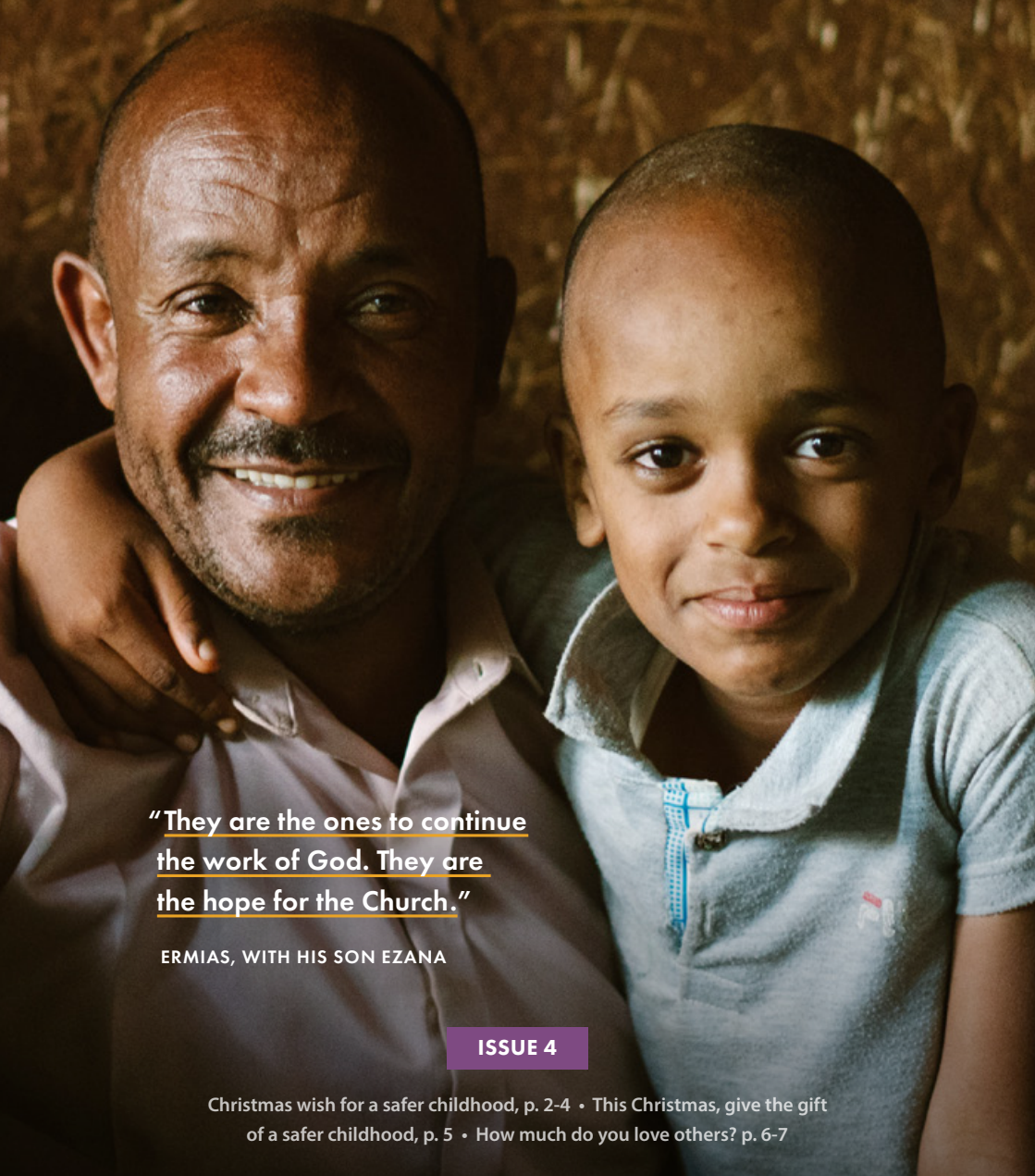




OpenDoors NEWSLETTER

STAND WITH THE NEXT GENERATION FOR THE GOSPEL



"They are the ones to continue
the work of God. They are
the hope for the Church."

