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NOVEMBER/
DECEMBER 2020

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

LEBANON

*Immediate help after
Beirut blast*

NIGERIA

*Embattled believers in
the North*

CHRISTIAN JOY!

*Inspiration from the Bible and our
suffering brothers and sisters*



Life-giving business

Invest in hope through income
generating projects


barnabasfund
hope and aid for the persecuted church

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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Front Cover: Vocational skills training for women in Pakistan



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I know that my Redeemer lives

At

Christmas time in many countries, a tradition has become established of performing Handel's oratorio *Messiah*, which he composed in 1741. One of the most glorious moments is when a soprano sings "I know that my Redeemer liveth", the words affirmed by Job in the midst of his wretchedness and anguish (Job 19:25, KJV). This note of confident faith arises out of the ashes of his pain and misery, when all hope seems lost and no end to his appalling suffering is in sight.

The words "I know that my Redeemer liveth" transcend Job's anguish, taking him – and us – to another realm, the realm of a Kinsman-Redeemer, whom we know to be our Lord Jesus Christ. It is He who will establish His purposes and bring hope out of despair.

We are living at a time when a sense of hopelessness pervades many countries across the world as Covid-19 continues to inflict suffering, not only sickness, mourning and death, but destruction of life-sustaining livelihoods and mental torment of many kinds. To this can be added new wars and conflicts breaking out, a potential global famine, natural catastrophes ... until our hearts cry out "How long, O Lord, how long?"

And yet, for us Christians, as we remember the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we see that a light has entered into our dark world, a hope has appeared in the midst of despair, a joy has drawn alongside our grief and depression.

The angel in Joseph's dream told him to give the name Jesus to Mary's baby "because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). As a Christmas carol says, "Christ was born to save", and the way in which He saved us was to redeem us, to pay a ransom to set us free from our sins and to claim us back from the evil one. That ransom was His own life.

And then He rose again: our Redeemer lives. In the midst of death, we know there is One who lives, and who will enable us to live with Him forever. So we have no fear of death. It is interesting to note that Handel's *Messiah* was originally intended to be an Easter piece, not a Christmas one.

A hymn dating back to the early Church speaks of the solemn mystery of the incarnation, so easily forgotten in the tinsel and crib scenes of our modern Christmas celebrations.

Rank on rank the host of heaven
Spreads its vanguard on the way,
As the Light of light descendeth
From the realms of endless day,
That the powers of hell may vanish
As the darkness clears away.¹

Job not only affirms that he has a Kinsman-Redeemer who will defend and rescue him, even though the rest of his family has turned against him. He also finds a source of joy and consolation in his agony – through it all, he has been faithful to God. This is his "joy in unrelenting pain" (Job 6:10).

In the midst of suffering there is a joy that transcends suffering, that transcends sadness and grief, that transcends hurts and pain and loss. At Christmas we often sing a carol that begins:

Joy to the world, the Lord is come;
Let earth receive her King!

But these words by Isaac Watts, first published in 1719, were a poem based on Psalm 98. Just like Handel's *Messiah*, it was not written for Christmas. Every day of the year, we can rejoice that the Lord Jesus came to earth to dwell among us, to redeem us from our sins, and lives forever. This is our joy in unrelenting pain, that our Redeemer lives.

DR PATRICK SOOKHDEO

International Director

¹ Verse 3 of "Let all mortal flesh keep silence", Liturgy of St James, c. 4th century, translated by Gerard Moultrie (1829-1885)

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how barnabas is helping

Vulnerable Egyptian widows given support to feed hungry children in Covid crisis

Marginalised Christian widows living in slums in desert areas of Egypt suffered hardship even before the Covid crisis. Already despised because of their faith and gender, and without the protection and provision of a husband, they struggled to support their families on low-paid daily work, which vanished in lockdown.

Most of the food and financial aid Barnabas provided for 4,577 families and 1,953 children living in desert areas went to widows and female-headed households. Widow “Esther”, 47, thought it impossible to take her doctor’s advice to “eat well” because she couldn’t even feed her three children. The next day, she received essential food and hygiene items from Barnabas. “She felt how close the Lord is to her needs,” said our church partner.

Small gifts for children, including Bibles, were included in 1,953 of the food boxes. “I prayed to Jesus to have my own Bible,” said 11-year-old “Emil”. “This is the best gift ever.”



Church members distribute boxes of essential food and hygiene items for vulnerable Christian widows and their children in Egypt

**£159,180 (\$205,540;
€176,160) to help 4,577
families and 1,953 children**

Project reference: PR1530
(Covid Emergency Fund)

New life of dignity for exploited Senegalese street children

“Ousmane” was born into a fanatical Muslim family. His father’s four wives quarrelled constantly and so did all their children. At the age of four, he was sent to Quranic school, hundreds of miles from his home, and did not see his parents for years on end. At the Quranic school, the students were beaten, deprived of food, forced to beg and sometimes put in chains. Ousmane ran away when he was ten, and fell into bad company on the streets of Senegal.

One day, a man told Ousmane about the love of Jesus and led him to the Lord. “What touched me is that I have never known love in my life,” said Ousmane. “Now I know love. I have a peace that I have never known.” He is one of nine former Quranic students, now Christians, who, with Barnabas’ support, have received training in a trade and a Christian education.



Now a qualified shoe repairer, Ousmane said, “The Church pulled me off the streets and helped me train for a job that will allow me to live with dignity, earn a living and start a home.”

**£2,775 (\$3,600; €3,000) for
one year’s support**

Project ref: PR1421
(Small business training for converts)

Covid food relief for Sri Lankan tea pickers

Sri Lankan Christians are frequently harassed by the Buddhist majority, sometimes violently. Many are labourers on tea estates where they earn just 700 rupees (£3; \$3.75; €3.40) a day. Housing in their communities is poor, hygiene facilities limited and malnutrition is rife. They had no savings to fall back on when their work stopped in the Covid lockdown.

“These poorest of the poor are struggling to survive,” said Pastor Peter. “We have never known a situation like it.” Barnabas provided food relief for 3,220 Christian families, including for families of 495 pastors like Peter, who lost their income from church offerings during lockdown.

Widow Sarojini, 65, has health problems and lives alone on the tea estate where she works as a labourer. Her daily wage work stopped overnight when Covid lockdown came. “I thank God for His provision and pray for the organisation who thought of us in this difficult time,” she said.



