

BARNABAS FUND - AID AGENCY FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH - BRINGING HOPE TO SUFFERING CHRISTIANS

COVID-19

God pours out blessings on global persecuted Church through you!

NIGERIA

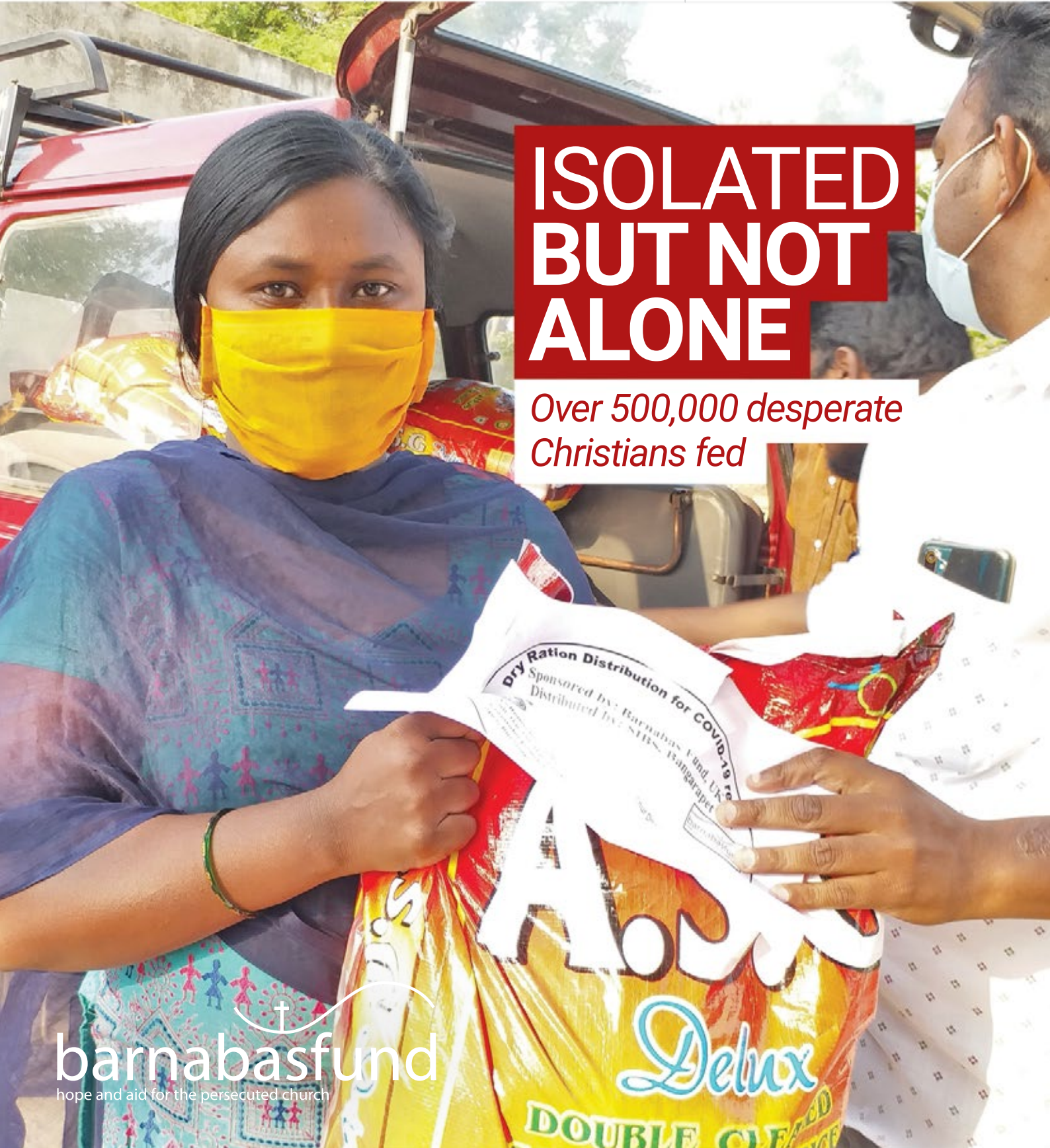
Courageous martyrs of northern terror jihad

LOCUSTS

Saving God's people in East Africa and Pakistan from hunger

ISOLATED BUT NOT ALONE

Over 500,000 desperate Christians fed



The Barnabas Fund Distinctive

What helps make Barnabas Fund distinctive from other Christian organisations that deal with persecution?

We work by:

- Directing our aid only to Christians, although its benefits may not be exclusive to them ("As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, **especially to those who belong to the family of believers.**" Galatians 6:10, emphasis added)
- Channelling money **from** Christians **through** Christians **to** Christians (we do not send people, we only send money)
- Channelling money through existing structures in the countries where funds are sent (e.g. local churches or Christian organisations)
- Using the money to fund projects which have been developed by local Christians in their own communities, countries or regions
- Considering any request, however small
- Acting as equal partners with the persecuted Church, whose leaders often help shape our overall direction

- Acting on behalf of the persecuted Church, to be their voice - making their needs known to Christians around the world and the injustice of their persecution known to governments and international bodies

We seek to:

- meet both practical and spiritual needs
- encourage, strengthen and enable the existing local Church and Christian communities - so they can maintain their presence and witness rather than setting up our own structures or sending out missionaries
- tackle persecution at its root by making known the aspects of other religions and ideologies that result in injustice and oppression of Christians and others
- inform and enable Christians in the West to respond to the growing challenge of other religions and ideologies to Church, society and mission in their own countries

- facilitate global intercession for the persecuted Church by providing comprehensive prayer material
- safeguard and protect our volunteers, staff, partners and beneficiaries
- keep our overheads low

We believe:

- we are called to address both religious and secular ideologies that deny full religious liberty to Christian minorities - while continuing to show God's love to all people
- in the clear Biblical teaching that Christians should treat all people of all faiths with love and compassion, even those who seek to persecute them
- in the power of prayer to change people's lives and situations, either through grace to endure or through deliverance from suffering

"Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40)

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Bank Name: United Overseas Bank

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Swift Code: UOVBYM33

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Front Cover: Indian Christian receives essential food and hygiene aid from Barnabas


barnabasfund
hope and aid for the persecuted church

Coronavirus can help us grow in faith

As

I write, a disaster has just occurred in the state of Michigan USA, in which intensive rain caused catastrophic dam failures and wide-scale flooding. A youth pastor from a Michigan church was interviewed on television expressing his bewilderment – first he had been ordered to stay at home because of the coronavirus, now he had been ordered to leave his home because of the floods. On his face were written stress and anxiety, as the pastor opened his heart and spoke of how the disaster was challenging his faith and causing him to wonder what God's purposes in it were.

This youth pastor can be replicated many times over in our world, which seems to be ravaged by natural disasters on an unprecedented scale – drought and floods, typhoons and cyclones, locusts and coronavirus. These have caused untold hardship and suffering, and countless deaths, leaving peoples across the world in a chronic state of anxiety. The UK's Office for National Statistics reports that three-quarters of British people are in a state of anxiety and worry, and no doubt it is similar in many other countries.

People are anxious about the future. They are uncertain what to do now to avoid catching or passing on Covid-19. Fears about the virus quickly changed many everyday behaviours. It only takes three to six weeks for a new way of behaving to become a habit. After that, it becomes difficult to go back to the previous way of doing things. Anxiety can also make us overreact even to small risks. Having been told that families must lockdown together in their own homes to save lives, they are now told they must go out to work and send their children to school, causing stress and confusion. Economic predictions are extremely grim. Uncertainty breeds fear, and fear breeds anxiety and worry.

How are we as Christians to respond? Like the Michigan youth pastor, some may ask honest and searching questions of our faith. But our situation should not lead us to waver in our theological understanding or falter in our spiritual commitment. Surely, it should lead us to reaffirm our trust in our wise and loving God, who knows the end from the beginning? Surely it should lead us to depend on His divine providence, in the assurance that our heavenly Father knows best?

Let us remind ourselves of the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ about the fragility of the flowers and the transience of the grass of the field "which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire" (Matthew 6:30). We are here today but will we be here tomorrow? For older people or those with certain illnesses, Covid-19 brings the real possibility of unexpected death. We have only today. None of us can be sure of tomorrow. But this is not something to bemoan. Rather, it is a wonderful opportunity for us to learn to trust in God above all else, to place our lives into His hands and acknowledge that our Father knows best. Christians in parts of the world where life is often cut short by sickness, accident, violence or simple hardship often have a stronger, simpler faith, tested as it is in their daily lives on a regular basis.

The Michigan youth pastor also wondered what God is saying to the world in these times of coronavirus. That is a difficult question to answer; perhaps we can only say that the Lord holds the world in His hands, He directs the course of the nations and ultimately His divine purpose will be fulfilled.

