just days after the start of Ramadan. Christians in areas where Islamic extremists are operating often experience increased violence during this period.

All Christians face violence and pressure in Muslim-majority Chechnya, but converts from Islam bear the brunt of it. They are considered to be betraying their national identity – Christianity is associated with Russia.

• PRAY
  • For God’s comfort for the families of the victims
  • For courage and protection for Chechen Christians.

India: ‘20 per cent increase in atrocities against Christians’

Amid growing extreme Hindu nationalism in India, dozens of speakers have called for concerted action to uphold the country’s constitution and fundamental rights, at a conference to mark four years of government led by Prime Minister Modi.

“There is a grave threat to plurality,” Professor Ganesh Narayan Devy, a scholar on India’s religious and linguistic diversity, told the ‘Citizens’ Conclave’ on ‘Building an Inclusive India’ in New Delhi, attended by over 800 delegates from across the country. “We are living at a time when you are questioned about the food you eat, the god you worship and branded as anti-national for expressing a different view [to Hindu nationalism].”

“2017 saw a 20 per cent increase in the number of atrocities against Christians,” said Tehmina Arora, a lawyer and director of rights group ADF India. “When you go to police, they hardly cooperate and often refuse to register complaints. There is a growing culture of impunity. We could file only 25 criminal cases, as against the 240+ incidents reported in the year.”

Children forced out of Christian-run hostel

In May, 74 children had to leave their Christian-run hostel in Rajasthan state, after the high court dismissed a petition challenging the child welfare committee’s seizure of the central office of Emmanuel Mission India.

Dramatic scenes, captured on video, of parents and guardians trying to restrain police from shifting their children to a bus to take them away, were shared widely over social media. In the video, an EMI staff member says, in Hindi, that the children are being taken away against their will and that of their parents.

In the court order, the judge stated that the EMI had ‘[kept] children in hostels, without registration’. But an insider at EMI said that the society had several times applied for registration, only to be rejected, so they had ‘given up’.

India is number 11 on the 2018 Open Doors World Watch List. Open Doors partners are significantly stepping up their support for the church in India - look out for further details in our September magazine.

• PRAY
  • For God’s protection for the children and His provision for their futures
  • For courage and influence for those defending the rights of India’s Christians and other minorities.
  • For Open Doors partners giving advocacy support to Christians in India.
“I’m going to find you.” You receive this message – what does it mean?

If you’ve lost a friend in a crowd, it might be telling you to stay put. If you’re playing hide and seek with a group of kids, it’s a shout to make sure you’re hidden.

But if you’re a Somali Christian in the Horn of Africa, it could be a threat against your life.

Most Somali Christians keep their faith completely secret. Islam is an important part of Somali identity, and for a Somali person to decide to leave Islam and follow Jesus is seen as a huge betrayal – and one that could lead to immediate execution.

Where the Middle East has the self-proclaimed Islamic State, the Horn of Africa has the militant Islamist group al-Shabaab. This group has stated publically that it ‘wants Somalia free of all Christians’, and they have intensified their search for Christians in the last year. If they find
someone who has become a Christian, the militants will often kill them on the spot. At least 23 suspected Christians were murdered in Somalia last year. The many Somalis who live in other parts of the Horn of Africa, such as Ethiopia, Djibouti and Kenya, also face huge challenges if they decide to follow Jesus. Radical Islam is growing across the region, and if the secret faith of our brothers and sisters is discovered, they can face attack and exile from their friends and neighbours, and even their own families.

But there is another who calls to us, saying, “I’m going to find you” – and His name is Jesus. He has come to Somali people through dreams, visions and amazing miracles, as well as through the bold witness of Somali believers. They know that it could cost them their lives, and yet hundreds have decided to follow Him. And there are still others who are determined to find these secret believers – Open Doors’ courageous local church partners, who are bringing our brothers and sisters the support and encouragement they need to keep going, despite the extreme persecution they face. And it’s your prayers and long-term support that make this dangerous and vital work possible.

**VISIONS OF ‘ISA’**

Hassan* is a 24-year-old Somali Christian student, who came to faith through his father, Aaden*. Aaden was a herdsman with little education – he couldn’t read or write. But when he was out herding his animals, he had visions of Jesus. Hassan tells us, “In these visions, Christ appeared to him and said, ‘It’s me, Isa. Do not be afraid, for I am with you.’”