Christian widow Sarojini with food aid from Barnabas

**£68,315 (\$87,125; €74,850)
to feed 3,220 Christian tea-
plantation families**

Project reference: PR1530
(Covid Emergency Fund)

Compassion in action

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.

Skills and self-worth in south-east Asia

In a south-east Asian country where motorcycles make up 81% of the total vehicle population, a Barnabas funded motorcycle repair training programme is a “huge blessing” to the Christian community, which is subjected to harassment and violence at a local level and by the government.

Young Christians learn practical vocational skills in basic motorcycle maintenance, including tyre repair and oil and filter changes. They also receive discipleship training. After completing the course, each participant is given a starter tool pack.

Some trainees may go on to find jobs in the motorcycle trade while others use their new skills to help their community, mending the bikes of family, friends and church members. In exchange they may receive money or payment in kind, such as food, rice or labour, which enables them to be less reliant on their families. Our partner explained that the scheme is successfully “building skills, self-worth, raising status in society,” alongside helping young people to self-sufficiency.



Training in motorcycle repairs provides skills and opportunities for young Christians

£700 (\$890; €770) to train and equip 35 Christians

Project ref: XX-1174 (Small businesses in a south-east Asian country)

Christian farming feeds starving in Zimbabwe

With Zimbabwe in desperate need of food aid, a Christian farming project, supported by Barnabas, continues to be rolled out across the country. Yields are up to ten times higher when the principles of careful spacing, correct timing, and replacing ploughing with mulching are applied.

For twelve years, Barnabas has supported the salaries of 14 Zimbabwean trainers who travel to communities to teach the farming method. We also provide growers with starter packs of fertiliser, seed and lime, sufficient to produce food for a family of six for a year. Christian discipleship is included in the training. The Churches in Zimbabwe are encouraging rural Christians to follow the farming model.

The trainers are also teaching the country's 6,000 agricultural officers to introduce the principles across Zimbabwe, which is suffering after a very severe drought in 2019, followed by Covid in 2020, which prevented many subsistence farmers from tending their crops.



A Zimbabwean family celebrates an outstanding harvest produced by the mulching method

£26,920 (\$34,320; €29,400) for one year's support

Project ref: 91-751 (Agricultural projects in Zimbabwe)

Barnabas frees another 160 Pakistani brick-kiln families from debt and bonded labour

Pakistani Christian brick-kiln worker Abbas couldn't sleep because of the stress he endured after inheriting his parents' debts. Like many impoverished brick-kiln workers, his parents had taken out a loan from their employer at a time of family crisis. Interest on the loan was deducted from their low weekly wages but they were unable to pay off the debt, keeping them “bonded” to the brick kiln. On their death, the debt and the bondage were passed to the next generation.

Abbas said paying the money was impossible. “Either pay off my debts or feed my family and I prefer feed my family,” he said. Now Barnabas has paid the debt. With the burden lifted, Abbas can afford to send his three children to school and, freed from mental stress, he sleeps well.

He is among 160 families whose debts have been cleared recently by Barnabas.



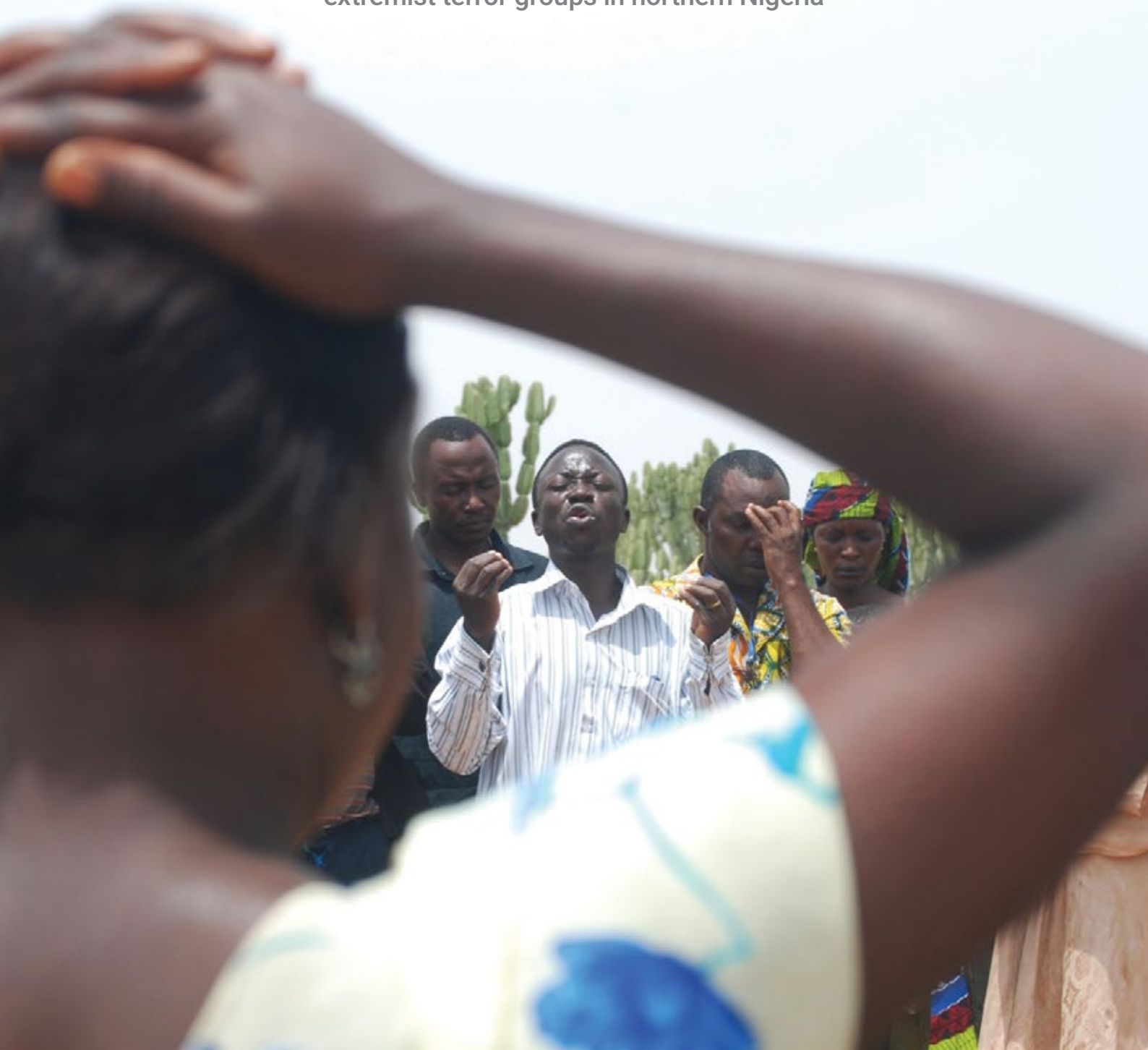
Abbas and his wife are now free and can afford to send their three children to school