So in this time of crisis, Christians should grow in their faith and trust as they depend on God. Rather than letting worry rule our lives, we should acknowledge that God is in control and turn to him in humble prayer and repentance. Three thousand years ago, the Lord told King Solomon very specifically what God's people should do in time of sent extreme weather, locusts and disease:

When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:13-14)

DR PATRICK SOOKHDEO, *International Director*

4 **Compassion in action**
New Uzbek church helps hundreds to worship legally

6 **Barnabas Coronavirus Emergency Network**
God pours out blessings on His people through Barnabas supporters

11 **Locust plague**
Hunger crisis in East Africa and Pakistan as deadly third wave of locusts expected

12 **Coping with anxiety**
An encouraging guide to overcoming worry and anxiety

13 **Coping with pain**
A supportive guide to help those struggling with pain

14 **Courageous martyrs**
At least 6,000 dead as jihad against Christians rages on in northern Nigeria



18

19 **Persecution Exposed**
State-sponsored discrimination against Christians in modern-day Turkey

20 **News in brief**
Worshipper's ribs broken as police forcibly shut down church in China

22 **All your anxiety**
An encouraging hymn for anxious times

23 **In Touch**
Two young brothers give goats to help Christian refugees "live and be happy"

how barnabas is helping

Survivors of jihadi attacks in Mali thank God for emergency aid

Mali suffered its worst year of extremist violence in seven years in 2019. Jihadi militants carried out murderous attacks in the north and central area, laying waste to Christian villages and causing hundreds to flee with only the clothes on their backs. In one of the worst attacks, at least 100 men, women and children were slaughtered.

“Ruth” and her family were among more than 2,500 displaced and traumatised Christians who received emergency aid for four months from Barnabas, including rice, bedding, buckets, and hygiene kits.

“Our grain stores were burnt and left bare,” Ruth said, explaining how she fled her home with her husband and children when militants set their village ablaze. “We received cereals, mattresses, blankets, through which we knew God’s love for His creatures ... May God fill you with His goodness,” she said. Ruth shared joyfully that the “hospitality of God’s children” helped lead one of her daughters to know the Lord Jesus as her Saviour.



“Ruth” with one of her children

\$86,283 to support more than 2,500 people for four months

Project reference: 34-1057

New Uzbek church enables hundreds to worship legally

The construction of a new registered church in Uzbekistan, with the help of Barnabas, will allow hundreds more Christians to meet for worship without breaking the law. Churches can only register in the Muslim-majority country if they have at least 100 members. Many small congregations therefore have to meet in private homes, making them vulnerable to police raids and heavy fines.

It was the first time that permission had been granted to construct an officially registered church building in Uzbekistan in the last 20 years. This is even more remarkable because the host church, which owns the premises, is an Uzbek-speaking convert congregation.

The new building seats 400 people, allowing a further six congregations to meet there for worship, while six other congregations continue to use the smaller old building. Our church partner said, “Thanks to your contribution, hundreds of Christians who feared to gather at home can now gather in an official church building.”



The new church is already being well-used by twelve congregations

\$65,941

Project reference: PR1424
(Church buildings in Uzbekistan)

Continuing help for Christians widowed by church bombing

“I am very grateful to Barnabas. Through your support I can manage myself and the needs of my children,” were the grateful words of Razia, a widowed Pakistani Christian mother-of-three. Her husband was among more than 80 Christians killed when Islamic bombers attacked Sunday worship at a church in Peshawar in September 2013 – the deadliest anti-Christian attack ever carried out in Pakistan.

Widows in Pakistan are very vulnerable without their husbands’ protection and earnings. Barnabas has practically and spiritually supported Razia and 13 other Christian women ever since they were widowed that terrible day, with help to feed, clothe and educate their children and encouraging them to know God will never forsake them.

They are treblely despised – for being Christians, women and widows. Razia said life became “very dark” after her husband’s death. “It is very difficult for a widow in our culture ... I had no hope of survival. I pray that God bless you.”



Razia is grateful for Barnabas’ regular financial support, delivered by a local pastor

\$18,213 to help support 14 Christian widows for a year

Project reference: 00-345
(Victims of Violence Fund)

Strengthened and encouraged. This is what we often hear from Christians who have received support from Barnabas Fund. Thank you for making this possible. Here are just a few examples of the many ways we have recently helped persecuted and pressurised Christians.

Solar power gives security for ministry in Bangladesh

Security has improved and running costs are lower at a church complex in Bangladesh, thanks to the installation of a solar power system funded by Barnabas. Police advised that security needed to be tightened because of the church's outreach work to the majority community. The site has been a target of frequent hostility and is monitored by radical groups.

The complex includes a church building, a mission school, a conference centre and a residential study centre. At least 100 adults and children use the site during the day, and up to 30 students stay overnight.

The old power supply was erratic. But the new solar panels provide an uninterrupted supply of electricity around the clock. This keeps vital security lights on at night and also powers the site's CCTV security cameras. A church leader praised God that people using the complex are "safe and secure due to the care of Barnabas".



New solar panels keep security lights and CCTV cameras operating 24 hours a day

\$5,894 to fund a solar power system

Project reference: 00-637 (Church Buildings Fund)

Training enables church workers in Sri Lanka to stand firm

Barnabas supported the training of more than 190 pastors, Christian workers and young believers in northern and eastern Sri Lanka, regions worst affected by the country's long civil war. The courses, taught in the Sinhala and/or Tamil languages of the students, focused on the core Christian doctrines, and equipped them with the knowledge and skills to minister to others and stand firm in the face of anti-Christian hostility.

The students, men and women aged from 19 to 65, were from low income backgrounds and very poor churches. The courses were structured to enable them to continue in their full-time ministries or jobs while studying. Students were keen to learn how to better serve the Church and their communities having experienced persecution and harassment in their own daily lives.

One student said the course strengthened his spiritual and personal life, "Through this education, God has given me the strength to lead my church people in His way."



Students learn the core Christian doctrines to enable them to stand firm in the face of hostility

\$41,090

Project reference: 85-985

Food parcels help poor Pakistani farming families survive locust plague

"We were praying God to send angels to help. Our prayers brought results and God sent Barnabas to feed us." These were the words of grateful Christian Pakistani farmer Thako and his wife, Dannie, who had been struggling to feed their four children after locusts wiped out their precious spring crops.

They were among hundreds of Christian farmers in Sindh, one of Pakistan's poorest provinces, who watched helpless as the most devastating invasion of insects for decades wiped out their livelihoods. Some farmers were so desperate for money to buy food that they sold livestock, a valuable asset, and even their household possessions. Many families were existing on one basic meal a day and malnutrition was rife, especially in children and nursing mothers. At the same time, families had to contend with the Covid-19 restrictions.

Barnabas helped 700 Christian families to survive by providing them with two monthly parcels of food, including lentils, rice, flour and oil.



Thako and his wife, Dannie, had their prayers answered when Barnabas provided essential food for them and their four children

\$67,665 to help feed 700 families for two months

Project reference: 00-1313 (Project Joseph)

Turn to page 11 to read more of what Barnabas has done to help locust-affected Christians.



BARNABAS FUND FED MORE THAN 500,000 CHRISTIANS IN 32 COUNTRIES

IN THE FIRST TWO MONTHS OF THE CORONAVIRUS CRISIS, INCLUDING LOCUST AND FLOOD AFFECTED REGIONS.

God pours out blessings on His people through Barnabas as Covid-19 adversity shakes the global persecuted Church

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. – **Luke 6:38**

“**A** Christian brother gave us rice. We were very grateful. But soon one of our church members, a widow with three children, came and asked me for help because they had run out of rice and had nothing they could eat that day. The rice that I received then, I gave all to her. Amazingly today God performed again His miracles, Barnabas Fund came and gave us enough rice for us to eat for one month. Thank you Barnabas Fund.” These were the hopeful words of Pastor Markus. Pastor Markus received food aid provided by Barnabas supporters the day after he gave all the rice he had to a widowed church member and her children who had run out of food. He is one

of 330 Indonesian rural pastors that Barnabas is supporting, who were left without their modest incomes from church offerings because of the Covid-19 lockdown.

Swift support for Christians suffering during the coronavirus crisis

We praise God that Barnabas’ unique way of working has been such a marvellous blessing during the time of coronavirus. Because we work through local Christian partners, Barnabas can step in swiftly to get practical help to suffering Christians. This has long been one of the main benefits of Barnabas Fund’s unique way of working by channelling aid from Christians, through Christians, to Christians in need.

Left: A Nigerian Christian mother and daughter receive a food pack of rice, beans, garri (a flour made from cassava) and oil from Barnabas. "I and my family are very grateful, for your love toward His sheep, may the Good Lord bless you, from the deep of our heart we appreciate you for remembering us, and my sincere appreciation goes to the Barnabas Fund for their heart of giving," said one grateful Nigerian Christian family



"The Lord did not leave me alone!" exclaimed Jamile, a Christian widow in Lebanon. Barnabas Fund provided food and medicine for her and her little daughter "Lily" when Covid-19 lockdown drastically reduced Jamile's income from her factory job, bringing them to a position of desperate need

Along with the amazing generosity of our supporters towards their suffering family, working across the Barnabas Coronavirus Emergency Network (BCEN) has allowed us to quickly get crucial support to more than half a million Christians affected by Covid-19 lockdowns, as well as locusts and flooding in some regions.

Christians under lockdown can no longer gather for worship, which means that many pastors are suddenly destitute because the Sunday offerings they relied on for income are no longer being made. Barnabas has already provided support to 6,769 struggling pastors.

Helping Christians survive India's twofold humanitarian crisis

With a population of 1.3 billion, India's was the world's biggest coronavirus lockdown. Its announcement on 24 March prompted a huge secondary humanitarian crisis. Overnight, millions of jobs vanished and more than 100 million migrant daily-wage workers, including many Christians, were left stranded and hungry.

Many millions attempted to flee locked-down cities but, with transport links suspended, they had no option but to attempt to walk many hundreds of miles back to their home villages. Some died on the way due to malnourishment, exhaustion or by being hit by vehicles as they walked on roadsides at night.