> “Christ appeared to him and said, ‘It’s me, Isa. Do not be afraid, for I am with you.’”

When Aaden decided to follow ‘Isa’, the Arabic name for Jesus, he faced horrific persecution. Hassan says,

\*name changed for security reasons

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**PERSECUTION IN THE HORN OF AFRICA**

**Somalia - World Watch List number 3**
The militant Islamist group Al-Shabaab frequently kills suspected Christians on the spot, and believers keep their faith completely secret.

**Eritrea - World Watch List number 6**
The government is the main source of persecution here. Authorities view Christians as agents of the West, and will arrest, harass and kill them with impunity. Hundreds are imprisoned in horrific conditions. Visit [www.opendoorsuk.org](http://www.opendoorsuk.org) to find out more, and to watch an interview with Eyal, an incredibly courageous Eritrean believer.

**Ethiopia - World Watch List number 29**
Ethiopia is a Christian-majority country, but believers from Muslim backgrounds are rejected by their families and communities.

**Kenya - World Watch List number 32**
Al-Shabaab militants carry out attacks over the border from Somalia. They killed dozens of Christians in Kenya last year.

**Djibouti - World Watch List number 50**
Rumours of conversion are often enough for believers to lose their inheritance rights or custody of their children.

The World Watch List is Open Doors’ annual ranking of the 50 countries where it is most dangerous to be a Christian. To pray for a country on the list each week, sign up for our weekly email by visiting [www.opendoorsuk.org/pray](http://www.opendoorsuk.org/pray)
“My father was beaten and even slashed with a panga (a tool similar to a machete). He has scars all over his body from that persecution.

“When the attacks did not work, the community offered him money to return to Islam. He never gave in to their pressures. This is when his family and the community rejected him, pulled away from him. Nobody wanted to talk to him and when they did, all he got was verbal abuse. Eventually we were thrown out.”

When Hassan decided to become a Christian, he didn’t experience the levels of violent persecution that his father did, but he still faced rejection and insults. “People told me that I had become like my father. They told me, ‘You are a ‘kafir’ (infidel)! You don’t deserve to be among us!’ I did not have any friends. I was very lonely. I had no one to talk to.

“Although I want to tell the world that I am a Christian, I don’t because I fear for my life. But God makes it possible for me to survive this isolation.”

Open Doors workers are able to assure Hassan that, despite being very isolated as a Somali Christian and having no church to go to, he has a global church family. He asks that we stand with him and other Somali believers in prayer.

PLEASE PRAY
Hassan says, “Please pray for Somali believers everywhere. Pray that Somali believers will stand strong in the faith and not be swept away by the big waves of persecution. The pressure on them is very intense.”

See for yourself
Visit www.opendoorsuk.org to see a short video of Hassan.

Hassan has to keep his faith in Jesus a secret, as he fears for his life

Open Doors partners have been broadcasting Somali radio programmes into the Horn of Africa for 19 years!

One of the ways that Open Doors works to support isolated believers like Hassan is through the radio. Open Doors has been partnering with others to produce radio programmes in the Somali language, and our partners have been broadcasting Somali songs, poetry and preaching in the Horn of Africa for the past 19 years! And it’s the faithful prayers and long-term support of people like you that are making this work possible, bringing light into the darkness of isolation faced by believers like Hassan, and helping them to keep going.

These programmes are also bringing the gospel to those who may never have heard it before, even in parts of the Horn of Africa where evangelism should be completely impossible. Thank you for giving lost Somali people the chance to be found by the love of Jesus.

A NEW FAMILY
Aayan*, a Somali believer, was just 19 when she decided to follow Jesus after He spoke to her in a
dream. She dreamt that she walked into a Christian’s home and heard a magnificent voice. “I have never heard anything like it before or since,” she says.

“Afterwards I was very unwell for two days. I asked my friends to take me to church and there I wrote a prayer request on a piece of paper and asked the pastor to pray for me. All signs of illness disappeared. I knew Jesus was the truth and I committed my life to Him.”

But once her family discovered that she had become a Christian, Aayan was in grave danger. “My family forced me to leave. My brother told me that my faith is ‘Haram’ – deserving of death. They searched for me many times to kill me.”