£122,750 (\$157,860; €135,400) to free 160 families (Phase 13)

Project: PR1356 (Pakistan brick-kilns – freeing bonded labourers)

Embattled Christians of Nigeria

Thousands of Christian lives lost in rising tide of murderous attacks, kidnappings and brutality by the three linked extremist terror groups in northern Nigeria



It was an occasion for joy and celebration, when the threat of terrorist attack and Covid could be forgotten for a little while. Christians gathered in the Nigerian village of Kukum Daji to rejoice in the marriage of a young couple and pray for their happiness at the start of their new life together.

At around midnight, the laughter stopped and the screaming began. Heavily armed Fulani militants roared into the festivities on motorbikes, gunning down guests at random. By the time the terrorists sped off into the night, 21 Christians were dead and another 28 lay injured.

“It is as if the lives of Christians no longer matter,” said Pastor Stephen Baba Panya, president of the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), as he lamented the attack in July, just one of many in a relentless wave of atrocities that has taken place this year in the Christian-majority south of Kaduna State. The north of the state is mainly Muslim.



Christian women mourn 21 Christians killed at a wedding celebration in Kukum Daji, Kaduna State, on 19 July

The geography of Nigerian violence

Kaduna State lies in Nigeria’s “Middle Belt” where Christians and Muslims are in roughly equal numbers. Anti-Christian violence in this part of the country dates back to the 1980s, when large-scale riots became a regular occurrence, almost always initiated by Muslims and targeting Christians.

Meanwhile further north, where Muslims form a large majority, there was little violence but increasing radicalisation of the Muslim population. In 1999, Zamfara State, soon followed by eleven other states, declared that it would implement parts of sharia (Islamic law) in their state law. The South of is mainly Christian, and many of the Christians living in the North come from southern tribes, so are viewed with hostility for being “non-indigenes”, as well as being despised for their faith. There are also many Christian converts from Islam, especially from the large Hausa and Fulani tribes.

Boko Haram terror grips north-east Nigeria and spills into Western Sahel

In the early twenty-first century the source and nature of anti-Christian violence in Nigeria changed. Mob violence by ordinary Muslims, deliberately goaded into fury, in the Middle Belt gave way to terrorist raids by jihadi extremists in the North. The now infamous Boko Haram group was formed in 2002. A change of leadership in 2009 or 2010 resulted in greatly increased violence under the new leader, Abubakar Shekau, as Boko Haram launched murderous terror raids in Bauchi, Borno and Yobe states.

Shekau’s extreme brutality was not acceptable to some of his followers and the group split (see box on page 9).

Boko Haram is now active across the Western Sahel, with a web of links to other Islamist terror groups, its violent insurgency having spilled over into Chad, Niger, Mali, Burkina Faso and Far North Cameroon.

Attacks by Boko Haram and its off-shoot, ISWAP, continue unabated in northern



Video footage of a teenage Boko Haram militant shooting Christian student Ropvil Dalep was posted by the terrorist group on 20 January 2020

Nigeria. In August 2020, heavily armed ISWAP militants took hundreds hostage in a raid on the mainly-Christian Kukawa town. The 1,200 residents had only recently returned to their home town in Borno State, after spending two years displaced in camps.

Cruel spike in jihadi violence during Covid crisis

In 2020, Boko Haram took cruel advantage of absent security during the Covid-19 crisis to attack vulnerable Christian communities, which were locked down and left as sitting targets while governments focused police and military resources on the pandemic.

In July, Nigerian pastor, Joel Billi, called for urgent action to be taken to halt the relentless Boko Haram killings, abductions and rapes in the north. The Christian leader, who is head of one of the region’s largest Christian denominations, Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (EYN), said that more than 8,370



Pages of burnt Bible strewn across the floor of a ruined church after a Boko Haram raid in Garkida village in Adawama State

church members and eight pastors had been killed, with countless more abducted during the insurgency, and some 700,000 displaced ... “EYN had four District Church Councils prior to the insurgency in Gwoza Local Government Area of Borno State [of] which none is existing today,” he said.

Mounting slaughter of Christians by Fulani militants

Meanwhile, in the Middle Belt, the twenty-first century began with low level occasional anti-Christian violence by Muslim members of the Fulani tribe. By 2017 there were increasingly frequent attacks, usually at night. The Fulani violence spiked horrifically this year, particularly in Kaduna and Plateau states, where hundreds of Christians lost their lives in an escalating campaign of ethno-religious cleansing. Thousands of believers were displaced, as they fled their burning villages in terror. The government seems unable or unwilling to stop the violence.

A deadly alliance between Boko Haram and Fulani militia has formed since 2015, making available sophisticated weaponry to Fulani militants. Fulani cattle rustling and land grabbing has also been linked as a major source of funding for Boko Haram, for whom the Fulani are reported to be fighting a “proxy war”.

“As I lay there, I heard my daughter say she is dying”

“The Fulani came in and were shooting. They killed two of my children,” said Christian widow Bilkisu. Using machetes, the militants hacked to death another five of Bilkisu’s relatives including a mother and her baby daughter and a mother and her two sons.

“I heard them light the match and

set the house on fire. We were lucky. It was more of smoke, which I was able to survive,” she added.

The raid on the widow’s farming community of Chibob was one of several in three days of vicious attacks by Fulani militants on villages in the predominantly-Christian Gora ward of Kaduna State in July. At least 22 Christians were killed and more than 2,000 displaced in the raids.

“Before I was shot, I saw the Fulani man who is my neighbour, he even identified me. I surrendered to him on my knees,” Bilkisu explained. Her assailants then shot her in the chest and back simultaneously and she fell to the floor. “As I lay there, I heard my daughter say she is dying.”



