After a devastating attack, a Christian community picks up the pieces.
Near to the broken hearted
After a devastating attack by Boko Haram, one Christian community picks up the pieces and rebuilds to remain a light in Nigeria through the help of your prayers and support

Beyond the violence in Nigeria
Charity and her children survived a violent Boko Haram attack on their Nigerian village, Guyaku; and through your prayer and support, they’re finding hope for the future

For whatever comes next
One can’t tell the story of faith without telling the story of persecution

Impact Report
How you are changing lives

Persecution Watch
Where and how God’s people are suffering for their faith

Updates from Capitol Hill
from Isaac Six

People who help through their time and talents

A monthly reflection on God’s goodness and what He’s teaching through Scripture and the witness of the persecuted church

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Presence
Presence magazine showcases the powerful stories of faith of persecuted Christians, while showing how God is at work through the united Body of Christ around the world.

About Open Doors
For over 60 years, Open Doors has worked in the world’s most oppressive countries, empowering Christians who are persecuted for their faith.

Open Doors Core Values
We are part of the Body of Christ, a people-to-people people
We are persecuted church-driven
We are people of the Bible
We are people of prayer
We live and work by faith
We are devoted to Jesus Christ and His commission
We are motivated solely for the glory of God

ON THE COVER
Pastor Andrew lives in the Nigerian village of Guyaku. In February 2015, Boko Haram attacked the town—and burned down Pastor Andrew’s church and home. But God hadn’t left His people behind.

Find out more on page 12.

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YOU CAN BE THERE.
By giving $30 a month, you can provide your persecuted family with critical support and emergency relief.

Become an Open Doors Frontline Partner means you’ll join the largest on-the-ground network of support for persecuted Christians in the world.

Sign up today at OPENDOORSUSA.ORG/ PRESENCEFLP
My spirit sank when I first read those words from Pastor Andrew, our brother in Nigeria. It’s a sentiment made familiar through the COVID-19 pandemic: What comes next? Will this ever change? When can our families be together again?

But Pastor Andrew’s pain was on another level—he watched the embers of his church as it burned, listened to the cries of his congregation and questioned how such a sacred thing could be disregarded and destroyed.

And in those moments, hope is the hardest thing to hold on to.

The news from Nigeria is grim: Religious violence, like the attack Pastor Andrew suffered, is more intense and widespread than ever before. Nigeria’s meteoric rise to No. 7 on Open Doors’ 2022 World Watch List shows the startling scale of oppression experienced by Christians in the country. In the past year, we have seen a 67 percent increase in the number of Christians killed for their faith in Nigeria. At least 10,000 more have lost homes, endured harassment, and escaped extremist attacks with nowhere to go. And those are just the reports we know about.

When I hear these stats and stories, I’m tempted to lose hope, too. The problem of persecution in Nigeria seems too big and too complex to solve. Can those of us who worship freely really make a difference for those who can’t?

But the moments that seem hopeless are the moments Jesus steps into. Those are the moments He reveals how He turns bad things into good, inviting us to follow Him into small actions that make a massive impact.

We all have a role to play. This year my role brought me to a Washington, D.C., meeting with religious freedom advocates. There I learned that an article I wrote had reached Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari. The piece called for government intervention to stem the spread of religious violence in Nigeria, and by the grace of God, the authorities acted.

Just as I learned this news, a Nigerian advocate across the table said, “That was you!? Thank you for speaking up. That work gave us six months of peace.”

Six months of peace so they can prepare for whatever comes next.

While persecution worsens, God is at work behind the scenes—multiplying every effort to strengthen His people. He is using every prayer, every letter, every gift to bless the persecuted with the resilience they need to persevere for better days.

Yes, there may be another attack. But there will also be another worship service. Extremists may burn down 10 churches, but we’ll be there to rebuild 100 churches. Thousands of brothers and sisters may suffer unimaginable loss, but we’ll make sure each of them has a trauma counselor. And many more may be tempted to lose hope—or even faith itself. But we’ll keep sending copies of God’s Word and letters of encouragement so they can hear the cloud of witnesses reminding them that they are not alone.