She spent a night hiding in a tree, terrified and with nowhere to go. She went to see her mother the next day to beg her to let her stay for even one night in their family home. Her mother threw hot tea in her face, shouting, “You are not part of me any more!”

“My family... searched for me many times to kill me.”

Aayan left and prayed, “If the men in my family find me now, they will kill me. You know how angry they are at me. You know the community expects them to punish me. Show me the way.”

She ended up back at the church, and the pastor’s family took her in. Aayan was heartbroken to be rejected by her earthly family, but your support has helped her to find a new family in God, through a Bible study facilitated by Open Doors.

“Thank you for providing a place where I can feel the love and warmth of a family”

Aayan says, “We meet twice a week to study the Bible in Somali. This helped me a lot. Before, I did not know such fellowship. But now it is really exciting to learn in my own language and have fellowship and meet other Somali believers. When we face difficulties, Open Doors stands by us – like...
when some of our brothers were imprisoned over false allegations. I love this Bible Study!”

She still lives alone, away from her own family, but they have learned to tolerate her since she first decided to follow Jesus 11 years ago.

“They haven’t accepted my faith yet, but they know they won’t be able to win me back to Islam. God has given me a chance to share the gospel with them. I trust that the Lord will cause the message to bear fruit in time.

“Thank you for providing a place where I can feel the love and warmth of a family. God bless you and multiply your service. A lot more people are waiting for us to reach them with the good news. We kindly request you to continue to stand with us.”

It’s your prayers and long-term support that have made it possible for Aayan to find her new family in God – thank you!

**PLEASE PRAY**

Aayan says, “Pray that God would connect me with people whose hearts He has prepared to receive the gospel. And please pray for peace and security in our region.”

Being able to read the Word of God in her own language has been a huge source of encouragement to Aayan – and you can give that gift to other Somali believers.

Every £15 could put Bibles into the hands of three believers in the Horn of Africa.

**A VISION TO REACH THE SOMALI PEOPLE**

Muktar* leads a group of secret believers in one of the more dangerous areas of the Horn of Africa. He had to flee to escape his family when he became a Christian, but was eventually ordained as a pastor, and felt called to serve the Somali people.

Being a church leader is always challenging, but being a church leader in a part of the world where that makes you a target for Islamic extremists seems completely impossible. Incredibly, God has given Muktar the vision and courage to carry out this dangerous work. Muktar says, “Our vision is to reach the Somali people according to their language and culture and plant churches among them.”

At one point, he was close to giving up – but your gifts and prayers have helped him to keep going. He says, “When I met Open Doors, I was exhausted and discouraged. I was trying to fund my ministry myself and had run out of money. I believe it is God who helped me by bringing me into contact with your ministry at the right time.”

“What I love about Open Doors is that...if there were four Somali believers, you would still go and serve those four”

Open Doors has helped Muktar start a small business to fund his ministry, and provided him with training to help him to be more effective in reaching out to
Muktar says, “What I love about Open Doors is that you know the culture and are focused. If there were four Somali believers, you would still go and serve those four. You adapted to the culture and understand how to reach them. You discipled me in ministry.”

One of the believers who is a part of Muktar’s secret church is a sister you may remember – we shared Zemzem’s* story in our May 2015 magazine. When she became a Christian, she was imprisoned for a time, and her husband divorced her, leaving her to care for their two young sons without any help. Your support enabled Open Doors to provide for her practical needs, such as buying her a bed and cooking utensils.

Despite everything that she has been through, she is a bold evangelist, and loves the teaching she receives in Muktar’s group. She says, “This training taught us to preach the gospel in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is deeply rooted in my heart, so I preach the gospel. And my children and I pray every morning and evening for those who make these discipleship classes possible.”

Thank you for enabling Muktar to continue courageously reaching out to Somali people in the Horn of Africa, and for providing a church family for believers like Zemzem. The dangers faced by believers in the region won’t disappear overnight, as the influence of radical Islam only appears to grow. Our brothers and sisters like Muktar and Zemzem need our long-term support to keep going.

Every £34 could provide training to help a secret church leader like Muktar to be effective in their outreach and know how to care for new believers facing persecution.