Barnabas is helping Christians from the impoverished north-east of India who had travelled thousands of miles to get work in the South. They mostly had low-paid jobs that vanished when lockdown came. They found it impossible to get the government food ration.

"We are five of us and have not been able to work or go out. We have lived on meals others gave us. To get a whole month's supply gives us such security and tells us that our Lord looks after us," were the thankful words of one migrant Christian family, who received food aid from Barnabas.



Barnabas Coronavirus Emergency Network



Building on our global partner network, Barnabas rapidly formed the Barnabas Coronavirus Emergency Network (BCEN) to monitor the evolving needs of Christians as the virus spread and countries introduced lockdown measures, and to channel aid to them from Barnabas.

Through the 110+ organisations from 60 countries forming BCEN, Barnabas receives updates from our partners on the ground on just how the ongoing crisis impacts on Christians, many of whom are already marginalised, persecuted and in need. (For a list of BCEN partner countries, please see page 9 of *Barnabas Aid May/June 2020* or, for an up to date listing, visit barnabasfund.org/nz/bcen)

How Barnabas is helping in the time of coronavirus

Barnabas is supporting Christians affected by the global pandemic and national lockdown in three main ways: food for hungry families, hygiene materials and pastor support.

Barnabas has so far provided support for Covid-19 affected Christians in 32 countries:

Angola, Albania, Armenia, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, China, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Madagascar, Malawi, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, South Africa, South-East Asia, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Uzbekistan, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

No food unless you renounce Jesus Christ

Pastor “James” explained to Barnabas that he had tried to collect food the Indian government was providing for poor and needy families affected by the lockdown. But the distribution was organised by local Hindu extremist groups, who dominate the government in the state where Pastor James lives. They refused to give him anything unless he renounced his faith in the Lord Jesus. Of course, Pastor James would not deny his beloved Saviour, so he went home empty-handed to his hungry family.

Ashok, a daily-wage worker, whose meagre earnings stopped when the lockdown prevented him going to work, is one of many who suffer this way. Because he is a Christian, he did not get any government food rations. He and his family were eating only once a day, and just drinking water at other meal times. Then Barnabas’ partners in India provided him and many other Christian families with staple food including rice, flour, cooking oil, potatoes, onions, salt and spices as well as face-masks and soap to help them stay healthy.

“I could not bear to see my church members suffer hunger”

“We are a poor congregation and we were helpless. I could not bear to see my church family suffer hunger,” said Pastor Premkumar. As the lockdown continued, the hunger among his small congregation became a huge concern.

“This is a heavenly gift”

Bangladeshi Christian, Fulmoni, and her husband, began to follow the Lord Jesus about five years ago. Her husband died last year and now she lives alone in a small hut. She has two sons but, because they are not believers, they rejected her and she has no support from her non-Christian family. Before the coronavirus crisis, the vulnerable 67-year-old sustained herself on a meagre income from daily-wage work as a maid. When lockdown came, she lost her job and was soon struggling to buy food. And her neighbours were too poor themselves to help her. “This is a heavenly gift for me ... I can smile now because I will not die without food. Jesus’ people are loving people. Thank you so much,” said Fulmoni.

Lockdown brought a hunger “crisis” to Madagascar

Madagascans rely on local street markets to buy food. But these shut down when lockdown came and only the expensive supermarkets stayed open, which few could afford. “We are in crisis,” a senior church leader told Barnabas. “People are more concerned about what to eat than about the virus.”



Our food aid for daily-wage workers from north-east India left jobless in South India because of lockdown included milk powder for families with babies and toddlers. For some of these little ones, it was their first milk for four weeks



Pastors in parts of India are excluded from government aid, but Barnabas is feeding them and other needy Christians. Ordinary Christians are also routinely discriminated against in parts of India where Hindu extremists control local government



Relieved Pastor Premkumar distributed food provided by Barnabas supporters to members of his hungry congregation. “Thank you, Barnabas Fund, this is an answer to my prayers,” he said



A smiling Fulmoni in Bangladesh with her life-saving food parcel thanked Barnabas supporters for their “heavenly gift”



When lockdown started, life quickly became difficult for church worker, Elodie, in Madagascar, and she became anxious about how she would feed her family. “This gift ... is very helpful for survival,” she told us.



A Kenyan woman and her goats make their way to safety through the floods. Torrential rains in East Africa caused flooding and landslides in April, displacing 100,000 people in Kenya alone. At least 194 were killed and waters washed away 8,000 acres of crops that had survived the locusts, at the same time as coronavirus struck [© Ondari Ogega/Daily Nation]



Rwandan pastors and their families collect food aid provided by Barnabas Fund



Hand-washing is difficult for the very poor in Mozambique



Grateful Pastor Elijah receives food aid for himself and his family in Kenya

Cyril, like many daily-wage workers in Madagascar, was desperately short of food for his family. He walked 20 km to the aid distribution point because he had no money to pay for a boat crossing. “I thank the Barnabas Fund in the name of Jesus ... I was happy when I heard the coming of the gift because it helps my household to survive.” Barnabas provided 1,000 vulnerable Madagascar Christian families, including 156 pastors, with crucial support during the Covid-19 lockdown.

Death by virus or by starvation?

Hundreds of thousands of Christians are facing severe food shortages as the triple disaster of Covid-19 lockdown and locust plagues, as well as floods in some regions, grip East Africa. Lockdowns have left daily-wage earners especially hard hit here too. When lockdown stopped their work, their pitiful wages stopped too.

“I would rather die from coronavirus than starvation,” said one African church leader, expressing the view of many who venture out of their homes in desperation to seek food.

In rural communities, frustrated families have been unable to work on their plot of land, leaving their precious crops ungathered and rotting away in the fields. Some under lockdown had to eat the seed that they had saved to sow for the next crop.

Whether in urban or in rural settings, it is difficult for poor communities in Africa to maintain proper hygiene to prevent the spread of coronavirus. For some it is overcrowding, for others it is poverty that makes

it impossible to buy facemasks or hand sanitisers. For many it is both. Some requests to Barnabas Fund were simply for buckets to facilitate hand-washing.

“Covid-19 has reduced us to helpless individuals”

Elijah, a young Kenyan pastor, wept with joy when Barnabas’ aid reached his community – nearly everyone he knew had lost their income because of the lockdown. “My peers, many of them slum dwellers and young parents working in the hotel industry, were sent on compulsory unpaid leave and so have no way to fend for their families,” he explained. “Covid-19 has reduced us to helpless individuals even though we are mature men with strength to work,” he added.

When the pastors became needy

Church pastors in Rwanda play a critical role in helping the poorest of families to overcome poverty, get a basic education and become more self-sufficient. During the Covid-19 lockdown, it was the pastors themselves who became needy. But, because pastors are expected to give help in Rwanda, not to receive it, they were not thought eligible for the government support available to ordinary people. And, as our partner explained, the pastors were also very reluctant to ask for “mercies” from their congregations despite being in such desperate need. Barnabas stepped in to provide 250 of the most vulnerable pastors and their families with food and essential hygiene supplies.



Kisanga, a rural pastor in the Democratic Republic of Congo, lost his modest income from church offerings when the lockdown started. He was already in a desperate struggle to cover the cost of medical treatment for his son who was in hospital suffering from malaria. But, with Barnabas' support, Pastor Kisanga was able to pay for his son's treatment, who then recovered, and feed his family for a week. "It built up my faith in Jesus by confirming that really God hears our prayers and responds in His time," he said. "I thank Barnabas Fund for their generosity during this tough time for pastors and church workers."

“Whichever way, you are going to die, either by corona or by hunger”

When churches closed in Zimbabwe and tithing dwindled away under lockdown, many pastors were soon in dire need, with nothing for their families to eat. "Sometimes, when you are told to stay indoors, you are forced [out] by hunger. Whichever way, you are going to die, either by corona or by hunger," a Zimbabwean pastor told Barnabas Fund.

His country was already in a dire situation before coronavirus came. Last year, Zimbabwe had the worst drought in decades, with temperatures reaching 50°C in some areas. By the end of 2019, Zimbabwe was experiencing acute food insecurity, with at least 3.6 million rural people classified as in food "crisis" or worse. Many children were suffering from malnutrition and stunted growth. And then came coronavirus.



Zimbabwean orphan Simba (aged 8) is cared for by his older brother. Simba's ambition is to learn to read "really well". He is one of the children benefiting from daily well-balanced nutritious meals provided by Barnabas

A Zimbabwean evangelist explained to Barnabas that, before the lockdown, people already lived from hand to mouth, relying on finding work in the morning so they will have some money to buy food in the evening. But "Everything is locked up now," he said meaning that all opportunities to find work had closed down.

Barnabas is helping desperate Christians in Zimbabwe survive by providing basic foodstuffs and hygiene materials, including hand sanitisers and disinfectants. We also support a programme that provides the children of some of the most impoverished families with a nutritious cooked meal with protein and vegetables as well as carbohydrate. For many children, it is the only meal they have each day. "Without it," say our project partners, "the children would simply starve."

All Glory be to God!

We are humbled at the tremendous outpouring of generosity our supporters have made for their suffering family in their time of desperate need, in the midst of this global coronavirus crisis. Through you, God has done immeasurably more than all we could ask or imagine! (Ephesians 3:20)

Thank you. ■

Pease continue to give to our Covid-19 Emergency Fund (project reference PR1530).