I believe that where there is a suffering church, there can be a strengthening church. But their needs are growing every day, and we must do more to meet that challenge. We must remain faithful to the role God has invited us to play in Nigeria’s restoration, so they can remain hopeful—for whatever comes next.
FRONTLINE FAITH

MYANMAR

HUNDREDS ADDED TO THE CHURCH

More than a year after Myanmar’s military led a coup and took over the civilian government, our partners inside the country have managed to reach believers caught in the escalating violence between the military and opposition forces. See page 9.

Since September 2021, with your help we’ve provided emergency aid to 17,135 believers unable to get food, medicine and other essential items. In addition to offering practical assistance, Open Doors is working with area churches to provide discipleship training. This year more than 500 people have given their lives to Jesus in Myanmar.

“Against the backdrop of intense strife and violence, God is working mightily!”

Of the larger group, 50 were children who raised their hands and made a decision for Christ. “By partnering with local churches, we are reaching out to the unreached children, assuring salvation in their young age, strengthening their faith, building good character, and helping develop a Christlike attitude in their lives,” Lwin explains.

LAOS

‘THANK YOU FOR YOUR FAITHFUL PRAYERS!’

“Thank you for your love, kindness and faithful prayers, especially the food that you give us! May God bless you.”

Laotian sisters Phoun, Fa and Daeng (pictured below) shared their gratitude with Open Doors partners when they delivered food and other necessities to their village. In south, central and north Laos, our partners have distributed packages of COVID-19 aid relief to more than 1,000 believers. Praise God!

CENTRAL ASIA

VITAL CONNECTION

In a place where Christians must gather in secrecy and raids by police are always a threat, encouraging one another becomes vitally important. Recently, several house churches in Central Asia (we can’t disclose the specific country for the Christians’ safety) came together for a retreat that your support helped provide. Believers were able to worship, learn and laugh together. The churches invited unbelievers as well.

“One of the unbelievers we invited came to faith and was baptized,” says Pastor Temir. “Praise the Lord for this woman, who found new life!”

CAMEROON

A PLACE TO HEAL

Baldina’s eyes reflect the tragedy she’s lived through. When their village in northern Cameroon was attacked by Boko Haram extremists, one of her sons was killed; another fled to a faraway town out of fear. Baldina and her elderly husband were alone, too weak to farm and fend for themselves.

Before the attack, Baldina called herself a Christian, but the roots weren’t deep. Her grief brought her back to a local church where she found comfort: “When I hear the message, listen to the songs, I am comforted. I thank God for everything... He is helping me to be strong today.”

Baldina and her husband are among the 3,000-plus Cameroonian families that Open Doors reached with relief aid, including food and clothes, during the last seven months of 2021. The aid helps Christian leaders who support persecuted church members like Baldina and her husband.

“Without this food, we would die of hunger,” she shares. “Thank you! I am grateful. You gave it to me, and God gave it to me.”

Your support in bringing children to Jesus.

Your support in encouraging house churches in Central Asia.

Your support in strengthening grieving families in Cameroon.

Your support is bringing COVID-19 relief to families struggling to survive.

Your support is bringing children to Jesus.

*Name changed to preserve security

*Your support is strengthening grieving families in Cameroon.
MALAYSIA
MESSAGES FOR DIFFICULT TIMES

Recently Susanna Koh, wife of abducted Malaysian pastor Raymond Koh, visited the Open Doors offices where she and her son Jonathan received hundreds of letters from believers throughout the world. It's been more than five years since Raymond was last seen.

"The family has been through a lot of struggles and challenges, but the prayers of the saints have kept our spirits up, especially the cards and letters from Christians all over the world," Susanna shared.

"Thank you so much for upholding our family in the Lord. It really encourages our hearts especially in difficult times and difficult seasons. God bless you."

NEPAL
NEW HOPE FOR WIDOWED MOTHER OF THREE

When Pabitra Regmi* accepted Christ after her mother was healed, she never realized just how much that decision would change her life. Her in-laws berated her constantly for her decision.

"I was always discriminated [against] and was not allowed to even touch the things in the house," Pabitra says. Eventually, she and her husband, also a Christian, left his family's home with their three children.

But when her husband died unexpectedly, Pabitra quickly realized she was a widowed, single parent who—with no support from her husband or his family—could no longer feed her children.

"They never came to help me, as I was a Christian," she shares.