To give a gift, call our Inspire team on 01993 460015, visit www.opendoorsuk.org or use the form enclosed with this magazine. Your support will help Open Doors’ secret network to reach the most isolated and vulnerable believers with vital support.

**PLEASE PRAY**

They also ask that we continue to stand with them in prayer. Muktar says, “Please pray for us. We always pray for all of you.”
FOUR WAYS TO PRAY FOR YOUR CHURCH FAMILY IN THE HORN OF AFRICA

1. **On your own.** Tie a piece of string or ribbon around one of the arms of your sunglasses to remind you to pray. Every time you put them on this summer, ask God to protect secret believers.

2. **With friends.** Coffee is a big part of life in the Horn of Africa, and eating popcorn as a snack with coffee is common. Why not invite some friends for coffee and popcorn, or share some with your small group, and spend some time praying for believers in the Horn of Africa? You could write short prayers on post-it notes and stick them on the map.

3. **With your family or Sunday school.** Play a game of hide and seek - when each person is found, ask them to say a short prayer for a secret believer.

4. **With your whole church.** Order a free copy of *Can you believe it?* our new resource to help your whole church to pray for their persecuted church family around the world. Turn to page 14 to find out more.

WHO CAN I PRAY FOR?

- **Hassan** is a 24-year-old student. He is an isolated secret Christian, and can’t meet with other believers. Pray that he will be able to find fellowship with others safely.

- **Ayaan** was threatened by her family when she became a Christian, but she longs for them to know Jesus. Pray that God will touch their hearts.

- **Muktar** leads a secret church. Pray for wisdom and encouragement for him, and for protection for him and his church.

- **Zemzem** is in Muktar’s church. Her husband divorced her when she became a Christian, leaving her to care for their two sons without support. Pray for provision for them.
Imagine you live in a land where, because you’re a Christian, you fail your studies, your neighbours beat you up, your home is destroyed, your family is put in prison, your father is killed. How would you respond? Would you lose heart, give up, change your faith? Or would you pray harder, stay faithful, grow bolder?

Hostility, injustice and violence are a daily reality for millions of Christians across the world – and yet, amazingly, that’s not the end of the story. Empowered by the Holy Spirit and strengthened by the body of Christ, persecuted believers are living the Bible today with courageous lives of faith, hope and love.

Our new Can you believe it? pack will help your church imagine what it’s like to be a persecuted Christian and identify with them.

Faith Though church leader Ghassan lost everything in the Syrian conflict, his church in Aleppo is feeding people of all faiths.

Hope Hannah and her family were tortured and starved whilst imprisoned in a North Korean labour camp but, after much prayer, they were released.

Love When Indian believer Meena was brutally beaten for her faith, she discovered that, with the Lord’s help, she could forgive, and even rejoice.

Younger believers, too, like Wasihun in Ethiopia and Fady in Egypt, already know and count the cost of following Jesus.

The new Can you believe it? pack features the stories of these five persecuted Christians in one short film, along with loads of exciting new resources to help your church identify with, pray for and support our persecuted family around the world. It includes:

• Fresh stories, prayers and games for all ages
• DVD with new film, PowerPoint and audio
• Sample Prayer Polaroid
• Inspirational ‘Faith, Hope and Love’ poster
• Colourful stickers!

Also, in this toolbox of resources, you’ll find links to prayers, games, a creed, quiz and drama script The Early Learning Church. Perfect for youth and children’s sessions as well as mainstream services, you can pick’n’mix activities on the International Day of Prayer for the persecuted church (Sunday 18 November) or a date to suit your church. Additional Prayer Polaroids, stickers, posters and gift aid forms can be ordered via the website or the resource order form in the pack.
WHO SAID WHAT?
See if you can match the quote with the correct photo.

“*At university, professors ask us difficult questions to make us fail.*”
Fady

“We had to kneel in our cells from 5am to 12pm and not speak.”
Hannah

“*The beating was painful, but inside I felt a tremendous joy.*”
Meena

“I was very shocked when my dad was killed but God comforted us.”
Wasihun

“When we give a loaf of bread, the love of Christ is written on it.”
Ghassan

You can find out the answers by ordering a copy of the *Can you believe it?* pack. Then share it with your church and put yourself in the picture!

