


OpenDoors NEWSLETTER

Same faith. Different lives.



From Africa to
Asia, hope is
rising again
this Easter.

ISSUE 2

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From Africa to Asia: Women of the persecuted Church

Violence against Christians in sub-Saharan Africa is rising at a rate we've never seen before. It's wrecking lives and damaging the Church. While in Asia, many have to keep their faith secret as they face violent opposition from those against their faith. This takes a toll on our family in these regions. From enduring religious attacks by extremists to being shunned by their families, many are left traumatised...

But **your generous prayers and support** helps many Christians across the world pick up the pieces after tragedy and enduring persecution.



Boko Haram attacks traumatised villages

It was night-time when Boko Haram attacked the village of Guyaku, northern Nigeria. Across the village, Charity, a single mum, gathered up her three children, bundled them outside and ran towards the mountains.

Amid the panic and confusion, two of Charity's children disappeared. Behind them, militants were killing Christians and torching homes.

Almost every home had been looted and burned, many believers were dead, and Charity's children were still missing. *"I couldn't even eat or drink,"* said Charity, *"because if my children are dead, what use is food to me?"*

But, just as Jesus could not be held in the tomb on the first Easter, so hope will rise in the darkest places. Two weeks after the

attack, Charity's prayer was answered. Her two children arrived home. *"It felt like a new dawn,"* said Charity.

Charity's story represents thousands of persecuted Christians across Nigeria who are left to pick up the pieces after violent religious attacks by extremists like Boko Haram.

Thankfully, you helped turn around Charity's community by providing them with emergency relief, food and support to rebuild. Importantly, your support also provides trauma counselling – to help people find true restoration in Jesus.

"The Boko Haram attack put a wound on our heart that would not be healed... But you have given us hope of a life in the future." Charity



Charity was traumatised by the attack; her children were missing for two weeks.

It's a shame to be single at 26

In Central Asia, where the freedom of women is limited, many women get married at the age of 21 as it's considered a way for them to achieve a respectable status, a level of dignity and value. So, in Samida's* (26) culture, it's unusual for her to be unmarried.

Samida came to faith in Christ as a teenager along with her parents. But her parents returned to Islam as they were deeply disappointed with Christianity because her father wasn't healed from his blindness. Samida, however, remained faithful to Jesus.

As the years pass, Samida's parents haven't received any negotiations for her hand in marriage, which stirs up gossip and embarrassment for them within their community.

Every day, Samida has to endure insults and beatings for her faith and because she isn't

married yet. *"It's your fault; you dishonour us by holding on to Christianity. No wonder there are no suitors for you! Don't you realise you bring shame on this household?!"*

"My mother tells everyone that I am a bad and lazy woman. She treats me like a slave. I am working day and night for my parents. Now they tell me that there is no more room for me in the house, and it's better that I share the shed with the animals."

"In their eyes, I'm nobody. I can't leave the town and move somewhere else, for that would spoil my reputation even more." Single women are limited in their freedom, and if they live on their own, people assume they're prostitutes, so they never feel safe.

Samida is one of many women, who experience being shunned, and their reputations marred by their families in Central Asia because they follow Jesus.

In Central Asia, your love and support help secret believers like Samida in their most trying times. Many are acting as salt and light in their communities thanks to the strength your support gives them, and they often report feeling the power of your prayers when under pressure.

Thank you for helping to turn things around for Charity, Samida and many others in our family of faith.
Thank you for helping hope to rise again this Easter and beyond!



*Illustrative image used, and name changed for security reasons.

Join us for...

Ramadan 2022 30 Days of Prayer for Afghanistan

The lives of secret Christians in Afghanistan has never been easy, but since the Taliban took over last August, it took a turn for the worst. Secret Christians are more vulnerable than ever before.

This **Ramadan (2 April-2 May)** we invite you to come to the throne room and intercede for Afghanistan. Visit www.opendoors.org.za/ramadan22 to download your free Ramadan prayer guide.

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Persecution Sunday

It was just after Pentecost in Acts when the persecution of the early Church started. Worldwide, the following Sunday is known as Persecution Sunday.

We invite you to join us this year on **SUNDAY, 12 JUNE 2022**, in churches across South Africa as we commemorate this day and those who suffer for the faith. Keep an eye on our events page and social media for more info on churches that will be hosting and to join us for an online event.



Christians worshipping in a church in Nepal.

Are you responding to Jesus?



I remember a time when I was doing a prayer walk with a team in a specific area in downtown Cape Town. As I walked down a path, I somehow felt the presence of Jesus in that space. It was as though the Lord was telling me that He walks there often, and He showed me how His heart breaks for the people there. I felt His footsteps as He interceded for His people who He wants to know Him. As I saw all of that, I said: ***“Lord, I want to have your heart and care for your people. I want to walk in these footsteps that I see from You.”***

Many of us are touched by something that the Lord has revealed to us. We know where His heart is and what He is doing. But we don't respond.