That's when our partners met Pabitra, assessed her situation and provided her with goats she could raise to provide for her family.

"Though I do not have my husband, God is with me," she says. "I am very grateful to God and to the Open Doors partners who supported and encouraged me during my difficulties. From the support, I gained hope to continue managing my family. I give thanks to all the people who helped me. Also, I pray that God keeps you safe and blesses your ministry."

Pabitra asks for prayer for her children's future and that her health would remain strong so she can care for her children.

AFGHANISTAN
SECRET BELIEVERS SHARE WHAT'S HAPPENING

Almost eight months since the Taliban took over Afghanistan and announced that executions and amputations will resume as they enforce the strictest interpretation of Shariah law, Christians there offer a glimpse of what life is like for secret believers now.

"The list has been circulated with our names on it," Saad says. "Some [of us] have been killed. Some have been kidnapped. Some have disappeared." Saad shares, "It feels like the morning after a massive cataclysmic explosion."

When the Taliban took control, it was "everything we feared," Saad said. "You cannot understand it like I do. I cannot explain it in words."

Another Christian, an Afghan artisan named Sharifullah,* described watching men climb ladders to paint over "anything that was beautiful and hopeful" with Taliban slogans and flags.

"The Taliban are killing our souls and spirits," he said. "They don't have to shoot us for this to be painful and hard, but they will shoot us. They are killing the souls of our children by taking all that is beautiful away from them."

He shares the concern of many Afghan secret believers: betrayal by family members and neighbors. Christians are fearful that those who know they follow Christ will expose them to the Taliban or other extremist groups. Sharifullah and his wife worry that they'll be exposed by his wife's brother.

"He used to tell us, 'You are too free with your lives. One day the Taliban will come back, and it will be better for you that you destroy all this.' Now, that day has come."

CENTRAL ASIA
BEATEN WHILE SHARING JESUS

A believer in Central Asia (we can't disclose his specific country) recently asked for prayer. Zjura* is an eager evangelist who openly shares his faith. He travels from village to village, telling people about Jesus. He is known for asking striking questions about life and God to engage his listeners in thoughtful discussion.

But where Zjura lives, telling others about Jesus can be a risk. Recently, he visited a village that didn't welcome his message. He explains that when he started to share, a group of people began to beat him. “You cannot protect yourself!” they shouted. Zjura attempted to continue talking with them, but they continued to attack him—leaving him injured and needing medical care.

He chose not to go to the police; he knew they wouldn’t help him. As is the case in many areas that are hostile to the gospel, Zjura’s report would have been ignored and his attackers gone unpunished. Instead, he forgave his persecutors and continues to speak of Jesus wherever he goes.
MYANMAR

“The situation is difficult to describe. Whenever the military goes, they burn the houses, kill the pigs [which many families rely on for income] and occupy churches… People in Chin state are migrating in droves, and towns have become completely empty. There is nowhere to hide but the jungle.”

—OPEN DOORS LOCAL PARTNER BROTHER LWIN

COLOMBIA

EXPelled from their homes—again

It was 20 years ago when 30 indigenous families in Colombia were expelled from their own community for turning to Christ. After searching, they found a new place to rebuild and start a new chapter. Over time, others outside their community settled in the same area, seeking shelter from armed conflicts in the region.

Now the non-Christian residents have formed a council to dictate “laws.” First on the list was closing the local Christian school if it would not teach traditional school courses. To dictate “laws.” First on the list was closing the local Christian school if it would not teach traditional school courses. To

BANGLADESH

BEaten and fired for following JESUS

Imagine wearing a Christian T-shirt and being threatened with your life for it. Our partners in Bangladesh met Jobayer* who shared his story after he showed up to work in a shirt he received at a youth camp organized by Open Doors partners:

“One of the men I work with asked the meaning of the words on the shirt. He didn’t know I was a Christian. He acted okay then but later lured me to a dark place and confronted me. Then he pulled a knife on me and said, ‘If you do not return to Islam, I will kill you!’ But I refused.”

When Jobayer arrived at work the next day, the staff was waiting for him.

“They asked me why I converted, and how much money I had received.”

Jobayer denied the accusation and in response began to declare Jesus as his Lord. When he converted, he was no longer welcome there.