ERMIAS, WITH HIS SON EZANA

ISSUE 4

Christmas wish for a safer childhood, p. 2-4 • This Christmas, give the gift
of a safer childhood, p. 5 • How much do you love others? p. 6-7



Christmas wish for a safe childhood

Ezana and Fasil Tedesse's* eyes shine as they anticipate Christmas. The games, the food, the songs they will sing, the bustle at home as people come and hear about Jesus... It's a joy shared by so many children at this time of the year.

But the excitement of those small boys from rural Ethiopia hides a deep desire. One wish, common to vulnerable children of the persecuted Church: All they want this Christmas is the gift of a safer childhood – without bullying, physical attacks, isolation and being denied an education.

Their father, Ermias, says: *"Even if Christian children were among the smartest in school, the teachers refuse to give them the grades they deserve. Their test scores would be lowered, but we could not afford to send them to another school."* And without an education, the twins would have little hope for the future.

But thanks to Open Doors partners like you, we worked together with the local Church to open a school in the local church compound to provide a safe place for children to get an education. It's part of a bridging project between the Christian community and the surrounding area.

The twins are now thriving in class – academically, spiritually and emotionally. *"We love going to school. We get an education from our teachers, and we really like learning and playing with our friends,"* they say.

With your support and prayers, children like Ezana and Fasil will have a brighter future – and they will grow to be strong, resilient and courageous witnesses for Christ. Thank you!

"They are the next generation for the Gospel," Ermias says. *"They are the ones to continue the work of God. They are the hope for the Church."*

*Names changed for security reasons.



The gift of a brighter future

Jenny, a 12-year-old girl from the Southern Philippines, is carving a new path for herself despite being persecuted for following Jesus. She had a future of hardship, persecution and struggle ahead of her – until Open Doors and its partners stepped in to change her story.

The opportunities for education seemed far beyond her reach. In her culture, tradition often overshadows the pursuit of education, leaving many youngsters to follow the familiar path of marrying at an early age, often as soon as they reach puberty.

For this reason, Open Doors' local partners have started a literacy class there to give them an alternative option and allow them the opportunity to dream of a brighter future.

Jenny loves learning and is thriving among the top in her class. It's given her a dream...

"I want to make a positive difference in the lives of others. I want to be a teacher or a youth leader in the house church, like my sister, and help others grow in faith," said Jenny.

She is bursting with excitement about Christmas. *"I absolutely love Christmas because it fills me with happiness,"* she smiles. *"It's the only time I receive a gift, which makes it special, and we remember how much God loves me and my family."*

This Christmas, Jenny will be remembering you, too – and she wants to thank you for your gifts and prayers. *"I am truly thankful for the support you provided for the literacy class,"* she said. *"It has inspired me and other children to dream big, knowing we have Jesus by our side."*



Elnura wishes us a blessed Christmas from Central Asia

Being a young teen and deaf is not easy for Elnura*, a girl from Central Asia. Many deaf Christians in this region are isolated and can't fully integrate into society. They are often ignored, and many find it hard to get jobs, so they don't have an income – there is a lack of access to training and education because they can't read and write.

Elnura is part of the deaf Christian community, which is one of the fastest growing groups of believers in Central Asia. They experience difficulties from society because of their disability, as well as because of their faith.

Open Doors provides support and training to them in many ways – through income generating training, computer skills, skills to repair mobile phones, beauty and make-up training and sign language training for hearing adults/children within families.

Elnura followed a sign language training course that enables her to communicate

with other deaf children and adults. She also received a Christmas gift from Open Doors.

Christmas gifts in Central Asia have a huge impact on both believers and non-believers. These projects enable the Church to reach out to believers, visit those who left the church under pressure or for any other reason, visit orphanages and hospitals with gifts and a Christmas programme, and encourage the children from deaf Christian families.