A community in Kaduna State holds a funeral for 17 Christian villagers murdered in an attack by Fulani militants in May 2020. Scenes like these have become familiar as Fulani attacks surge in Nigeria’s Middle Belt

Anti-Christian motive for Fulani militant violence repeatedly denied

As local witnesses of attacks have stated, Muslim farms are left untouched while, just a few kilometres away, Christian farmland is routinely raided and looted. Fulani militants have also targeted pastors and church buildings with no connection to grazing land and uttered the traditional jihadi war-cry: “Allahu Akbar” during their attacks.

Brutalised Adara tribespeople reel in pain

Christians from the Adara tribe, one of Kaduna State’s largest ethnic groups who are about two-thirds Christian and 7% Muslim, have suffered kidnapping, robbery and murderous attacks mainly by militants from the Muslim-majority Hausa-Fulani people.

Since January this year, the Adara community endured at least 65 terrorist attacks, more than 110 killings, and 73 abductions of children and adults. Over 111 houses were razed, 32 whole villages destroyed and 20,000 persons displaced. The toll of Christian suffering is undoubtedly much worse because these figures reflect only the attacks we hear about; many go unreported.

“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,” said Awemi Maisamari, national president of the Adara Development Association. “We have since realised that the usual silence of government, when most of these atrocities are being committed, actually means consent.”



Nigerian pastor Alubara Audu, already wounded in a Fulani militant attack, was shot dead in cold blood as he warned his Adara Christian community of the impending raid in the early hours of a Sunday morning in August. As villagers fled, the pastor was shot and fell to the ground. Despite being wounded he continued to shout out to others to run, until the gunmen shot him multiple times at close range. He is pictured with his wife, Amina.



Food aid and essential supplies provided by Barnabas Fund arrive in the Hura village, Plateau State, where nine Christians were murdered in an attack by Fulani militants during lockdown in April. At the time of the assault, the village was sheltering hundreds of Christians who had survived onslaughts in nearby villages

President Muhammadu Buhari – himself a Muslim Fulani – claims that the root cause of the issue lies merely in clashing interests of uncoordinated nomadic Fulani cattle herdsman, driven southward by changing climate conditions in the Sahel to compete with settled farmers for grazing land.

Military personnel stand idly by during curfew as defenceless Christians massacred

A 24-hour curfew was supposedly introduced by Kaduna State authorities on 26 July to contain the surge in violence. It was, around the time of writing, being strictly enforced by military and security personnel, leaving Christian residents trapped in their homes, facing hunger, lack of medical care and even arrest if they attempted to tend to their crops. Yet, Fulani militia seemed able to continue to move freely.

Witnesses explained how military and security forces stood idly by during the curfew as at least 33 believers were killed on two consecutive days in August in Fulani militant attacks on five Christian communities in Zangon Kataf Local Government Area, southern Kaduna State.

In the first attack, on 5 August, Fulani militants arrived on trucks, passing unhindered through military checkpoints despite the curfew, to attack Apiashyim and Kibori villages, killing eleven Christians. Despite being aware attacks were underway, security personnel arrived only after it was over.

Hardship and hunger on rise amid violence

A local church leader said child malnutrition was on the rise because of

the curfew: “Parents cannot go out and look for food for their starving children. The sick are trapped at home. No one wants to risk the brutality of the military that are enforcing the curfew. Even if the curfew is lifted, freely grazing cattle herded by armed Fulani men have eaten up and trampled over thousands of hectares of grain farms, yam farms, [and] sugar cane crops among others.”

Put end to “pernicious genocide” in Kaduna State plead Christian leaders

In desperation, the Southern Kaduna People’s Union (SOKAPU) sent a letter in August to the International Criminal Court in the Hague asking for action against the “pernicious genocide” in northern Nigeria. The Christian leaders’ statement highlighted that around 50,000 Christians have been displaced from rural communities in Kaduna because of the violence.

The letter appealed to the international community and “men and women of conscience all over the world” to come to the aid of Christians facing “what looks like a government sponsored genocide” in southern Kaduna State.



Nigerian Christians and church leaders protested outside the Nigerian High Commission in London in August, against the slaughter of Christians in Kaduna State. Carrying banners stating, “It’s not a conflict, it’s a genocide” and “Our lives matter”, the peaceful protesters called on Nigeria’s President Buhari to declare the Fulani militia a terrorist organisation

Northern Nigeria’s terror scourge: who’s who?

Boko Haram – (popular name for the group who call themselves Jama’atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda’Awati Wal-Jihad)

Boko Haram, loosely translated, means “Western education forbidden”. The terror group was formed in 2002 in Maiduguri, Borno State. The group initially blamed regional corruption on “Western influences” and sought to impose sharia. It has the stated aims of establishing an Islamic caliphate and the elimination of Christians in the region. Now active across the western Sahel, the well-armed and funded group is aligned with Islamic State and thought to be linked to other terror organisations including Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). In terms of numbers killed, Boko Haram is one of the deadliest terrorist organisations in the world today.

ISWAP – Islamic State West Africa Province

The breakaway Islamist terror group with a popular following in the north. Led by Abu Musab al-Barnawi, the group split from Boko Haram in 2015, partly due to the extreme brutality of Boko Haram’s leader Abubakar Shekau, and is active in north-east Nigeria.

Fulani militants

Fulani militants, a third major terror group of well-armed extremists in northern Nigeria, operate mostly in the Middle Belt. The Fulani tribe are mainly Muslim and mainly nomadic cattle herdsman. They mount frequent raids on settled farming communities of Christians. Not all Fulanis are Muslims and not all Fulani Muslims are militant. However, in recent years Fulani Muslim militant attacks have intensified to levels described as “genocidal”, particularly in Kaduna State. Fulani militia have been linked to Boko Haram who are thought to be providing arms and vehicles, and participating in coordinated attacks.



Living businesses

Barnabas invests in hope by funding start-up costs for range of income generating projects

Economies across the world are plunging as a result of the Covid-19 crisis. It is likely that the flow of funds from wealthier countries to developing countries will diminish.

At Barnabas Fund, we believe it is time for churches everywhere to become self-funding and self-sustaining, like the New Testament churches, especially in situations of pressure and persecution.

We are investing in hope by funding start-up costs for a wide range of income generating projects. Some support individual families through “living businesses”; others will provide running costs for churches, seminaries, Christian schools and other Christian ministries.

Support for food businesses in Pakistan

The economy of Pakistan was badly impacted by the Covid crisis, and many people lost their jobs. Christians already marginalised and discriminated against by most of the Muslim majority, and restricted to low status, low income jobs, especially suffered.

Our focus is to make the Christian community in Pakistan self-sufficient and self-supporting by developing projects that will create sustainable incomes.