“For example, several years ago the religious police in Saudi Arabia raided and arrested over a dozen members of an underground church composed of migrant workers from Ethiopia. Members of Congress, alerted by advocates, quickly asked to meet with the Saudi Arabian government in Washington so the Saudi government could explain the arrests. The explanations turned out to be all smoke. A common supposed trap was trafficking to visa issues to petty crime. Prepared in advance, congressional staff pointed out that the arrest happened during worship service, that the police explicitly told the members they were being arrested for holding the service, and that under international agreements protecting basic rights, the members should be released. After several months of negotiations, the Christians were released, and the Saudi Arabian government eventually began to curtail the excesses of their religious police force.

The Church we serve may often be invisible to the naked eye, but it exists in the hearts and lives of those who follow Jesus. As advocates, we can make sure the invisible remains visible—especially to those in positions of influence willing to stand up for the persecuted.
After a devastating attack by Boko Haram, one Christian community picks up the pieces and rebuilds to remain a light in Nigeria through the help of your prayers and support.

BY CHRISTOPHER SUMMERS
PASTOR ANDREW WALKS THE DIRT PATH, JUST WIDE ENOUGH FOR TWO PEOPLE, TOWARD HIS CHURCH IN GUYAKU, NIGERIA.

There are tall grasses on his left, waving in the morning breeze, and there’s a large outcropping of boulders on his right.

Entering the church, he’s greeted by women wearing colorful dresses with blooming flowers and bright patterns, their heads wrapped in traditional scarves called geles. The men wear a mix of Western clothing and long sokoto shirts that come to the knees.

When worship begins, the church comes alive with clapping, rhythmic Nigerian choruses, steel drums and heartfelt dancing. The music thrums and pours out the square windows and into the radiant morning light.

This time of worship might seem normal—it’s a church, after all. But it wasn’t long ago that Pastor Andrew thought his church would never worship again.

In 2015 the extremist group Boko Haram violently attacked the Christians in Guyaku, killing several believers and burning all but six of their houses. And Pastor Andrew’s church was reduced to rubble.

“I lost hope that we would come together to worship God again because our church was destroyed,” he shares.

“BOKO HARAM IS ATTACKING GUYAKU!”

On the night of the attack, Pastor Andrew remembers the church treasurer running into his home, frantically yelling, “Boko Haram is attacking Guyaku!” When Pastor Andrew stepped into the night, there were already rows of houses on fire.

“Fire was consuming the entire village,” Pastor Andrew says. “We ran for our lives and went to hide [in caves] under the mountains.”

As he hid with other believers from Guyaku, Pastor Andrew whispered a prayer for his congregation—but it wasn’t what you might think. “During the time of the attack, my prayer for my members was that God would strengthen their faith,” he says. “And even if they were abducted, that they would not deny Christ but hold firmly to their faith.”

Like Pastor Andrew, many Christians hid in caves and waited out the long night, hoping and praying their loved ones had survived.

When morning finally came, everyone cautiously left their hiding places and tried to locate family members.

“When we entered Guyaku, the scene was devastating. The heavy smell of smoke rose through the air, and homes continued to smolder. Boko Haram had stolen their possessions, and what they couldn’t take, they burned.”

“The persecution was so much that I never imagined we would come together again to worship in the church,” Pastor Andrew says. “We lost everything.”

FINDING THE STRENGTH TO REBUILD

Pastor Andrew and the other church leaders tried to encourage their people to trust in the Lord, rebuild their homes and remain in Guyaku.

However over time, as the remaining Christians began to repair their homes and resettle, more believers returned.

At one point, Pastor Andrew knew it was time to gather again as a church. The village was still largely in ruins, but they were able to cobble together a gathering place from among the wreckage. “I called the attention of some of the church members, and we brought all our burned zinc [roofs] together and some sticks to make a worship place,” he says.

And it was under that makeshift roof of burned zinc, walls thatched with sticks from the forest, and log benches balanced on rocks, that God resurrected the church. Boko Haram had intended to...
destroy the Christian community of Guyaku—but God wasn’t finished with Pastor Andrew’s little congregation just yet.

PARTNERING TOGETHER FOR HOPE

As soon as Open Doors heard about the attack, we rushed to help the church with emergency relief, food aid, trauma widow counseling and the support needed to rebuild.