Disaster Relief

SAVING GOD'S PEOPLE FROM LOCUSTS

Barnabas aid is saving the lives of hungry Christians, whose crops have been ravaged by locusts in Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Pakistan

PROJECT JOSEPH



Hunger-related deaths were prevented in Helen's rural Kenyan village, struggling with food shortages due to locusts, thanks to Barnabas supporters' timely help



For three days, blind Anna and her granddaughter lived on nothing but water and a daily cup of milk, given by a neighbour, which the pair shared between them. Locusts had destroyed the harvest from Anna's little patch of land. She had no other source of food and was expecting to die. Then her pastor came visiting and told her there was food given by Barnabas Fund. All she had to do was go to the church and collect it.



Anna's granddaughter leads her blind grandmother to a distribution point for Barnabas food aid



Anna and her granddaughter return home with their life-saving food rations carried for them

"I felt as if I was dreaming," remembered 85-year-old Anna, "because no person had ever come to my house with such news." She called her little granddaughter, who led Anna by her stick, as is customary in Uganda, and before long they were back home with her pack of maize, beans, cooking oil and salt.

A locust plague on a scale unknown in at least a generation has invaded East Africa and Pakistan. Billions of insects devastated crops in the first wave in early 2020, then a deadly second wave numbering in the trillions ravaged a precious second-planting of crops and spread into India. A rare third generation, even more numerous, was predicted to hatch in June-July.

The UN has warned that East Africa is on the verge of a humanitarian crisis. Parts of Ethiopia, where Barnabas has also sent aid, is encircled by a wide swathe of locust swarms, which consume around nine tonnes of green vegetation *a day*. Worse still, the locusts may spread across the Sahel to West Africa.

"This food is love put into action by believers," said Kenyan Christian, Mary

In Pakistan, experts predicted a "quantum leap" in food destruction if the swarms are not controlled. Aerial spraying is the most effective way, but difficult for countries to do if they are putting all their resources into battling coronavirus. Many farmers have therefore resorted to traditional, but virtually useless, methods like beating drums to try to keep the insects off their crops.

Parts of East Africa have also been contending with torrential rains that brought flooding and

Barnabas has fed more than 200,000 hungry Christians struggling to survive the relentless locust plague in Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Pakistan.

landslides. At least 100,000 people were displaced in Kenya alone, where the waters washed away 8,000 acres of crops that had escaped locust damage. On top of all this is

the coronavirus lockdown, both in East Africa and in Pakistan.

"Thanks to people who have a loving heart to provide such timely assistance," said Kenyan Christian, Helen. She explained that children



Pakistani Christian farmer, Mr Pano, suffered huge losses to his crops due to the locusts and is struggling under debt because he needed to borrow to feed his growing family. Then the Covid-19 lockdown put him under even more pressure. "God sent Barnabas Fund to help us," said the hardworking farmer

and the elderly were suffering the most in her village before Barnabas' food aid arrived. The maize, beans, oil and salt cost \$24 for each hungry family.

Barnabas has provided food parcels to the most vulnerable Christian Pakistani farming families in southern Sindh province, which was particularly badly hit by the locust invasion. A typical food parcel includes flour, rice, dhal (lentils), tea, sugar, chilli, salt, cooking oil, toothpaste and soap. ■

Project reference 00-1313 Project Joseph Feeding Locust-affected Christians



Disaster Relief

Coping with anxiety

*All your anxiety, all your care,
Bring to the mercy seat, leave it there,
Never a burden He cannot bear,
Never a friend like Jesus!*¹

Early in His ministry, the Lord Jesus gathered His disciples around him on a mountainside and taught them (Matthew 5-7). The content of the “Sermon on the Mount” was astonishing and revolutionary. In one famous passage, Jesus commands “Do not worry about your life” in particular food, clothes and health (Matthew 6:25-34 NIV). Many other translations say “Do not be anxious”. This was going to be particularly relevant to the disciples who had left jobs and homes to follow Him, so faced great uncertainty, but it is a message for us all.

The Greek word used is *merimnao*, meaning to worry anxiously – the frame of mind which gives us careworn days and sleepless nights. Jesus is not forbidding prudent forward thinking and planning. He is telling us not to let ourselves engage in the pointless fretting that cannot change the past and may even make us literally sick with worry as we contemplate all kinds of terrible things that might occur in the future. This kind of worry can hinder our judgement and decision-making.

Anxiety may become severe, and anxiety disorders are common, well recognised mental health problems. Anxiety and depression may feed off one another. Persistent worry can steal and destroy our Christian joy.

When we think of the past, it should be to look at what the Lord has done, and seek to regain our equilibrium by remembering how He has rescued us or others. The downcast psalmist ordered himself to remember God (Psalm 42:6). John Newton wrote in his hymn *Amazing Grace*: “Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.”

What the Bible says

Command Do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. (Matthew 6:34 ESV).

Commit Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6 NIV)

Calm I want you to be free from anxieties. (1 Corinthians 7:32 NRSV)

Confidence Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:7 NIV)

Consider Which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? (Matthew 6:27 ESV)

Comfort Say to those who have an anxious heart, “Be strong; fear not!” (Isaiah 35:4 ESV)

Cheer Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up. (Proverbs 12:25 NIV)

Jesus sets out seven points to help us quell our anxiety.

1. God gave us life itself. Therefore we can trust Him for the lesser things that support life. If He can give us the miraculously complex human body, He can also provide food and clothes for it. (Matthew 6:25)
2. God cares for the birds, so He will surely care for us who are made in His image. (Matthew 6:26)
3. Worrying is pointless. It does not change the situation. (Matthew 6:27)
4. The beauty that God gives to flowers, for their short lives, shows His lavish generosity and

abundance. He will not run out of resources to help humankind, whom He has made “a little lower than the angels” (Psalm 8:5-8) and put to rule over the rest of His earthly creatures. (Matthew 6:28-30)

5. Worry is natural, even logical, for those who do not know they have a loving, all-powerful heavenly Father. It should not be natural for Christians. (Matthew 6:31-32)
6. Focus on the Kingdom of God. Let that dominate our thoughts. If we fill our minds with God’s purposes and glory, there is little thinking-time left for anxious pondering. (Matthew 6:33)
7. Live one day at a time. Sometimes we might need to make this “Live one hour at a time.” But, either way, trust God and His perfect will. Leave the future to worry about itself. (Matthew 6:34)

The bottom line is that Christ’s followers should be people marked by serenity and contentment, whatever their circumstances. For worry is a characteristic of pagans (Matthew 6:32). If we can lay aside anxiety, we will find not only greater peace of heart but also greater power to live effectively for the Lord and to build His Kingdom.

George Müller (1805-1898) never requested funding for the orphanages he established in Bristol, UK; he only prayed that God would provide. Sometimes it looked as if the orphans would go hungry, but always a gift of food or money was received just in time. Müller said, “The beginning of anxiety is the end of faith, and the beginning of true faith is the end of anxiety.”

DR PATRICK SOOKHDEO

International Director of Barnabas Fund

Coping with pain

Pain is inevitable; suffering is optional

One feels hesitant, even as a professional, when asked to write about pain.

Ultimately the pain experience is profoundly personal and a very lonely path to walk. Pain can be the result of many things: physical pain in the body, emotional pain, the pain of past memories, mental or spiritual pain, and all these lead to suffering.

The word “pain” comes from *peine* and encompasses the agony of Christ, punishment, penalty, penal and also the torment of hell; it also comes from *nocere* which means injury. So it is unsurprising that the word “pain” for us evokes judgement, punishment or that we have “done something wrong to deserve it”.



Image © Christa Friend

The word “suffering” means “to bear” or “to carry”, so we may just end up carrying the consequences of past and present life experiences.

Physical pain can be amplified in its intensity by past emotional experiences. We try to relieve physical pain but also treat the suffering component, which is often mental and emotional. Bringing freedom from the pain and suffering allows us the opportunity to be released from its prison, but it is still up to us to walk out into the sunlight.

Acute pain, in contrast, is a protective reflex which allows our survival. The few who have genetic lack of pain sensation present with crushed and burnt fingers and toes. Acute pain is a gift to us, to warn; it will insistently tell us to stop until the cause has been dealt with. We may consider that acute pain is an unwelcome companion, but it is, in fact, often a true friend, speaking to us when others may be silent.

For some of us, the acute pain becomes a “dis-ease”, something which becomes self-sustaining and chronic pain. This may be independent from any outside circumstance and is associated with emotional suffering.

The role of faith and belief

When pain is severe, one asks “Why has this happened to me?” Part of the wrestling and soul searching for answers can bring suffering to our door very rapidly as we mentally and emotionally respond to the pain. Frankl wrote, “Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.” Frankl highlights the potential for the transformation of our suffering.

It is hard if our faith is based on “God is love so He will stop anything ‘bad’ happening.” If this is our belief we will, in time, become extremely disappointed and angry. A theology that does not allow a God of love to coexist with the experience of suffering will be profoundly inadequate in dealing with the consequences of everyday life, including the experience of pain and illness through our journey towards eventual death.