INSPIRE YOUR CHURCH...
TO WAKE UP AND STAND WITH THEM!
The *Can you believe it?* pack will be available from mid-July. To order, use the response device, call Inspire on 01993 460015, or go to www.opendoorsuk.org

“*And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*”
1 Corinthians 12:13

INVITE AN OPEN DOORS SPEAKER!
If you would like some help in sharing these stories with your church, why not invite an Open Doors speaker to lead your service? Call Inspire on 01993 460015.
HEALING AND HOPE
SECRET CHILDREN UPDATE

It is heart-breaking to think of an innocent child being bullied or attacked. But around the world, many children and young people are the victims of persecution, simply because their families follow Jesus.

Thank you for being family to persecuted children through your gifts and prayers – especially if you give regularly to support our work with children, or you gave to our appeal for children at the end of last year. Open Doors is able to support persecuted children for as long as they need us, and to bring them healing and hope for the future, thanks to the long-term support of their global church family.

RECOVERY CONTINUES

Alvaro, Trinity and Anita were victims of a bomb attack on their church in Indonesia, carried out by an Islamic extremist at the end of 2016. Your prayers and support have enabled Open Doors to provide their families with financial help as they continue on the long road to recovery.

Trinity, now four, was in China earlier in the year receiving treatment. “Praise the Lord for her progressive healing, it’s all God’s grace,” said Trinity’s father. Trinity’s mother says, “I am very grateful that we experienced the love and prayers from Open Doors from the beginning.”

Anita, now three years old, suffered the least amount of burns, and the injuries have only left small scars. However, she has been left traumatised by the attack. “It’s very depressing to see her cry and scream ‘I’m scared’ over and over again,” says her mother, Tetty. “All I can do now is surrender to God.” Open Doors staff continue to meet with her and counsel her.

Alvaro, now five, has been undergoing medical treatment in Malaysia. Alvaro’s mother, Novita, says, “I thank God for all your prayers and financial support. As a result, my husband was able to stop work this past year to stay home and help care for Alvaro. This has made a tremendous impact in his healing.”

Please pray for continued healing, both in body and mind, for Alvaro, Trinity and Anita.

Trinity (top), Anita (middle) and Alvaro (bottom) continue to recover from the bomb attack on their church in Indonesia, thanks to your support and prayers.
A TIME OF FUN FOR WASIHUN

When Wasihun was just seven, his father was killed for his faith in Christ; they are the only Christian family in their village in Ethiopia, and their neighbours were angered when they wouldn’t take part in the rituals of a local traditional religion.

Your support and prayers have enabled Open Doors to support Wasihun and his family ever since this terrible tragedy took place, providing food, trauma care, school fees for Wasihun and his siblings, and helping his mother, Buze, to start a small business to help her support her family.

Wasihun is now 12. He loves football, and helps his mother care for their cattle. Recently, thanks to your support, Wasihun and his sister, Bachu, were able to attend a youth camp organised by Open Doors for children impacted by persecution in Ethiopia.

An Open Doors youth worker says, “Children and youth experiencing persecution can be greatly encouraged when they know they are not the only ones experiencing difficulties. This programme is also an opportunity for a short time of rest and fun. Through fellowship with others, playing games and learning from the Bible, they had the opportunity to be instruments of the Lord’s healing and encouragement to one another.”

Look out for a video of Wasihun and his sister, Bachu, coming soon to the Open Doors website.

A FAMILY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGHOUT THE WAR IN SYRIA

In Syria, Open Doors is supporting groups of Scouts for children and teenagers from five years old up to age 19. It might come as a surprise that the Scouts are running in Syria, but here, and in other parts of the Middle East, Scout troops are founded and run by churches. They are not just about young people having fun, exploring nature and doing good deeds – they are also the place where many young people learn about the Bible and decide to commit their lives to Christ.

Being a part of the Scouts has been a source of strength for many young people throughout the years of war in Syria. George is now 17, but he joined the Scouts when he was eight.

He says, “Through the Scouts, the church has been close to us teenagers. They were our pillar during these years of war, supporting us, and working non-stop to serve young people. “For me, the Scouts are a family I have been living with for nine years.”

Open Doors’ vision is that every child who faces persecution is reached with protection, provision and education. Our secret networks allow our workers to reach children even in the most dangerous places with love and long-term support – and it’s your prayers and gifts that make this work possible. Thank you! Please continue to pray for healing, protection and provision for persecuted children.