As part of this goal, we have helped 20 women to set up their own small food businesses in Islamabad. We funded the 25,000 rupee (£125, \$160; €136) start-up costs of each business, including providing cookery training.

Start-up delivers steady daily income

We also helped provide equipment for the new ventures. In the case of Christian, Nabila, we supplied her with a portable oven, stove burner and gas cylinder, pans, cooking utensils, ingredients and raw materials.

She thanks the Lord for the success of her market stall in Islamabad, where she cooks and sells home-made pakoras, samosas and potato fries to hungry passers-by. The stall is providing a steady daily income sufficient to support herself and her husband and their four-year-old daughter.

Until recently Nabila's husband had his own market stall selling engine oil. But Muslim rivals, jealous of a Christian's success, became verbally



Nabila is making enough money to support her family by offering a range of home-cooked snacks from her market stall

abusive towards him, making threats and accusing him of stealing. The harassment became so intense that Nabila's husband shut the stall and moved with his wife and daughter to a new home in another part of the city. Now he helps Nabila run her stall.

Nabila is thankful to Barnabas for providing her with the opportunity to start her own business. "I hope Barnabas can provide help for more Christian women like me," she said.

Brick-kiln wives equipped for new ventures

Sewing and tailoring is another area where there is opportunity for Christian women to earn a living and become self-sufficient, even while they are raising their children at home.

In one of Pakistan's brick-kiln communities, we have established a training centre for women and girls to learn sewing and embroidery skills. At the end of the course, each trainee receives a sewing machine to equip them in their new ventures.

Many who attend the training already labour alongside their husbands in the brick kilns, working even during pregnancy, and pray to be able to give up this hard, physical work.

"God has opened the door for us"

"I am thankful to Jesus Christ and all those people who support us from the UK so we could stand on our feet," said Nazia. "God has opened the door for us that we learn the work of stitching and we could earn money to be helpful to family in finances.

"My desire is to leave the work of brick kiln and just do the work of stitching and make the name of my family bright."



Nazia thanks God and Barnabas supporters for helping Christian women to be self-sufficient

Another mother, Rhana, said the money she earns will be used to pay the school fees for her three sons.

Young Christian mother given skills to support baby daughter

In south-east Asia, we fund a three-month sewing skills course for Christian women at a rural training centre. At the end of the course, each trainee is provided with a sewing machine to take back to their villages.

The course has provided Christian "Leah" with the skills to support her one-year-old daughter. Leah lives in a village where there are only a few other believers, who worship secretly in her brother's house. Last season, the rains upon which family members rely to water their rice fields did not come and they are having to find food on a daily basis.

With the support of Barnabas, Leah attended the sewing training course and is now equipped with the skills and a sewing machine to make an income repairing clothes and making new garments.



"Leah" now has the sewing skills to enable her to be self-sufficient

New café in Uzbekistan provides jobs for five converts

In Uzbekistan, Barnabas funded the start-up costs of a café that provides employment and a regular wage for five Christian converts from Islam. There is high unemployment in the region and converts, who suffer discrimination and hostility because of their faith, often have to move to the city or to another country to find work.

"This project has changed [the] lives of [the] converts," said our church partner. "Our brothers and sisters have a regular job and income. They can provide for their own families. They don't need leave home and church and move to another place of work."

The café rents small basement facilities where food is prepared and also puts a simple tent on the market place outside where people can sit and eat what they order.

The café had to shut down temporarily because of Covid, but it had already proved so successful that new café ventures are planned, providing more work for Christian converts.



A Christian café staff member takes the order of a customer in the market place seating area in Uzbekistan

“Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength”

Nehemiah 8:10



That your joy may be full ...

One of the most significant things in the Christian life is joy. This radiant inner joy sets Christ's followers apart in a frenzied, discontented world that relies on external events and successes for happiness.

True joy does not come merely from the fleeting feelings of pleasure when good things happen to us. Christian joy grows in the heart of believers. It is a deep, abiding contentment that arises when Jesus dwells in our hearts.

Spiritual joy is ever present and sustained in us by God, even when everything in life seems to be against us. In the midst of illness, poverty, isolation, persecution and even death, when there seems very little to be joyful about, God enables Christians to be joyful.

The refining fire of suffering

Unlike the world, Christians can actually welcome suffering because it can refine our characters and makes us more Christ-like. Paul describes this as a “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22-23).

Biblical joy is to respond to external circumstances, however difficult or tragic, with inner joy and peace, because “we know that in all things God works for the good for those who love him” using all experiences, including our suffering, to accomplish His work in conforming us to the image of His Son, throughout our earthly lives (Romans 8:28-29). He is carefully preparing us for the glorious day we will be with Him.

When Peter and the other apostles left after being flogged by the Sanhedrin for refusing not to speak of Jesus, they were “rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name” (Acts 5:41).

Count it all joy when you fall into various trials – James 1:2 (NKJV)

As Job endures the extreme trials God sent to test his faith, he finds “joy in unrelenting pain”. He declares his joyful consolation, even if God were to cut off his life, is that he has managed to remain faithful (Job 6:9-10).

The joy Job is speaking of is not just *some* joy but – as James (1:2, NKJV) puts it – *all* joy. This is the fullest, or most complete, kind of joy that can only come from God himself.

Christian martyrs often bore pain without even crying out, patiently looked death in the eye and some found the courage to sing God's praise.

The Apostle Peter writes about this kind of joy, of “greater worth than gold, which perishes”, that comes in the face of grief and trial and fills Christians with “inexpressible and glorious joy” because of their love for Jesus and in anticipation of the end result of faith in Him (1 Peter 1:6-9).

No one will take your joy from you – John 16:22

The early Church passed through some of the most brutal times of persecution and suffering known in Christian history. Yet, early Christians were often characterised by their calm, courageous and joyful response to persecution and suffering.

When Paul and Silas were in chains in jail they prayed and sang hymns to God, as the other prisoners and outcasts listened in wonder at such joyful praise in that dark place (Acts 16:25).

The mind is in heaven

Thousands of believers were thrown to lions or burnt alive during the first, second and early third century persecutions in the Roman Empire. Christian martyrs often bore pain without even crying out, patiently looked death in the eye and some found the courage to sing God's praise.