Pain and suffering are at the heart of the Christian Gospel and yet this may appear distant and irrelevant when pain first strikes us. Yet our journey need not be made alone. In the suffering, God is present, though may appear absent at times, and the divine light, “the Shekinah” may appear. The experience of

many of those who have suffered much is that His divine grace enables them to bear the pain. As the Lord said to the apostle Paul, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12:9)

Healing lies in acceptance of our shared human condition and of a loving God who Himself chose to become one of us. We will experience pain, often as an unwelcome intruder on our life’s journey. The reality is that the God of our childhood and the Jesus of the Gospels can still speak to us as we experience trauma and disease, even though He can feel distant and removed from us. Christian mystics speak of a “cloud of unknowing” or of being in deep darkness; the light of the sky or soft starlight seeming too distant, unreachable.

The experience of trauma, pain and

“God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”

CS Lewis

suffering will cause us to re-evaluate our relationship with God. “Is He really all good?” “Will my prayer work?” “Can I hope for a miracle?”

The presence of the Divine in the middle of pain and suffering usually does not remove the cause of pain. Despite the prayers of many, suffering continues in us and in the world.

We hold in balance “He was a man of suffering, and familiar with pain” alongside “He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

Total pain

Dame Cicely Saunders, the founder of the modern hospice movement introduced the idea of “total pain”. “This kind of total pain” she emphasized, “has physical, mental, social and spiritual ...

Continued on page 22

Courageous martyrs

As jihad continues in northern Nigeria

In the attacks the militants tend to kill men, who are usually the main protectors and breadwinners in communities, leaving women widowed and vulnerable, and children without fathers

“Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” (Psalm 23:4)

Under cover of darkness the extremists come, planning to kill, maim, pillage and destroy in northern Nigeria. They surround the village and shatter the silence of the night with gunfire and menacing chants.

As the terrified Christians wake and try to flee, the militants attack and lay waste to the village, killing anyone they can find, stealing cattle, plundering food stores and setting fire to churches and homes. Such attacks are occurring regularly across northern and central Nigeria, leaving in their wake hundreds of Christian martyrs.

At least 6,000 killed in anti-Christian attacks

Since 2015, a surge of extremist violence in Nigeria has killed more than 6,000 Christians and forced almost two million people to flee their homes. Attacks on villages by heavily armed militants are filled with Islamic cries of “Allahu Akbar” meaning “God is great”.

Thousands of others were maimed, burned and kidnapped or forced to flee. “Persecution is real here. We are targeted because of our faith,” said one distraught Christian leader in Borno State in November 2019.

“Full scale jihad launched against Nigerian Christians”

Another Barnabas contact told us in January this year, “Whether it is the continuous attacks of Boko Haram or Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) or even



In February 2020, five million Nigerian Christians fasted for three days and took part in peaceful protests across the country against the persecution of Christians [Image: Christian Association of Nigeria]

Fulani militia, the fact remains that a full scale jihad has been launched against Christians in Nigeria.”

Martyred Pastor Lawan Andimi “went home like a champion”

This is how a fellow Christian described the martyrdom of Pastor Lawan Andimi of Chibok in north-eastern Nigeria, one of the many Christians killed by extremists. Andimi was chairman of his local Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and a mighty man of God. He led thousands to the Lord, including many Muslims.

A Muslim convert himself, he began to follow Christ as his Saviour in 1980 and became a pastor. His testimony and powerful relationship with God saw him lead to Christ his own father-in-law, a prominent mallam (Quranic scholar) in Chibok, a town from where 276 mainly-Christian schoolgirls were kidnapped in 2014.

Andimi's evangelism made him the target of Boko Haram as far back as 2013 and he survived a series of attacks from it in 2015, 2016 and 2017. On 2 January 2020, he was abducted by the extremists.



Courageous Christian martyr, Pastor Lawan Andimi, continued his ministry to Muslims despite three previous attempts on his life by Boko Haram

“I shall fear no evil”

Despite being in the “valley of the shadow of death” (Psalm 23:4), this courageous Christian did not give in to fear. Instead, he sent a poignant video message to his family, “Thank God for everything ... I have never been discouraged because all conditions that one finds himself is in the hands of God. By the grace of God, I will be together with my wife, my children and my colleagues. If the opportunity has not been granted, maybe it is the will of God.”

Boko Haram killed the father-of-seven on 20 January. He was one of at least 35 Christians killed by extremists in January alone.

Vast country identifies as either Christian and Muslim

Nigeria is a vast country with more than 370 tribes, the largest being the Hausa-Fulani¹ (majority Muslim), Yoruba (mix of Christian and Muslim) and Igbo (predominantly Christian). At the beginning of the twentieth century, traditional African religions dominated but by the 1960s most Nigerians identified as either Christians or Muslims.

Christians predominate in the South, and Muslims predominate in the North. The Middle Belt has a roughly even mix of both religions and was the scene of many incidents of anti-Christian mob violence in the last two decades of the twentieth century.

Twelve northern states implement sharia in state law

A rivalry between the three largest tribes has dominated Nigerian politics since it became independent of British colonial rule in 1960. For the majority of the 40 years following independence, Nigeria stumbled from one military coup and regime to another.

¹ The northern-dwelling Hausa, one of the most numerous groups in Nigeria, have become integrated with the smaller Fulani group, whose members conquered Hausaland in the early 19th century. The great majority of both are Muslims.

Adara Christian community suffers relentless attacks, robberies and kidnappings

Christians from the Adara tribe, one of the largest ethnic groups in Kaduna state (Middle Belt), have suffered kidnapping, robbery and murderous attacks mainly by the Muslim-majority Hausa-Fulani in recent years. At least 12,480 members of the Adara, who are about two-thirds Christian and about 7% Muslim, have been forced to flee their homes because of the violence.

Tension rose after the appointment of a new state governor, Malam Nasir el-Rufai, in 2015. A Fulani, he introduced unpopular measures that reduced the status of the main Adara chief, who was later kidnapped and killed.

There have been repeated violent attacks by Fulanis against the Adaras and on at least one occasion the Adara retaliated. This resulted in nine Adara leaders being arrested and jailed for more than 100 days, but no arrest of Fulanis.

The 2019 attacks included:

- **10 February** – Ungwan Barde community attacked and 11 people killed.
- **26 February** – Karamai village attacked, 40 killed, more than 100 houses burnt down.
- **10 March** – Ungwan Barde attacked again, 34 killed.
- **11 March** – Dogon Noma village attacked, 52 killed.
- **11 March** – Ungwan Gora in Makiyali village attacked, no fatalities, some injured, whole village burnt down.
- **12 March** – Kyamara village attacked, 2 killed.
- **8 April** – Banono in Ungwan Aku attacked, 26 killed.
- **1 August** – Maikori area of Ungwan Gamo village attacked, 1 killed.

The attacks continued in 2020. Examples from the first five months of the year include gunmen opened fire at the local market in Ugoakla village, killing eight people. On 12 May, at least eight people were killed in assaults on the villages of Bakin-Kogi, Idanu and Makyali. Between 18 to 21 May, at least 20 were killed in attacks on 16 villages: Magunguna, Idazo, Ungwan Galadima, Ungwan Guza, Etissi, Ungwan Ma'aji, Ungwan Dantata, Ungwan Araha 1 and 2, Ungwan Goshi, Ungwan Shaban, Ungwan Jibo, Ungwan Maijama'a, Ungwan Sako, Ungwan Maidoki and Ungwan Masaba, all in Kajuru Local Government Area, Kaduna State.

During this period radical Islamism grew and, by October 1999, culminated in the announcement by the Northern state of Zamfara that it was implementing parts of sharia (Islamic law) in general state law. Eleven other states in northern Nigeria with majority Muslim populations, including those of Kano and Kaduna, followed suit.

These moves flew in the face the country's constitution that guarantees religious freedom, and Christians strongly opposed the change. Riots ensued and several thousands of people, both Christians and Muslims, were killed.

Boko Haram's goal is an Islamic caliphate

It was against this background of rising radicalism that the terror group Boko Haram arose. Its name, loosely translated, means "Western education is forbidden". The group was founded in 2002 in Maiduguri, the capital of Borno state, with the initial aim of uprooting corruption, which it blamed on Western influences, and imposing sharia law. However, its goal expanded and it now seeks to eradicate the Christian presence and establish an Islamic caliphate from north-eastern Nigeria all the way to northern Cameroon.

Boko Haram is active across the Western Sahel, its violent insurgency having spilled out of Nigeria into neighbouring countries such as Chad, Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali and Far North Cameroon. It is understood to have formed links with other Islamist terror organisations, including al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and the Somalia-based Al Shabaab.

In 2009, after a confrontation with Nigerian security agencies and the death of Boko Haram's leader in detention, the group vowed to exact revenge on the Nigerian government. In 2010, new leader Abubakar Shekau declared jihad against Christians with the words, "We are declaring a holy war! We will fight the Christians, because everyone knows what they have done to the Muslims!"

Extremists vow to "kill all citizens of the cross"

On Christmas Eve that same year, Boko Haram attacked two churches in Maiduguri and detonated explosives in Jos, Plateau state, the latter killing more than 30 people. It went on to align itself with Islamic State and, in 2016, declared that it would "blow up every church and kill all citizens of the cross" to "cleanse" the territory of Christians.

As well as laying waste to Christian villages and burning churches, Boko Haram has kidnapped thousands of people, including 276 mainly-Christian schoolgirls in Chibok. It has forced men and boys to join its ranks as "soldiers" and abducted women and girls for forced "marriages" to jihadists.