Your support and prayers are keeping hope alive for thousands of families in Syria as the war continues, providing vital food aid and medicines, as well as long-term projects such as youth and children’s work and trauma care. You can give to our Syria crisis appeal by calling our Inspire team on 01993 460015, or visiting our website at www.opendoorsuk.org
“Tell Archippus: See to it that you complete the ministry you have received in the Lord.’ (Colossians 4:17) These words have driven me to serve and kept me moving forward.”

So says 39-year-old Sube* from Ethiopia about the Bible verse that has kept her going in the midst of difficulties as she follows her evangelistic calling. Sube has been a Christian since she was 15 years old, when God healed her from an unknown illness. Thanks to your support, she has been able to receive theological training through Open Doors partners, and has since equipped and trained more than 100 evangelists, pastors and elders in her local area to lead churches and preach the gospel.

Sube’s journey of discipleship has not been easy. She comes from a remote area north of Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, where Christians suffer from violence, isolation and denial of certain rights. When her father found out that she and her sister had become Christians, he was furious, and chased them both from the family home. But this did not deter Sube. She went on to share her faith with the rest of her family, and brought them to Christ. She even planted a church! Her passion for evangelism meant that when Open Doors brought theological training to her area, she enrolled without hesitation.

Sube says, “The course shaped me and my ministry… Every time I attended a class, I was more convinced how vital this knowledge was to all Christians and I wanted to teach others.”

‘NO STORM, NO CHANGE’

Sube sees her completion of the course as just the beginning. “If God wills, I want to establish training centres for such people where I and other teachers can deliver training. This is my passion. I would like to acknowledge Open Doors for accepting me into the theological training. It has had a great impact on my life.”

Alem* is a mother of three, and has also benefited from the course and Sube’s teaching, going on to start teaching Sunday school and working in women’s ministry. She says, “The course moved me to keep on learning… [Sube] always taught me to embrace difficulties, saying, ‘No storm, no change.’ I thank Open Doors for making this course available and Sube for teaching it to me.”

‘GOD REALLY HEARD OUR PRAYERS’

Your support has also helped Dinke*, whose husband abandoned her and their eight children after they became Christians.

She says, “All my life I had been a Muslim. I first did not know Christianity. However, because of my son, Jesus Christ visited our family. Even though I knew little about Jesus, He still accepted me. I thank God for that and for leading me into true life…”

“Afterwards my husband came to see me as his enemy. He took the land, chased us from the house, placed locks on our property and left us. It forced us to find shelter far from our home area.”

But your support has helped Dinke and her
family get their lives back on track. “The Lord helped us a lot through Open Doors,” she explains. “When my husband took everything from me, Open Doors covered the costs of the lawyer who defended my case. I was able to get back my home and land, my children’s inheritance. You also helped me with money for food and other urgent expenses like medicine. God really heard our prayers.”

**ISLAMIC EXTREMISM IS GROWING**

Ethiopia is part of the Horn of Africa – one of four countries that make up the most easterly point of sub-Saharan Africa. It is currently ranked as number 29 on the Open Doors World Watch List, which ranks the top 50 countries in which it is most dangerous to be a Christian.

Ethiopia is a Christian-majority country, yet Christians face persecution from the government, extremist Muslims, and even each other. The Ethiopian government is suspicious of religion in general, and so continues to restrict religious freedom – religious broadcasting and religious activities in schools are banned. Christians who leave the Ethiopian Orthodox Church – which considers itself the one true church – to join Protestant churches have been physically attacked.

Christians in Ethiopia also suffer from Islamic oppression as Islamic extremism is on the rise; believers from Muslim backgrounds face the most persecution, and they risk facing violence and rejection as a result of their decision to follow Christ.

Open Doors has been active in Ethiopia since the late 1980s, working through local church partners to equip Christians for ministry by preparing believers for persecution and offering relief in certain cases, and providing livelihood support, cross-cultural evangelism training and support, management training for church leaders and theological and discipleship training.

Sube, Alem and Dinke are just three of our sisters you have strengthened in their faith and helped to be effective witnesses for Christ in their community – thank you!