Naira, one of the Open Doors' partners who distributed the gifts, says: *"I really see Elnura being more open because she received love and attention. The Christmas gift really gave her the feeling that she is seen and loved – not only by us, but also from God."*

Thank you so much! Your support and prayers are helping to reaching communities like these in Central Asia and beyond!

*Name changed for security reasons.

This Christmas, give the gift of a safer childhood

Around the world, children are deprived of basic rights just because they are Christians.

Open Doors identifies and supports children living with persecution in the most dangerous parts of the world to be a Christian. Without our support, they have little hope.

Will you stand with us this Christmas?
Your prayers and support will help
give urgent aid and a more secure
future to a persecuted child.



"They are the next generation of the Gospel, they are the ones to continue the works of God," says Ermias, a father from Ethiopia.



Scan the QR code or visit
www.opendoors.org.za
to support them and
pray for them.



TRAVEL WITH OPEN DOORS IN 2024

Is your heart yearning to provide resources, support, and prayer to our persecuted family under persecution?

Join us for a webinar on **16 NOVEMBER** at **19:00** to learn more about travelling to the persecuted Church with Open Doors in 2024.

Register for the webinar by
scanning the QR code or visit
www.opendoors.org.za.



How much do you **LOVE** others?

It's easy to love those who love us, but what about those who we have issues with or from whom we gain no benefits? How much do we love those people?



"IF WE REALISED THE TRUE POWER OF PRAYER, WE'D BE ON OUR KNEES DOZENS OF TIMES EACH DAY." BROTHER ANDREW

Matthew 5:44-46 says: *"You have heard that it was said: 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven."*

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Do we do this? It might feel as though the Lord is asking us for too much. Yet God did this for us – He loved us who were once His enemies, as shown in Romans 5:10: *"For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life?"*

What about praying for those who hurt or harm us? Do we pray for them? Serving the persecuted Church, we hear many testimonies of persecuted Christians praying for those who have hurt them – sometimes in unimaginable ways.

Why would they pray for those who persecute them? Because they know Jesus is the only one who can break through the hardness of their hearts, and He is the only way they can experience the hope that we as Christians have in knowing that one day we will be reunited with Him, ending the troubles we face in this world.

Wouldn't we want that for those we love? A relationship with our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

So prayer is vital in showing our love for

those around us. Intercessory prayer is an unselfish expression of love. It's a way for us to reflect God's character of love and mercy to those around us. And it helps us to see others through God's eyes – those made by God in His image.

If God could change the heart of Paul on the road to Damascus, what can't He do when we pray to Him for those around us?

Today, who is the Lord asking you to pray for?

HOW TO PRAY FOR OUR PERSECUTED FAMILY

- Pray for resilience for them to endure the persecution they face.
- Pray for the Lord to change the hearts of their persecutors as He did with Paul.
- Pray that the peace of God will guard their hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7), as the devil tries to let them doubt God's presence and love for them.



Why not join us in November as we pray for our persecuted family? Scan the QR code for more info.

FROM THE HEART



Dear partners and friends

Thank you for your partnership during this past year. I pray that you have been encouraged and challenged as you journey along with this ministry that raises awareness, prayer and support for the worldwide persecuted Church.

Recently, I reflected on the need to live authentically – holding on to our core beliefs in relationship with Jesus despite pressures to go along with the popular opinion and what everyone else is doing.

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul writes: *“Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, ‘children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation’. Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life.”*

When visiting our family of faith, who lives under restrictions and often severe pressure because they follow Jesus, this shining like stars in a dark environment is noticeable. Their joy and determination to live according to their identity as children of God is a challenge to me. How easy it is to be overwhelmed by our circumstances.

Again, as we move closer to Christmas, many in the countries where persecution is very high to extreme face increased pressure and danger for celebrating the Prince of Peace’s coming.

You are invited to pray for them – and act in support of the families and children who need safety and encouragement to endure so that they will shine as stars in their communities.

Peace

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Persecuted  But never alone.