Islamic State in West Africa Province breaks away from Boko Haram

Boko Haram's brutal and indiscriminate violence under Shekau's leadership, which resulted in Muslim casualties as well as Christian, became too much for

even some of its own followers and, in April 2016, a faction broke away and took on the name Islamic State of the West African Province (ISWAP).

Unlike Shekau's group, the breakaway group was recognised by Islamic State. It is well-armed and has gained support from local Muslims by filling in gaps in governance and supporting economic activity.

A surge of ISWAP attacks took place in late 2019 and early 2020. On 26 December, ISWAP posted a horrific video of the beheading of ten Christian men and the shooting dead of an eleventh as revenge for the death of an Islamic militant in Syria. "This message is to the Christians in the world. Those you see are Christians and we will shed their blood as revenge," it declared. On the same date, ISWAP ambushed and then shot dead Christian bride-to-be Martha Bulus and her party as they travelled in preparation for her wedding.



Bride-to-be Martha Bulus who was murdered by extremists

Fulani militants attack Christian villages and seize farmland

The third major group of well-armed extremists terrorising Nigerian Christians are from the Fulani tribe. Nomadic Fulani have been cattle herders since the thirteenth century and the majority are Muslim, although some have converted to become Christians. Of course, not all Fulani Muslims are extremists, and many live peacefully with their Christian neighbours.

Tensions arose when the Fulani herdsman began to move south into the Middle Belt as their traditional grazing land in the north became more arid, alongside the Boko Haram conflict intensifying. Cattle rustling was also increasing, with some reports saying this was a major source of funding for Boko Haram.

As the Fulani moved south, militant elements began making murderous land-grabbing attacks against settled Christian farmers. Their attacks became more frequent from 2015, and their weaponry more sophisticated, raising concerns that a campaign of ethno-religious cleansing was being waged.

Christians wanted to know why the Fulani militants were targeting pastors and church buildings and why they were using the traditional Islamic war cry "Allahu Akbar", if all they wanted was grazing land.



Nigerian church elders worship amid the ashes of a church days after a devastating Boko Haram attack

Campaign of violence against Christians described as “genocide”

Baroness Cox, a patron of Barnabas Fund, believes Islamist fundamentalists are trying to drive Christians out of their traditional homelands in an organised and systematic campaign she describes as “genocide”.

After a fact-finding mission to the area in November 2019, she said the Fulani strategy could be epitomised in the phrase, “your land or your blood”. She said, “In every village, the message from local people is the same: ‘Please help us! The Fulani are coming’.”

She met survivors of five Christian villages attacked by the Fulani, in which at least 116 were killed and an estimated 12,000 villagers forced to flee. One of the survivors told her, “I saw my brother-in-law’s body on the ground, hacked to pieces with a machete. Our home was destroyed. The hospital was burnt. They tried to burn the roof of the church by piling up the chairs, like a bonfire.”

Are Fulani fighting a proxy war for Boko Haram?

There are concerns that the Fulani militants are now so well armed by wealthy jihadist sources, who fund AK-47s and rocket-propelled grenades, that they are possibly fighting a proxy war for Boko Haram, with the shared agenda of driving Christians out.

Since the start of 2020, the Fulani have carried out a savage series of assaults on Christian communities in Plateau and Kaduna states. In one attack, on Hukke village, near Jos, on 8 April, seven vulnerable older Christians, unable to flee as around 300 marauding Fulani swarmed over their village, were burnt to death in their homes. The youngest to die was 67, and the oldest 90.

Speaking afterwards, a village head said that the attacks are now so commonplace that they had stopped reporting them. “We are tired and we do not want to bother others about our tragedies,” he said. “We seem to always be reporting deaths and attacks and people are weary of our reports.”

Another village head, retired pastor Duada Rogo, said the Fulani first attacked Nitiriku, the Christian village where he lives, in 2016, murdering 37 people, and since then have “been coming in from time to time killing people silently, one or two here and there

in their farms”. The Fulani came again on 19 April, when they shot dead three women, set 63 homes ablaze and stole cattle and food.

Pastor Duada pointed out that Christians are not the only farmers in his area. “Muslims also own farms in villages near us, why do they not take over the farms of their fellow Muslims? This is more than grazing land or farmers and herders’ fight over land. This is specifically targeting Christians.”

“Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me”

Despite the anguish and suffering caused by the latest wave of terrorist massacres, the faith of Christians is being strengthened. A Barnabas contact told us, “We are sure that Christianity can outlive Boko Haram and all the brutal forces of jihad ... The blood of Christians, like that of Christ Jesus, cannot be silenced by acts of cruelty and extreme wickedness emanating from the bowels of Islamic extremism.”

Please continue to pray for peace and an end to the extremist violence which is exacting such a terrible toll in the land. Our courageous brothers and sisters in Nigeria are indeed suffering persecution on a horrific scale. But we thank the Lord that He is with them. Though they walk through the darkest valley, His rod and staff will comfort them.

Barnabas supports Christian victims of violence in Nigeria

Barnabas is giving practical help to victims of anti-Christian violence in Nigeria. Displaced Christians receive emergency food, trauma counselling, medical assistance and spiritual support. The education of the children is supported and damaged homes are repaired.

(Project reference 39-772)



Victims of violence

Jihadists exploit Covid-19 pandemic to further their murderous campaign in West Africa

Islamist terrorist groups took advantage of the Covid-19 lockdown to increase their murderous attacks against Nigerian Christians. They exploited the fact that the authorities refocused scarce security resources on combatting the coronavirus, knowing Christian villagers had no choice but to stay close to home, where they were left defenceless.

Boko Haram and Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) stepped up their deadly insurgency against the military in north-east of Nigeria and in the Lake Chad region. At the same time, Fulani militants escalated their merciless attacks on Christians in rural areas of Plateau and Kaduna states.



Women and children begin the long trek to safety after the devastating attack on Hura

“This incessant killing is getting too much”

“With this coronavirus people are suffering, but this killing is more dangerous than the coronavirus. How many people has the coronavirus killed in this country? But this incessant killing is getting too much,” said Rev Ronku Aka, chief of the Irigwe tribe, after an attack on Hura village in Plateau state on 14 April.

Nine Christians, including a three-year-old boy and his pregnant mother, were murdered in the Fulani militant assault. The gunmen surrounded the village, shouting “Allahu akbar, come out, come out!” while wildly firing their weapons into the air, before storming forward, killing at random and setting houses ablaze. In total, 21 homes were razed and seven badly damaged.

All nine victims were buried in two graves the following day, after which women and children started evacuating the village, walking the dusty tracks to seek safety in a town some miles away.

Islamist terrorist thanks God for pandemic

Some Jihadi groups celebrated coronavirus, describing the contagion as a “small soldier of Allah” and other Islamist militants believed that fighting jihad is the way to guarantee protection from the virus.

“We thank you God for this pandemic,” ranted, Boko Haram leader, Abubakar Shekau, in a Twitter audio message on 14 April.

Hurling insults peppered with expletives at government leaders, including the presidents of Chad, Niger, Nigeria and the USA, he mocked Covid-19 precautions saying, “nothing has changed” in the daily lives of the Islamist group. “We pray five times daily ... we stick together. We join hands. We eat from one bowl. We are doing very, very, very well. We have anti-virus. You have coronavirus, we have anti-coronavirus.”

Covid-19 has claimed comparatively few lives in Nigeria. At the time of writing, there had been 158 deaths and 4,787 cases in the whole country. However, the impact of the lockdown on poor Christians has been heavy.

Barnabas Fund has sent essential food supplies, including rice, beans and cooking oil, to feed 677 displaced and vulnerable families in the north for a month. We have also provided medical equipment, including sterilisers and surgical gowns, gloves and masks, to a hospital in Jos, in Plateau State.

We are giving financial support more than 30 pastors, whose small incomes in the form of Sunday offerings from their flock have disappeared, as their churches no longer meet and, with no incomes, people have little to give anyway. ■



Pastor Matthew Tagwi with Joy, the younger of his two daughters, shortly before he was killed in April, at the age of 30, in an attack by Fulani militants. His pregnant widow Rose immediately forgave his killers. “I hope [they] will get to know this Jesus I know ... I pray that the Lord saves their souls,” she said

Epicentre of Christianity or place of persecution?

State-sponsored marginalisation of Christians in modern-day Turkey

Built in sixth century Constantinople, the Hagia Sophia, originally a church, remains symbolic of the ongoing struggle between Islamism and secularism

Turkey, a country where east meets west, is frequently ranked among the top ten holiday destinations in the world. Istanbul, its cultural capital, spanning Asia and Europe, was, under its former name Constantinople, the centre of Eastern Christianity for more than 1,000 years. It was at Antioch (now Antakya) that the word “Christian” was first coined (Acts 11:26). Paul invested much of his ministry in Ephesus, equipping the early Christians through his letters to the early churches there, also in Galatia and Colossae, all of them in modern Turkey, as were the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

However, in 1453, the Ottoman armies conquered Constantinople. They seized the sixth century Hagia Sophia church, and used the building as a mosque. (In 1935 it was turned into a museum). Christians were subjugated under the Islamic Ottoman Empire’s discriminatory *millet* system, in which each religious minority community governed itself and their head was responsible to the Ottoman authorities.

From subjugation to genocide

In the late nineteenth century, subjugation turned to genocidal violence, which peaked in 1915. At least 3.25 million Christians (Armenians, Greeks and Assyrians) were murdered by the Turks, often using the minority Kurds to do the actual killing.