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**CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?**

Inspire your church with stories of persecuted believers who are standing strong in their faith – turn to page 14 to find out more about *Can you believe it?*, our new, all-age resource!
Hear the stories of the persecuted church first-hand without leaving the country! This year at Standing Strong, we are delighted to be welcoming speakers from North Korea, Egypt and India, who will be sharing stories and testimonies with us. Worship alongside other Christians from all around the UK and Ireland as we learn how God is building His kingdom through His church in some of the most dangerous countries in the world.

In 2017, the news was frequently bombarded with stories from Egypt – stories of bombings and attacks on churches, in which 128 Christians were killed. As a result, the country rose four places to number 17 on the 2018 Open Doors World Watch List, which ranks the top 50 countries where it is the most dangerous to be a Christian. We’ve become so used to hearing about the violence that Christians face there, but what about the pressures that impact their daily lives?

‘A COMMUNITY OF HOPEFUL CHRISTIANS’
Egypt is home to roughly 95 million people, with Christians making up ten per cent of the population. Michael Jones*, an Egyptian business man who will be speaking at Standing Strong, shares some of the trials that they face daily. “At work, a Christian man or woman is not usually identified or treated as a work colleague or a team member, but rather as ‘the Christian’, a ‘Nazarene’ or an ‘infidel’. In spite of his 30 years of hard work in a public sector company, my father was never allowed to head his department because of his faith; and this is the case now with several friends from my church.

“Persecution is actually a part of the journey of anyone who wants to live for Jesus Christ.”

“Christian young men and women often do not get fair treatment or the same chances as their Muslim comrades. In cases of oral exams at university, job interviews, promotions and work privileges, they are usually treated differently because of their faith.”

Christian women are doubly persecuted – both for their gender and their faith. Christian girls are often targeted; they may be kidnapped, forcibly converted to Islam and married to Muslims.

Even the children of Christian parents are discriminated against in their classrooms – they’re asked difficult questions about theology by their teachers, and often neglected

*name changed for security reasons
and isolated from their classmates. Michael tells of one nine-year-old boy, Mina, who ‘went home one day and shredded his Bible in his full despair. He told his parents: “It’s much easier to live as a Muslim than as a Christian.”’

Christian business owners can find it difficult to make a living; Muslims will often call for a boycott if they find out that the owner of a shop is a Christian.

Nevertheless, Open Doors church partners are doing amazing work to support and encourage our Egyptian brothers and sisters as they face these trials.

Michael says, “Persecution is actually a part of the journey of anyone Christian who wants to live for Jesus Christ. There is a large community of Christians who are hopeful, who are taking the journey of forgiveness and love, showing the love of Christ to the community in many ways.”

BOOK NOW FOR STANDING STRONG!

Go to www.opendoorsuk.org to book your place for this very special event. Spaces are limited so book today to avoid disappointment!

ONLY 1 MORE MONTH OF DISCOUNT – BOOK BEFORE 1 AUGUST AND SAVE £5 PER TICKET!

“`They come with such faith, such vision, such love for their people and stories of hope.” – Attendee of Standing Strong 2017

Glasgow
10 November
10am-4pm
£10 (£15 after 31 July)

Ireland
12/13/14 November
7:30pm-9:30pm
£5

Birmingham
17 November
10am-4pm
Bethel Convention Centre
Adult: £10 (£15 after 31 July)
Child: £5 (ages 5-11)**

Ticket price includes refreshments but does not include lunch. You may bring your own lunch, or purchase lunch for £5 at time of registration.

**See our website for further details.
TAKE ON A CHALLENGE FOR YOUR PERSECUTED FAMILY

Could you run, trek, cycle or walk to raise support for your persecuted family? Do you love to bake? Or perhaps you have a unique fundraising idea of your own? Take on a challenge - in the UK or abroad, alone or with friends - and help transform the lives of Christians who are suffering for following Jesus.

BE A PILGRIM FOR THE PERSECUTED
A Pilgrimage is a wonderful opportunity to step out of your usual routine and seek a time of prayer and reflection – and it’s also a great way to raise support and prayer for your persecuted family! The Pilgrims’ Way offers you the fantastic experience of following in the footsteps of many thousands of Christians over the centuries as you make the 136-mile journey from Winchester to Canterbury. Reconnect with your cultural heritage and enjoy the beauty of God’s creation. You can walk the whole route in two weeks, or spread it over several weekends. You can walk alone or with a group of friends – or even as part of a relay! Walk at a time that suits you and set your own fundraising target.