Early third century Christian writer, Tertullian, wrote of the martyrs of his day, “The leg feels not the stocks when the mind is in heaven. Though the body is held fast, all things lie open in the spirit.”¹

Joyful Uyghur Christian sang hymns until the end

China's vast north-west Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is now home to more than 10 million Muslims and is closely linked to its neighbouring Central Asian nations. In the early twentieth century, a number of Muslims gave their lives to Jesus Christ through the work of Swedish missionaries. One source records that between 1919 and 1939 the adult members of the church had grown to over 200, almost all of whom were converts from Islam.

In April 1933, an armed Muslim faction from Khotan (modern Hotan, Xinjiang) seized Kashgar, Yarkant and other towns and proclaimed the Turkish-Islamic republic of Eastern Turkestan. One of their first objectives was to eliminate Christianity from the region, in particular those who had converted from Islam. Male Christians were beaten and thrown into prison in Yarkant or Kashgar. Some were beheaded; others perished under terrible tortures. By the end of the 1930s, at least 100 Christian men had suffered martyrdom for their stand for Jesus Christ.

One who paid the ultimate price for his faith was 20-year-old Hassan of Yarkant. The young martyr's soothing voice calmed the nerves of the other prisoners at night as he sang hymns to his Saviour in the Uyghur language. One of his favourites was “Loved with Everlasting Love”. When his singing ceased, the other prisoners concluded that he had died of starvation.

Beacons of joy in Cameroon's long-suffering Far North

“Fear nearly swept us away when we left Koza via Gaboua for Malika and Kotsréhé on a motorbike, in the bush with thorny trees without houses,” a displaced Christian described the traumatic escape from a Boko Haram night attack on a Christian village.

Late in 2019, a terrible spike in Boko Haram raids on isolated and rural Christian communities caused massive displacement as families fled the onslaught of murders, kidnapping, arson and looting. Left with nothing but the few possessions they could carry, displaced families found themselves in desperate need and exposed to hostility in the Muslim-majority towns where they took refuge.

God is good, God is good, God is good forever

“We do not cease to convey to you the joy that animates us ... May Almighty God fill you a hundredfold for the gesture of love and heart for all that you have done for these brothers and sisters in difficulty,” were the words of a Christian leader as he explained how Christians responded when they received aid from their brothers and sisters far away.

“God is good, God is good, God is good forever,” joyfully sang Madeleine, a Cameroonian Christian widow, as she received her parcel of food and other essential items from Barnabas.

Marie, a Christian mother, couldn't hold back her tears as she gratefully exclaimed, “The God of Jesus Christ has visited me!”

More than 600 Christian families, displaced by cruel terror attacks on Christian villages in Far North Cameroon earlier this year, were sustained by Barnabas supporters who provided food aid, blankets and sleeping mats, warm children's clothes, hygiene items and other essentials.

¹ Quintus Tertullian, *Ad Martyras and The Passion of The Holy Martyrs Perpetua and Felicitas*, Trans. Thelwall and Wallace, Lighthouse publishing, 2018.

Second historic Turkish church building to be turned into a mosque

TURKEY



The former Christian orthodox Church of St. Saviour in Chora, in Istanbul, became a museum after the Second World War

Just a month after his controversial repurposing of the UNESCO world-heritage recognised Hagia Sophia basilica, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan ordered another ancient Christian place of worship to be turned back into a mosque.

The presidential decree came on 21 August to transform the St. Saviour in Chora Church building in Istanbul, now Kariye museum, which closely mirrors the history of neighbouring Hagia Sophia Cathedral.

The decision drew criticism from Erdogan's political opponents and church leaders who said the move will deepen religious divides in the country. A Christian opposition MP, Garo Paylan, called the transformation "a shame for our country".

Repression of religious minorities is increasing in Muslim-majority Turkey, particularly under Islamist President Erdogan, who has been outspoken about his desire to recreate the Ottoman Empire.

Sudan agrees to separate religion and state, ending 30 years of Islamic rule

SUDAN



Thirty years of cruel Islamic rule officially came to an end in Sudan when Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok signed an accord on 3 September

A deal ending Sudan's 30 years of rule under Islamic law and Islam as the official state religion has been agreed between the transitional government and rebel groups.

Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok signed an accord with the leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N), Abdelaziz Al-Hilu, on 3 September in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa.

"The state shall not establish an official religion," says the agreement. "No citizen shall be discriminated against based on their religion."

The deal came less than a week after the government signed a peace accord with an alliance of rebel groups on 31 August, ending decades of conflict in Darfur and the border states of Blue Nile and South Kordofan, which left hundreds of thousands dead and millions more displaced.

Islamists have called for the government to be overthrown, describing the reforms as a "war against virtues".

Fulani Muslim rescues Nigerian Christian missionaries dumped by kidnappers

NIGERIA

A Fulani Muslim man came to the rescue of two Nigerian Christian missionaries dumped in the bush by kidnappers on 15 July after they had endured two months in captivity.

He found Pastor Zakka Ibrahim and Samuel Mabas exhausted and hungry, and gave them shelter. The men had been kidnapped in Niger State on 17 May.

They were abandoned by their kidnappers without food, and spent two days trekking in heavy rain across unfamiliar terrain. At one point they had to crawl on their stomachs to evade armed militants.

Their rescuer looked after them for two days before taking them to church leaders in Gusau, the capital of Zamfara State, which neighbours Niger.

At least 18 Christians murdered in Boko Haram stealth raid in Cameroon

CAMEROON

Several groups of Boko Haram militants descended on a camp for internally displaced people in Nguetchewe village, Far North Cameroon, killing at least 18 Christians as they slept in a stealth night assault on Sunday 2 August.

The rifle and machete armed jihadists injured several others as they ransacked houses in an hour-long attack in Mayo Tsanaga department. The bodies of some of the victims were found dismembered.

It is thought the terrorists were attempting to continue their attack with an assault on a Christian mission in the village, from which a minister and other church workers had been kidnapped by Boko Haram in 2013.

Pakistani Christian sentenced to death over “blasphemous” text messages, and another charged

PAKISTAN



Lawyer Saif-ul-Mulook, left, is to lodge a high court appeal against the conviction of Christian Asif Pervaiz, right

Pakistani Christian Asif Pervaiz was sentenced to death on 8 September after he was convicted of sending text messages with “blasphemous content”.

The 37-year-old former garment factory worker has been in custody since 2013, when he was accused by his supervisor of sending derogatory text messages about Muhammad. Pervaiz denied the charge.