“After the attacks, you were the first to come and help each family with food support,” Pastor Andrew says. “Not only did you give us food, but you also brought trauma healing teachings to us. We organized various groups in our region, and you came down to us to teach us.

“We received both spiritual and physical support from you.”

Pastor Andrew’s experience represents the stories of thousands of Christians across Nigeria who risk their lives to call themselves Christians. Today, more Christians are killed for their faith in Nigeria than in any other country in the world. Violent attacks by Boko Haram and other Islamic extremist groups are common in the country’s north and Middle Belt—and are becoming more common farther south.

For persecuted Christians, the needs are significant across the country. Your prayer and support go toward helping Christian leaders, like Pastor Andrew, pick up the pieces and rebuild after deadly attacks.

Boko Haram’s objective is clear—to wipe out every Christian presence in the region—but, through your help, God is rebuilding these communities stronger than when they started.

“I WON’T TURN BACK”

“If you had not come here with your support and trainings, I don’t know how the Christians would have been,” Pastor Andrew says. “But God brought [Open Doors] at just the right time.

“My heart is filled with joy to express my gratitude,” he adds. “If there were a word greater than ‘thank you,’ I would have said it. But, because of you, they are living hopeful, thinking of the kingdom of heaven.”

Today, the Christians of Guyaku have a new church building, and their congregation is even larger than it was before the attack. What Satan sought to destroy, God multiplied.

After the church service, Pastor Andrew walks down the steps of his new church and back into the Nigerian sun as he greets many of his congregation. Then, with a broad smile, he shakes hands—holding his Bible close to his side.

When asked if the attack has weakened his resolve or made him fearful of following Jesus and leading his people, Pastor Andrew gives a simple but powerful reply: “Come what may, I won’t turn back because I know there is a reward that awaits me.”

IF THERE WERE a WORD GREATER THAN “THANK YOU, I WOULD HAVE SAID IT. BUT, BECAUSE OF YOU, THEY ARE LIVING HOPEFUL, THINKING of the KINGDOM of HEAVEN.”

— PASTOR ANDREW

Through your prayer and support, Pastor Andrew and his church members know they’re not alone and the Body of Christ across the world stands with them. But there are so many more persecuted Christians, just like the Christians of Guyaku, who need prayer, emergency relief, ongoing support and critical trauma care.

Will you prayerfully consider giving a generous gift today to help strengthen persecuted Christians in Nigeria like Pastor Andrew?
Charity, a young mother of four in northern Nigeria, leans over and picks up another ear of corn from a metal container. She shucks it as she stands next to her two daughters, Elizabeth and Patience, and her son, Theophilus. She's wearing a red headscarf, and she's teasing Theophilus about something. He laughs and flashes a bright smile, then shakes his head.

The afternoon sun is intense, so they sit in the shade to prepare the corn. The wall of their mud brick home behind them, with window shutters of corrugated steel, is the same rustic brown as the ground at their feet. Beside them there's a short wall made of thatched branches, and a kit of pigeons coos and pecks the ground nearby.

It's a scene played out by millions of people every day—a family gathered together to prepare food for the day.

But the simplicity of the scene disguises something miraculous: Charity and her family nearly lost everything because they follow Jesus, and the mere act of preparing a meal together was something they thought might never be possible again.

Here in Guyaku, a remote village in northern Nigeria, being a Christian comes with significant risk. Nigeria is the deadliest place in the world for Christians, and extremist groups like Boko Haram, the Islamic State group, and other militants target believers for violence.

In these attacks, Christians are often murdered or have their property and means of livelihood destroyed. Charity and her children know this firsthand. They're survivors of a deadly Boko Haram attack on their village.

**THE NIGHT OF THE ATTACK**

"It was the hot season," Theophilus says, "when they came."

Charity, a single mom, was cleaning up for the evening when her brother came running into the house. "Put out the light! Put out the light!" he whispered urgently.
“That was the moment we found out Boko Haram was attacking our village,” Charity says.

Boko Haram has long been one of the most infamous terrorist groups in the world, inflicting devastation in Nigeria and other West African nations for more than a decade. They view themselves as the ultimate expression of Islam and want to establish an Islamic state ruled under their radical interpretation of the faith and the Quran.