“Trek Kilimanjaro
The Kilimanjaro Trek offers you the chance both to climb Africa’s highest mountain and to support Trauma Care and Children’s projects in Kenya. Your six-day trek will take you on the Rongai route to Kilimanjaro’s famous summit in Tanzania, with prayer and devotions along the way. Before you start you will meet with Kenyan Christians who have experienced persecution and whose lives are being changed, thanks to projects supported by Open Doors.

The 2018 trip runs from 9–21 October and is a joint venture with Christian charity Compassion. Costs are approximately £3,500 including flights. Your fundraising target is £2,000 which can be made up of one-off donations as well as regular giving by friends and family.

“IT’S SO HARD TO TRY TO DESCRIBE BECAUSE IT REALLY WAS THE MOST INCREDIBLE THING I HAVE EVER DONE. THE SCENERY EVERY DAY WAS LIKE NOTHING I HAVE EVER SEEN BEFORE. I REMEMBER ONE MORNING SITTING EATING BREAKFAST WATCHING THE SUN RISE OVER KENYA AND JUST FEELING SO IN AWE OF IT ALL.” – RACHEL, PREVIOUS PARTICIPANT

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“IT WAS CERTAINLY AN EFFORT AND A SACRIFICE BUT WELL WORTH IT! I FOUND THAT TELLING PEOPLE I WAS BEING SPONSORED ON A PILGRIMAGE WAS A CONCEPT THAT WAS EASY TO TALK ABOUT. ALL I HAD TO DO WAS GO EXPECTANTLY, THANKFULLY AND BE WILLING TO TAKE RISKS.” – SALLY, ABINGDON

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WALK, BAKE, RIDE, RUN... WITH THEM
Bring hope to Christians in the Middle East by doing the things you love! Run, walk, bake, swim, cycle... you can do just about anything to raise money and prayer for your persecuted family in Iraq and Syria.

Elisabeth from Burnley organised a cake sale for her church and community with a mouth-watering display of cakes spread on tablecloths up the stairs. Or how about taking advantage of the warmer summer days and organising a sausage sizzle, like Sue and Kerry from West Sussex? They found that the smell of the onions was a real draw! And when they shared that they were raising money for the persecuted church, they found people were very willing to partake.

NEW MUSKATHLON: SOUTH KOREA
Do you want to know more about what life is really like for North Korea’s Christians? Would you like to meet North Korean defectors and make a difference to those still trapped in the harsh regime living out their dangerous faith? Sign up for Muskathlon South Korea to raise funds for Christians living in North Korea, the most dangerous place in the world to be a Christian. Run 13, 26 or 39 miles, walk 39 miles or cycle 75 miles – you choose. Visit South Korean churches, sites of political interest and the demilitarised zone. Look over the border to North Korea and pray with local believers for their North Korean neighbours.

The trip will take place from 5–12 October 2019 and the cost is €1550 excluding flights. Your fundraising target is £10,000 which can be made up of one-off donations as well as regular giving by friends and family.

START YOUR CHALLENGE TODAY!
To request a pack for any of these events or to chat to us about your own challenge ideas, email challenge@opendoorsuk.org, ring Inspire on 01993 460015 or visit www.opendoorsuk.org/fundraise
Immediate execution – this is what faces our Somali brothers and sisters in the Horn of Africa if their secret faith is discovered. The Islamic extremist group al-Shabaab has intensified its hunt for Christians this year.

But Open Doors workers are also looking for these secret believers. You can help them find our Somali brothers and sisters, and bring them the vital support and encouragement they need to keep following Jesus, despite the incredible risks they are taking.

HELP US FIND THEM BEFORE SOMEONE ELSE DOES

Every £25 could put Bibles into the hands of five believers in the Horn of Africa.

Every £68 could train two secret church leaders to find and care for new believers facing persecution.

Your prayers and gift today will help Open Doors’ secret network to reach the most isolated and vulnerable believers in the Horn of Africa with vital support, and the love of their global church family.

Use the response form, call 01993 460015 or visit www.opendoorsuk.org