Persecuted believers hear and see the name of Jesus, and they respond, but it comes with a cost. Easter is here, and for many

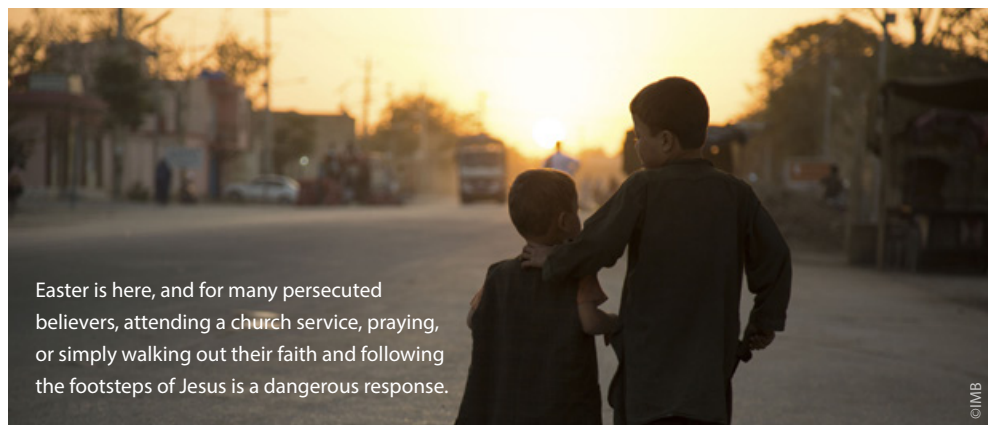
persecuted believers, attending a church service, praying, or simply walking out their faith and following the footsteps of Jesus is a dangerous response. But they lay down their lives every day because they know the heart of the Lord.

We're so grateful for *you*, our partners, who respond to Jesus's call through your prayers and support to meet the rising needs of our family of faith.

Open Doors is currently responding to the needs of persecuted believers worldwide by helping them stand strong during Easter and throughout the year.

You can continue to respond to the call of Jesus to strengthen believers around the world with your support.

Visit www.opendoors.org.za/givehope.



Easter is here, and for many persecuted believers, attending a church service, praying, or simply walking out their faith and following the footsteps of Jesus is a dangerous response.

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EASTER

attacks on Christians

For many among our persecuted family in Christ, Easter is a time of heightened danger because of what it represents for believers. Yet, while many of them have suffered for the name of Jesus during Easter, it's also because of Him that victory has been achieved. He carried our sins but also our pain. And because of that, the story of Easter is a reminder that the worst tragedy can be turned around.

Here is an overview of the attacks against Christians on and around Easter since 2015. It's in these same countries that the Lord continues to work and grow His Kingdom.

Thank you for your prayers and support over the years during these events.

As you celebrate Easter this year, please especially pray for our family of faith on the frontlines.



2015

SYRIA 21 killed & 60+ injured

KENYA 147 killed

PAKISTAN 17 killed & 80 injured

2016

PAKISTAN 74 killed & 300+ injured

2017

NEPAL 1 injured

EGYPT 49 killed & 110 injured

2018

EGYPT 7 kidnapped

PAKISTAN 7 injured

INDIA 1 injured

2019

NIGERIA 13 killed & 32 injured

SRI LANKA 259 killed & 500 injured

COMMON GROUND



22 attacks occurred on or close to Easter



Sri Lanka and Kenya saw the most deaths as a result of the attacks



Sri Lanka and Pakistan (2016) saw the highest number of individuals sustaining injuries as a result of the attacks



9 churches were targeted in 11 attacks



2 or more churches were hit with co-ordinated attacks in 4 of these instances



3 of the attacks were carried out by suicide bombers



9 attacks were perpetrated by Muslims or radical Islamic groups

From the heart



Dear partners and friends

Whether you find meaning in church traditions and the liturgy of remembering Palm Sunday, Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday, Lent, reflecting at the stations of the cross to remember Jesus' path, or if you focus on Good Friday and Easter Sunday celebrations with hot cross buns and Easter eggs – this time in the calendar is an important moment to remember and connect.

We remember the reality of our sin and need for a Saviour. We meet Jesus as He faced the cross and intentionally made the ultimate sacrifice of separation from God the Father for us. We hold our breath in the quiet of Saturday, recalling the first followers of Jesus, who waited anxiously and broken. We also remember the exhilaration of Easter, having received forgiveness – we celebrate new resurrection life.

For me, being a part of a ministry focused on our persecuted Christian family brings a different perspective to celebrating

Easter. Often this time of year hostility spills over into attacks and harsh discrimination and opposition – and the identification with Jesus's suffering because of their own suffering is significant.

Beyond gratefulness for eternal life and conviction to live in closer connection to Jesus and the hope He brings – these family members of ours find the strength to share in His suffering daily when hated because of their Christian identity, evangelism efforts and commitment to follow Jesus. May we continue to lift them up knowing that nothing shall separate them (or us) from the love of Christ. Not trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger or sword. May you have a blessed Easter.

Peace

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Persecuted  But never alone.

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