Across northern Nigeria, believers know that when Boko Haram arrives, terror is not far behind. So Charity knew what was about to happen when she heard her brother’s warning.

They knew all they could do was run.

“I was scared,” Theophilus shares. “I thought that we wouldn’t survive. So I grabbed my sister’s hand, and we ran.

Charity grabbed her youngest daughter and quickly placed her on her back in a wrap.

“It was at that time that we ran away towards the mountains,” Charity says. “We were heading in the same direction when a motorbike came toward us. That was how I got separated from my children. I went with my little girl, and my son ran in a different direction with his sister.”

Charity ran toward the mouth of a cave and darted inside for shelter with others from the village. In the darkness, she whispered her children’s names. No answer. She whispered again and again: “Theophilus … ? Elizabeth … ?”

But her words were met with silence. “What if they killed my children?” Charity thought in the darkness.

The night in the cave was long. Finally, at daybreak, everyone shuffled cautiously out of the cave and started to walk back to the village to view the damage. On her way back, Charity heard that Boko Haram had killed some of her family members in the attack.

It was devastating news—but all she could think about was her children.

And they were nowhere to be found.

PICKING UP THE PIECES

“When I arrived home, I didn’t see my children,” Charity remembers. “I couldn’t even eat food or drink water throughout the day because there was no taste, and I was thinking, ‘If I drink this water and eat this food and my children are dead, of what use is the food to me?’”

A week went by with no news, and fear overtook the village. There was no cell service, and many thought the roads were too dangerous to travel. Charity didn’t know if she’d ever see her children again.

One day, alone in the house doing some chores, Charity heard her son calling out her name. When she looked out her front door, she saw Theophilus and Elizabeth walking toward her.

“I was so shocked and excited as I shouted their names!” Charity shares. “Seeing my children felt like a new dawn—everything changed because my lost children were back.”

“We shed tears of joy,” Theophilus says. The reunion was a profoundly moving answer to prayer.

“But soon, after all the joy and laughter, we started remembering the fact that some of our family members had died,” Charity shares. “So we went to console our family members and mourned our loved ones. But I was greatly comforted because I saw my children were alive.”

STANDING WITH OUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

When Open Doors heard about the attack on Guyaku, our partners in the field rushed into action to help provide emergency aid, food relief, support to rebuild—and critical trauma counseling.

“Your coming helped us a lot,” Charity says, “at the time that we had lost hope and had no place to stay—because we were sleeping in the bush behind the town after the incident occurred.”

There are so many difficult memories that can stir up fear within the hearts of both Charity and her children. The darkness is a reminder of the violence. Loud noises can trigger shocked reactions, and even dogs barking can bring a shudder of fear after the sun sets on Guyaku.

Fortunately, the trauma counseling has had a positive impact on the family. “The attack put a wound in our hearts that would not be healed. But the teachings you gave us really helped us because it brought unity,” Charity adds.

“We didn’t know we were traumatized,” Charity shares. “We didn’t even know what trauma meant. Then you came just at the time we needed the teaching on trauma. The teaching on trauma has helped us a lot.”
What was that night like for you?

Theophilus: We ran far that night; we didn’t turn back until we met with our neighbors [in a cave] under the mountain. Then we kept on walking together to a town called Ushibara. We walked very far. When we arrived, we didn’t see our parents because they were also looking for us in the night.

They couldn’t find us; we were looking for them too, but we couldn’t find them.

The morning came. We were still looking and couldn’t find them. People came and were trying to find out what was happening in our hometown. Then they said two people died—our grandaunt and our uncle opposite our house died.

When morning came, we went to Gambi so we could go home. We went back home and didn’t [see] our mother for a week—and then we met with our mother.

What was the impact of the attack on your community?

Theophilus: Boko Haram came and drove people away—then people sought after God. People became close to God because everyone was scared of death.

If anyone is sick, that person would be praying, looking for God: if he gets healed, he then forgets about God. So that was what we did during that time: we sought after God.

What’s a verse that helped you?

Theophilus: Psalm 23 that says, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

Why did you and your family weep when you saw each other again?