In 1923, Turkey became a secular republic, founded by Kemal Atatürk,

who also abolished the Ottoman caliphate. Today, Turkey’s 81 million population is more than 99% Muslim, predominantly Sunni but with a large minority of Alevi Shias and Bektashi Sufis. Christians (approximately 32% in 1900) are around 0.2%, mainly from historic non-Turkish ethnic groups, but including some Turkish converts from Islam. There are also Christian refugees among the 3-4 million Iraqis, Iranians and Syrians escaping to Turkey from various conflicts, since the 1980s.



Christians in Turkey worshipping together

Since the end of the genocide, the status of the remaining Christians has fluctuated. The seizure of church properties by the state has been a recurring form of persecution for many decades. But in 2011 the government licensed a building in Van province used as house church by Protestant Christians (mainly converts from Islam), thus recognising it as a place of worship. However, the seizing of church buildings has intensified again in recent years.

The press is often hostile to Christians, and in 2009 the Ministry

of Education introduced a new school textbook aimed at 13-year-olds, which encouraged discrimination against Christians.

The rise of the AKP

The situation has worsened in recent years, as secularism has given way to Islam, with the rise of the Justice and Development Party (AKP). Its founder, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (President of Turkey since 2014) has been outspoken about his desire to recreate the Ottoman Empire.

According to Armenian politician Garo Paylan, “hate attacks against churches and synagogues take place several times every year”. On 23 February 2019, vandals spray-painted the disturbing words “you are finish” in English and Arabic across an Armenian church, in Balat district. In October 2019, the AKP initiated an overt anti-Christian, and anti-Semitic, poster campaign in Konya that warned Muslims to “not take the Jews and Christians as allies” (a reference to Quran 5:51).

In 2019, President Erdoğan suggested that the Hagia Sophia should be used again as a mosque, having already supported reciting the Islamic call to prayer there in 2016.

Since Erdoğan’s premiership began, the secularism advocated by Atatürk has been diminishing in the public sphere. The rights of Christians to freely and safely practise their faith are being rapidly eroded, and a second-class status is being re-imposed on them. ■

Eleven church buildings wrecked in Burkina Faso after Christian grave desecrated

BURKINA FASO

Eleven church buildings were destroyed in the course of a three-day attack in Gaoua district, south-west Burkina Faso, that began on 18 April.



This church building in Loropeni was all but demolished in the three-day attack

The perpetrators, from the Gan ethnic group, wreaked havoc in the town of Loropeni, where Christians are a small minority, as they burnt out and caused structural damage to the churches.

The perpetrators, from the Gan ethnic group, wreaked havoc in the town of Loropeni, where Christians are a small minority, as they burnt out and caused structural damage to the churches.

The attacks are thought to be in revenge for the police arrest of eight Gan locals, including a tribal chief, for their desecration of a Christian grave on 9 April. The group had attempted to exhume a recently deceased local ethnic Gan woman, wife of a church deacon, in order to impose a “traditional funeral ceremony” (i.e. a non-Christian funeral).

Gan Christians are often persecuted for their faith by the wider Gan community, who mainly follow traditional African religions. An estimated 14,000 Gan people live in their homeland territory in south-west Burkina Faso, of whom around 6% are Christian and around 10% follow Islam.

Pakistan establishes new minorities commission

PAKISTAN

The long-awaited National Commission for Minorities, inaugurated in Pakistan on 5 May, is an important step towards the protection of religious freedom and equality.

The terms of reference for the new minorities commission include ensuring that non-Muslim communities’ places of worship are preserved. It will also seek to amend laws that discriminate against religious minorities and recommend steps to ensure the maximum participation of minority communities in all aspects of national life.

The new National Commission for Minorities will have twelve “non-official” members including three Christians, three Hindus, two Muslims and two Sikhs, and one representative from each of the Parsi and Kalash communities. They will sit alongside six “official” members comprising of five senior civil servants and a senior scholar of Islam.

No representative from the Ahmadis is included on the commission.



The task of safeguarding churches, and other non-Muslim buildings, falls under the remit of the new National Commission for Ministries

Worshipper’s ribs broken as police forcibly shut down church in China

CHINA



A Christian leader holds up his hands asking for calm as police force their way into the house church service

A church member had two ribs broken when 100 police forced their way into a service at a “house church” (i.e. unofficial church) in Fujian province, China, on Sunday 3 May to shut it down.

Dramatic video footage shows police surging through the door of a private flat in Xiamen city and removing by force members of Xingguang Church, despite appeals for calm by Christian leaders. Children can be heard screaming as worshippers are wrestled to the floor by police.

The continuing crackdown on the Church by the Chinese authorities has seen hundreds of house churches and official, state-sanctioned “three-self” churches shut down. Increasingly repressive measures have included the arrest and imprisonment of pastors and the installation of surveillance cameras inside churches.

On 28 April, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) denounced the Chinese government’s state-wide use of high-tech surveillance to target minorities, which is “amplifying the repression” of religious communities.

The commission, which redesignated China as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC), highlighted the progression of the “Skynet” surveillance network across in China over the past decade along with an increase in religious freedom violations.

The surveillance system, which includes advanced facial recognition, harvests “unprecedented amounts of data” on populations targeted for government suppression, said USCIRF.

Fulani militants use lockdown “leeway” to kill eight Nigerian Christians, 24-hours after earlier atrocity

NIGERIA



A young child with dressed injuries who survived the Fulani militant attack on Gonan Rogo

People’s Union, Jonathan Asake, said the lockdown imposed by the state authorities to check the spread of Covid-19, gave the attackers the “leeway” to invade the villages.

Seventeen Christians were killed in an attack by Fulani militants on 11 May, in Gonan Rogo village, including seven children, a six-month-old baby and a 70-year-old. The number of attacks in Nigeria’s Central Belt has soared during the Covid-19 lockdown as extremists have exploited the fact that the authorities diverted security resources to combatting the virus.

Awema Maisamari, national president of the Adara Development Association, said, “Killings, maiming, burning, looting and kidnapping have continued unabated from village to village.”

Speaking after 20 Christians were killed in four days of Fulani militant attacks on 16 mainly-Christian villages between 18-21 May, Maisamari added, “Our brutalised, dehumanised, terrified and traumatised community members are reeling in pain, ever wondering why this contrived anarchy is still being condoned by the powers that be.”

Due to space constraints we can only report here a few of the many recent attacks on Nigerian Christians. To learn more about anti-Christian violence in Nigeria please turn to page 15.

Fulani militants killed at least eight Nigerian Christians and injured scores of others in the Kajura Local Government Area of Kaduna State overnight on 12 May, less than 24 hours after 17 Christians were murdered in a similar attack.

Large numbers of gunmen stormed the villages of Bakin-Kogi, Idanu and Makyali, home to the majority-Christian Adara tribe. The president of the Southern Kaduna

Al-Shabaab calls Muslims to rejoice in “punishment” of Covid-19 infected non-Muslims

SOMALIA

A spokesman for the Somalia-based Al-Shabaab terror group declared coronavirus a “punishment visited by Allah upon the disbelievers” in an audio message reported on 27 April.

The militant, known as Ali Dhere, called on Muslims to rejoice over the “painful torment” inflicted on any

non-Muslims who contract Covid-19.

He mocked government lockdown measures, describing the closure of mosques and Islamic seminaries as “sinister”, and urged all Muslims to “join the war against unbelievers”. At the time of writing, Somalia had recorded 1,828 cases of Covid-19, and 72 deaths.

Abducted, presumed-dead pastor released alive after 14 months’ captivity in Myanmar

MYANMAR



Pastor Tun reunited with his wife and one of his children. His wife had prayed relentlessly for his safe return, despite local reports that he had been killed by his kidnappers [image credit: Gospel for Asia]

A pastor in Myanmar (Burma) who was abducted from his home at gunpoint by Buddhist militants on 19 January 2019, and reported killed, has been released alive in Rakhine State.

Pastor Tun N. was released on 7 March by his kidnappers, thought to be members of the Arakan Army (AA), after 14 months held captive. Now reunited with his wife and three children, the 42-year old described his captivity as “the most hellish time of my life, be it spiritually, mentally, and, in particular, physically”.

The kidnap of Pastor Tun N. came weeks before the abduction of Pastor T. Tun (57), a father-of-five, who is thought to still be in captivity. It is believed the pastors were targeted for their evangelism and leadership roles in their communities.



To view our most current news scan this with your device

... Continued from page 13

elements.” There continues to be recognition for a holistic approach to pain, as Broglio comments: “An understanding of the physical, psychological, social and spiritual issues important to the patient is fundamental for effective pain management.” “Total pain” requires holistic care. In the hospice setting, we are so fortunate to have the time and space to just “be” with patients, finding out what is important for them at any given moment. This “total pain” isn’t just about dying, it’s about the loss of being “in touch” physically, mentally, socially or spiritually. This is grief. It is inherently woven into our very being.

Henri Nouwen, the Dutch priest and theologian, describes this: “When we dare to look into the centre of our being, we encounter there our loss. When we were born we lost the safety of the womb; when we went to school we lost the security of our family life; when we married we lost the joy of options; growing older we lost our looks, health, friends and fame. All these losses are part of ordinary life.” Can we allow ourselves to grieve? As we truly “feel” our own loss we find the miraculous happens. Nouwen suggests that “our grieving hearts open our inner eye to a world in which losses are suffered far beyond our own little world ... the pain of our crying hearts connects us with a suffering humanity.”