A sessions court in Lahore ordered Pervaiz to serve a three-year jail term for “misusing” his phone before being hanged. There is a mandatory death sentence for “blasphemy” in Pakistani law, although no one has been executed to date.

Pervaiz’s lawyer Saif-ul-Mulook said he would appeal the conviction. “This case should have been thrown out by the judge,” said the lawyer, who previously successfully defended Christian mother-of-five Aasia Bibi in overturning her “blasphemy” conviction.

In August in Punjab province, another Christian was arrested for “blasphemy”. Sohail Masih was accused of insulting Islam in a Facebook post. He was later charged under sections 295-A and 295-C of the Pakistan Penal Code, the latter being the section carrying a mandatory death sentence.

The appeal court hearing for Pakistani couple, Shafqat Emmanuel and Shagufta Kausar, against their conviction and death sentence for a similar alleged “blasphemy” by

text message was adjourned on 24 September. A new date has yet to be set for the hearing.

The married couple, who have four children, have endured six years in prison on death row.

Shafqat, who is disabled, and his wife Shagufta say that they are illiterate and incapable of sending the messages.

On 10 September, the High Court in Lahore called for medical reports on seriously ill Pakistani Christian Zafar Bhatti after his lawyers asked for bail on health grounds and an early hearing against his conviction for “blasphemy”.

“This case should have been thrown out by the judge,” said the lawyer, who previously successfully defended Christian mother-of-five Aasia Bibi

Zafar, a diabetic in his 50s, suffered a heart attack in prison on 3 September. He was jailed in 2012 and sentenced to life imprisonment in 2017 for sending texts insulting Muhammad on a phone that was not registered in his name.

At the time of writing, there are believed to be approximately 24 Pakistani Christians (including four minors) in prison accused of “blasphemy”; eight of them have been sentenced to death.

Chinese authorities close net on churches after Covid lockdown

CHINA

Authorities in China are closing the net on persecuted Church communities in the wake of the Covid lockdown by offering cash rewards to anyone who provides information on “illegal religious activity venues”.

The Ethnic and Religious Affairs Bureau of Gushi county, in Henan province, urged citizens in August to submit photos, videos and recordings of “unapproved” meeting places in exchange for around 500 yuan (£55; \$70; €60).

As a result of the campaign, the landlord of a house church” (i.e. an unregistered congregation) refused to rent her property to Christians, leaving them without a place to worship for a second time. The congregation belonged to a three-self (i.e. state-registered) church until it was shut last year as part of a continuing government crackdown against Christianity.

In another development, Henan province authorities stated they would only allow churches to reopen following the Covid-19 lockdown provided they demonstrated their loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party.

In Yucheng, officials ordered preachers to give sermons that extolled President Xi Jinping for leading people “in defeating the epidemic”. A pastor lamented, “I had to preach as the state required, otherwise the church would not have reopened.”

Chinese authorities are also stepping up a policy of withdrawing government welfare benefits from vulnerable Christians who refuse to renounce their faith.

In Xinyu city in Jiangxi province, officials took away a disabled Christian man’s monthly allowance of 100 yuan (£11; \$14; €12). “Officials told me that we would be treated as anti-party elements if my husband and I continued attending worship services,” said his wife.



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BEIRUT EXPLOSION

Thanks to Barnabas supporters, urgent aid arrived immediately for affected Christians in Lebanon

On 4 August an immense explosion rocked Beirut when about 2,750 tons of ammonium nitrate fertiliser exploded in a warehouse in the port area of the city killing at least 160 people and injuring about 5,000. Lebanon is no stranger to conflict and explosions are almost routine. But this blast, the equivalent of a small nuclear weapon, exceeded anything seen previously in the country. Hundreds of thousands were made homeless.

When the disaster struck, Lebanon was struggling with economic and political problems as well as the Covid crisis. The government had defaulted on its debt. The currency and economy were sliding, as banks struggled to cover people's deposits. With a poverty rate estimated to exceed 50%, the country's population was already desperate.

Four Christian neighbourhoods among the worst affected

For poor Christians in the capital and nearby, the explosion was catastrophic. The blast wave flattened the port area and apartments in the nearby crowded neighbourhoods crumbled. Four of the five neighbourhoods worst affected are predominantly Christian. Damage was caused to buildings as much as 26 km away. Businesses and homes were damaged or destroyed and the infrastructure of a large part of the city was demolished.

Immediate help reached shocked and desperate Christians

Barnabas Fund partners in Lebanon responded immediately to help with critical needs including

food, medical support and basic home security repairs. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, Barnabas has sent just over £203,000 (\$260,500; €222,600) in emergency relief aid support (at the time of writing), starting in first few days after the explosion. Help was targeted especially to help vulnerable people and on repair work to make homes safe and secure.

***Barnabas has sent just over
£203,000 (\$260,500; €222,600)
in emergency relief aid***

Support for vulnerable secret believers

Converts from Islam to Christianity live in great insecurity in a country torn by political and sectarian strife and were particularly at risk. Some of the Muslim-background believers from nearby countries who Barnabas helped, cannot receive other aid because coming forward would reveal the fact that they were converts from Islam, thus endangering themselves. We praise the Lord that, because Barnabas partners are already working with these converts, aid could rapidly reach these most needy brothers and sisters.

Beirut is home to many Christian refugees from Iraq and Syria and helping them was also a high priority.

£23,300 (\$30,000; €25,700) from Barnabas supporters is helping to repair 60 Christian homes, at an average cost of around £390 (\$500; €430) each.

A typical food aid programme costs £27 (\$35; €30) per month per family. Many homes were wrecked by the explosion. Support was sent to help repair doors and windows, making homes safe and secure for many vulnerable Christian families.

An update from one of our project partners:

overwhelming need growing in troubled Lebanon

"Where we come from it is disasters on all levels! The sanctions hit the economy in such a way that made it collapse! No fuel ... means no electricity, no bread, no cars to move and no transport of goods," came the words of Lebanese Christian leader to Barnabas in late September. At the time of writing, coronavirus was also hitting Lebanon very hard, affecting the lives of all people and Christians in particular. He explained that bread was being strictly rationed as well as rice, sugar, vegetable oil, and other staples. Medicine was also scarce, and very expensive if it can be found at all.