Theophilus: When we met, being that we didn’t think we would meet again, we shed tears of joy, because we didn’t think we will meet again. That is why we cried—because we missed each other.

How can we pray for you?

Theophilus: I am in need of prayers because Boko Haram have spread everywhere. We don’t know—maybe in the night they [could attack]. The kidnappers and Boko Haram are everywhere.
Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I came to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior at the age of 21 in a Bible study in my home. It went from head to heart, and God literally changed my life starting that night.

When did you first become aware of persecuted Christians?

The Lord got my attention about the reality of the persecuted church in 2002. He used a couple of incidents to do this. Something had been going on and things weren’t changing, and I finally sat down and asked God, “Lord, what are you trying to teach me in regard to the persecuted church.” After the Lord spoke to my heart (no audible voice, just an awareness), I understood what He wanted to teach me in regard to the persecuted church.

What’s a place you have a heart for?

Basically, I have a heart for all the places Christians are persecuted. The one that I think about when reading the Bible is Israel. Christians are a small minority among those who adhere to Judaism and Sunni Islam. The atmosphere is hostile for the most part for those who move away from Judaism and Islam.

How do you serve the persecuted church through Open Doors?

By God’s grace I have been able to support the persecuted by many avenues. I verbally engage people. Many aren’t aware of what is happening worldwide. I also write letters and send cards through Open Doors. I make people aware of how to become a Connector through Open Doors and [how to use] the Prayer [App] to have up-to-date situations available to be prayed for.

What’s one piece of encouragement you’d offer to others about helping the persecuted church?

Hebrews 13:3: “Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the Body.” What greater encouragement can we have than the Scriptures themselves and their encouragement, instruction and admonition?

Tell us a little bit about yourself.

I am an 80-year-old woman recently widowed after 61 years of marriage. We were missionaries with Child Evangelism Fellowship for about 20 years, both locally and in the English-speaking Caribbean.

When did you first become aware of persecuted Christians?

We first heard about Brother Andrew’s smuggling of Bibles into Russia from a friend at church. We were encouraged to pray and give through quite a few presentations at our church through speakers and films from Open Doors.

What’s a place you have a heart for?

I especially have a heart for persecuted children and their parents. How hard it must be to pass on your faith to your children in the midst of persecution.

How do you serve the persecuted church through Open Doors?

Other than prayer, which I have done for years, I was excited to realize that the Open Door’s headquarters was very near to me in Santa Ana, California. I wanted to volunteer there for many years. This dream came true when caring for my husband with multiple sclerosis came to an end last year. I have been richly blessed so I have worked with some very special people at Open Doors.

What’s one piece of encouragement you’d offer to others about helping the persecuted church?

From the book of Revelation, I have come to realize what a special place the persecuted church has to the heart of God. Therefore, be encouraged to pray, and then pray some more to our powerful God to comfort and encourage them.
Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge. my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.

— Romans 12:17-19

REFLECT

This passage seems obvious on its surface—but for believers living in places where it’s hard to follow Jesus, this command can be incredibly difficult. Our field tells us a story that shows this reality:

“One of our contacts, Brother Jacob,” is a wonderful pastor in his 60s. One time, representatives from several [governmental] departments came to investigate Jacob and asked him to hand over a contact list of all the believers in his church. Jacob simply said, ‘Sorry, I have no legal right to disclose other people's private details, but I can give you a list of our church leaders. Please contact us with anything you’d like to discuss. We are always happy to take responsibility for church matters. And anyway, when the others are in trouble will you go to help them? Will you visit them when they are sick? If there is a death in the family, will you take them clothes and help with the funeral?’

“He stresses that both inside and outside the church, Christians must have a good reputation. ‘We must be polite,’ Jacob said. ‘If anyone comes to us, we will serve them the best we can, but we will never compromise our message or deny our brothers and sisters just to protect ourselves. God is always with us, so we are not afraid of anything. Besides, believing in Jesus is not a crime. We go about our work quietly, serving others with all our hearts ... but if we are opposed in some way, we will never be afraid. That is when we are bold, strong and courageous!’

PRAY

Heavenly Father, we thank you for believers like Brother Jacob, who risk so much to follow you. Thank you for their clear commitment to loving everyone, no matter what, and to loving you above all else. Please give us the same spirit of trust and faith. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

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