This is love shared, a love that is stronger than death. Amidst all the brokenness we may yet find healing and peace. ■

“But all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well”
Julian of Norwich

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DR RAJESH MUNGLANI FFPMRCA
is a Consultant in Pain Medicine in Cambridge and London

All your Anxiety

Edward H. Joy

In times of distress and worry, Edward Henry Joy’s hymn *All Your Anxiety* reminds us of Christ’s tender entreaty, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). We are called to know we can trustingly “leave our burden” (1 Peter 5:7) with our perfect friend, Jesus.

(Guitar: capo on 1st fret)

Is there a heart o'er-bound by sor-row? Is there a life weighed down by care?
Come to the cross, each bur-den bear-ing; All your anx-i-e-ty-leave it there.
All your anx-i-e-ty, all your care, Bring to the mer-cy seat, leave it there,
Nev-er a bur-den He can-not bear, Nev-er a friend like Je-sus!

All your Anxiety Edward H. Joy

1. Is there a heart o'erbound by sorrow?
Is there a life weighed down by care?
Come to the cross, each burden bearing;
All your anxiety—leave it there.

Refrain:
All your anxiety, all your care,
Bring to the mercy seat, leave it there,
Never a burden He cannot bear,
Never a friend like Jesus!

2. No other friend so swift to help you,
No other friend so quick to hear,
No other place to leave your burden,
No other one to hear your prayer.

3. Come then at once; delay no longer!
Heed His entreaty kind and sweet,
You need not fear a disappointment;
You shall find peace at the mercy seat.

In Touch

HOPE IN SUFFERING SCAAW 2020

Sunday 1 – Sunday 8 November

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, ... “plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

Be a part of Suffering Church Action and Awareness Week as we stand with our suffering family in looking to our bright hope in Christ amid present global crises.

Locusts, coronavirus and devastating floods have swept the globe in 2020, adding immeasurably to the suffering of persecuted Christians. Before these disasters, so many of our brothers and sisters were already marginalised, violently attacked, kidnapped, raped and even killed simply because they are Christians.

Hope in Suffering focuses on the wonderful resilience of the persecuted Church. Through our suffering family, be inspired to find strength today in the face of pressures and struggles, as we look to the bright hope Jesus promises us for tomorrow. Join with us to lift up our persecuted brothers and sisters in prayer, take practical action to help them, as well as raise awareness of their plight.

Remember to put SCAAW into your church's diary. You can make a difference to the lives of millions of our persecuted family. You can pray, raise funds, and inform others about the persecution of Christians by holding an event at your church or group. You can also hold your event by webinar, video meetings using “Zoom” or livestreaming.

Contact your local Barnabas office today to register for your **Hope in Suffering inspirational resource pack** with everything you need including **A3 poster** to advertise your event, **eight-day devotional booklet**, **SCAAW 2020 bookmark**, **Barnabas' Praying for the Persecuted Church booklet**. Further resources in the next issue of **Barnabas Aid magazine**.

Keep up to date with the latest news on Suffering Church Action and Awareness Week 2020 at: barnabasfund.org/scaaw

Praying for the needs of the persecuted Church

Throughout New Zealand there are various Barnabas groups that meet up to pray for the needs of the persecuted Church.

Among them is the Lower Hutt/Wellington meeting on the last Wednesday of every month, which takes place from 7 p.m.-9 p.m. will resume normally at Hosanna World Outreach Centre, 20 Rimu Street, Naenae, Lower Hutt. Meetings are also available to join via Zoom video conferencing. Please contact

jeff@barnabasfund.org.nz for further information and the necessary details to join the Zoom meeting. Please visit barnabasfund.org/nz/get-involved/events to register.

There is a fortnightly prayer group meeting on Friday mornings in the Mt Roskill area of Auckland. If anyone is interested in joining, please contact the Barnabas Fund office (details inside front cover of this magazine) who will put you in touch with the group leader.

If you are hosting a meeting and would like to let others in your area know, please contact the Barnabas Fund office with your details, and the time, date and location of the meeting. Email: office@barnabasfund.org.nz

Save the date for special Barnabas supporters virtual meeting

Mark a date in your diary to join us for the Barnabas New Zealand virtual meeting on the evening of **Thursday 23 July** with special guests Dr Patrick Sookhdeo, International Director of Barnabas Fund, his wife Rosemary Sookhdeo, International Director of Finance, and Caroline Kerslake, International Director of Projects.

Patrick will address the effect of Covid-19 on the Church and Christian mission, in the light of the growing persecution which is taking place as well as the multiple natural disasters befalling the Church. He will seek to point a way ahead from which Barnabas Fund can develop into the future, as it re-structures and re-prioritises its efforts, under God, in order that the Church can be sustained, strengthened and advanced in post-Covid times. He will also reflect on how, through the tremendous assistance of Barnabas supporters, the Fund has been able to feed more than half a million Christians in the last three months.

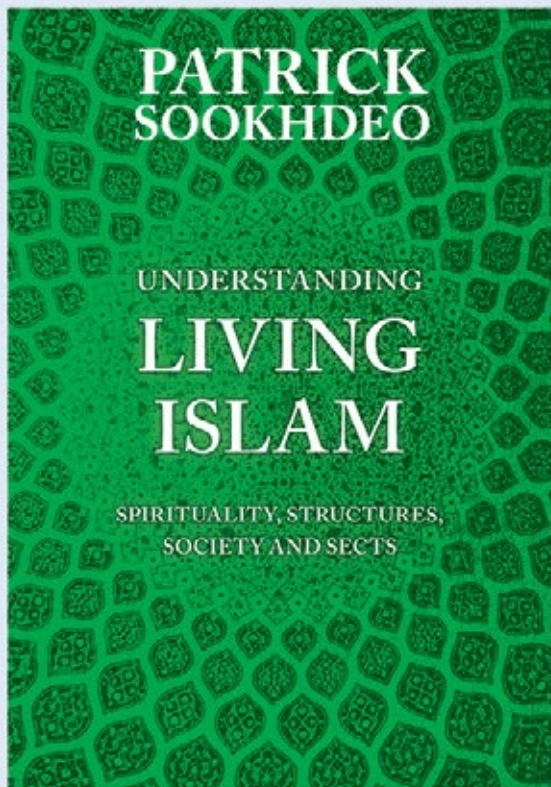
Caroline will address not only what God has done to help Covid-affected and other hungry Christians over the last three months but also new projects that we hope, with the Lord's help, to be developing to meet the needs of the post-Covid persecuted Church.

To register your interest for the event and to receive the special code to join the meeting please contact us by email: office@barnabasfund.org.nz

BNZ Bank to phase out cheques by July 2021

BNZ Bank New Zealand has set a date to phase out cheque use by July 2021. Our team will be working proactively with supporters over the coming twelve months to help them understand the transition and support options available.

Please feel free to contact the Barnabas Fund office (details inside front cover of this magazine) if you would like help with setting up alternative ways to donate to Barnabas. We are here to help make this transition as easy as possible for you.



Understanding Living Islam

Spirituality, Structures, Society and Sects

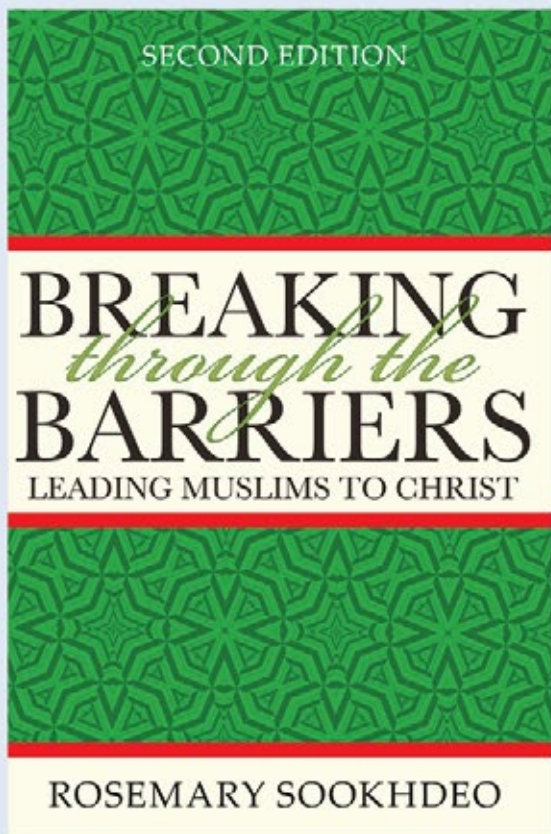
A detailed study of the practices, family life, social structures, spirituality and sects of Muslims today. Including extensive quotations from Islamic sources, the book is especially suitable for those seeking an in-depth understanding of Islam, and covers the range from conservative and political Islam to folk Islam and mysticism. A companion to *Understanding Islamic Theology*.

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\$40
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Breaking through the Barriers

Leading Muslims to Christ

How can we understand our Muslim friends and neighbours so that we can share the Gospel effectively with them? This book discusses their religion, culture and practices to find points of contact that will help Muslims respond to the Christian Gospel and provides crucial information on the differences between Islam and Christianity.

ISBN: 978-1-7321952-6-4

No. of pages: 184 Cover: Paperback

\$25
(Including P&P)

also available as eBook

To order these books, please contact your nearest Barnabas Fund office (addresses on inside front cover).

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hope and aid for the persecuted church