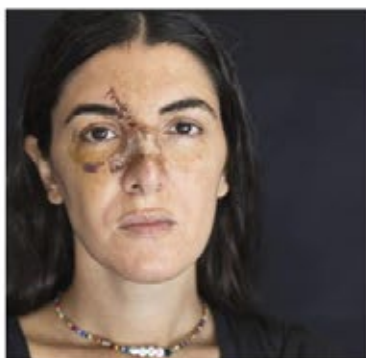
In midst of multiple crises, many Lebanese, including Christians, are considering leaving the country. Since the August explosion, many who have a second non-Lebanese passport started leaving or plan to leave because they can see no hope for their children in Lebanon.



The Christian area of Bourj Hammoud, near the epicentre of the blast, is one of four of Eastern Beirut's Christian neighbourhoods among the five worst affected in the city. Church buildings and Christian ministries were also damaged



Project reference PR1533
Disaster Relief



Many Christians were among the estimated 5,000 people injured in the terrible blast. Flying debris scattered for miles across the densely populated city. "Your prayers ... give us a lot of strength so we can absorb the shock and do our best to pass on this spirit to others around us," wrote another Lebanese Christian leader soon after the massive explosion in Beirut in August. "People here are so sad and angry and it is difficult for them to just add on a big catastrophe of this size on top of all the previous ones accumulating over the years!!! Worst of all were the events in 2019 and 2020 starting with the revolution, the economic crisis and bank collapse, Covid-19 and now the explosion."



Christians in Lebanon were already desperate due to economic crisis and Covid-19, even before the explosion on 4 August devastated Beirut, destroying vital stores of grain and damaging houses in a wide radius



Many damaged homes were left without windows or secure doors. Barnabas supported urgent basic repairs to make houses safe and secure for families



A church distribution team in prayer before taking water and food to Christians affected by the terrible event in Beirut



A traumatised Beirut resident is comforted after the terrible explosion that shook her city



Many hands make light work of preparing urgent food aid parcels for hungry victims. Food parcels contained a well-balanced range of nutritious and familiar foods, plus two hygiene items.



BARNABAS TODAY

Launched in September 2020, the aim of our new *Barnabas Today* website is to provide spiritual resources to encourage believers facing pressure and difficulties of many kinds.

We are prioritising resources created by our brothers and sisters living in those situations of poverty and persecution, not resources from the Church in the comfortable West.

With God's help, this new website will grow as a platform from which Christians can freely watch, read, listen or download material to touch their hearts, educate their minds and strengthen their souls. There are hymns and songs in different languages, with local music coming out of the various contexts. There are Bible studies, sermons and devotional material written by Christians from the midst of the fiery furnace, believers who really know

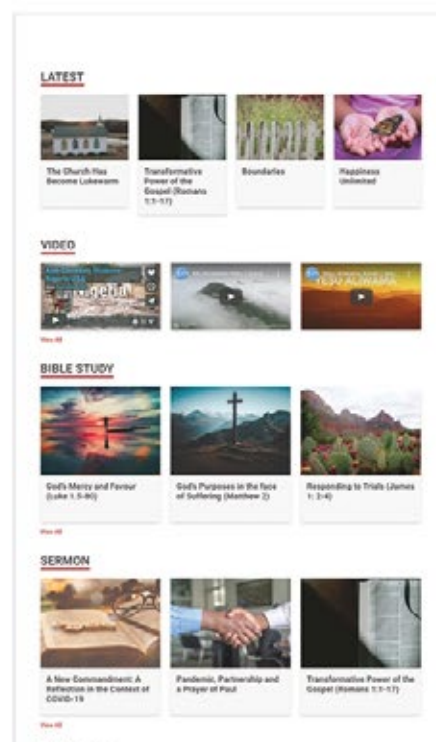
what it is to suffer for Christ and can share from their own experience to strengthen others.

And these resources are there online to bless all of us, wherever we live. We all face challenges during our earthly lives, whether sickness, financial, relationships, bereavement or other difficulties. We can find help on this website from those who have learned how to grow spiritually strong through trials and tribulations. Furthermore, as anti-Christian pressure mounts in the West, there will be a treasure of spiritual strength and wisdom from the persecuted Church, on which Western Christians can also draw as they equip themselves for persecution not seen in generations.

Visit the *Barnabas Today* website to explore our new resources and find out more: **barnabastoday.com**



Project reference PR1536
Barnabas Today website



The Barnabas Today website, launched in September 2020, provides spiritual resources to sustain suffering Christians, available in languages including Urdu, Russian, Chinese and Portuguese.

In Touch

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Barnabas supporter turns miles into money to ease plight of poor and vulnerable

Barnabas supporter Maddy Spelman was so moved by the plight of marginalised and vulnerable Christians suffering because of the Covid lockdown that she stepped out to help them.

Joined by her good friend and neighbour Linda Miller, Maddy walked 26 miles of the countryside, the equivalent of a marathon, near her home in north Devon, UK, over four days and raised a magnificent £500 (\$650; €548) in sponsorship for Barnabas.

"As a regular reader of *Barnabas Aid* magazine, I was impacted by the article about the spread of Covid-19 around the world and how vulnerable people who live in poorer countries are," said Maddy.



Maddy Spelman takes in the glorious view during her marathon walk



Friend and neighbour Linda Miller kept Maddy company on the walk

Mary's musical marathon supports Christians suffering from impact of Covid

Talented supporter, Mary Gorniak, a professional flautist and piccolo player, emerged tired but delighted after staging a 24-hour Musicathon, which raised an amazing £800 (\$1,030; €880) for the Barnabas Covid Emergency Fund for Poor and Persecuted Christians.

The round-the-clock musical relay inventively involved members of Mary's family and friends far and wide, some joining in from Germany and Poland. From midnight on 22 May, every hour was filled with one or more participants making music in their own homes. Each music-maker (or makers) then passed on the baton to the next participant via video call until all 24 hours were completed.

More than 30 enthusiastic musicians, including Mary's husband, George, and their three grown up children, took part, singing or playing a variety of instruments including piano, guitar, cello, violin, drums and percussion.

Mary, from Surrey, UK, said she wanted to help people in less developed countries who had suffered medically, physically and financially from the impact of the coronavirus.

The Musicathon raised more than £2,000 (\$2,600; €2,200), which was shared between Barnabas and two other international charities. "I am really, really grateful to all who donated," added Mary.

Barnabas Fund has already supported more than 600,000 Christians affected by the global Covid crisis and Mary's donation will help us in our goal to help another 600,000.



Mary Gorniak said she felt blessed by the generous donations of Musicathon supporters

Remember Barnabas Fund on
Giving Tuesday 1 December

Support Barnabas with Christmas cards

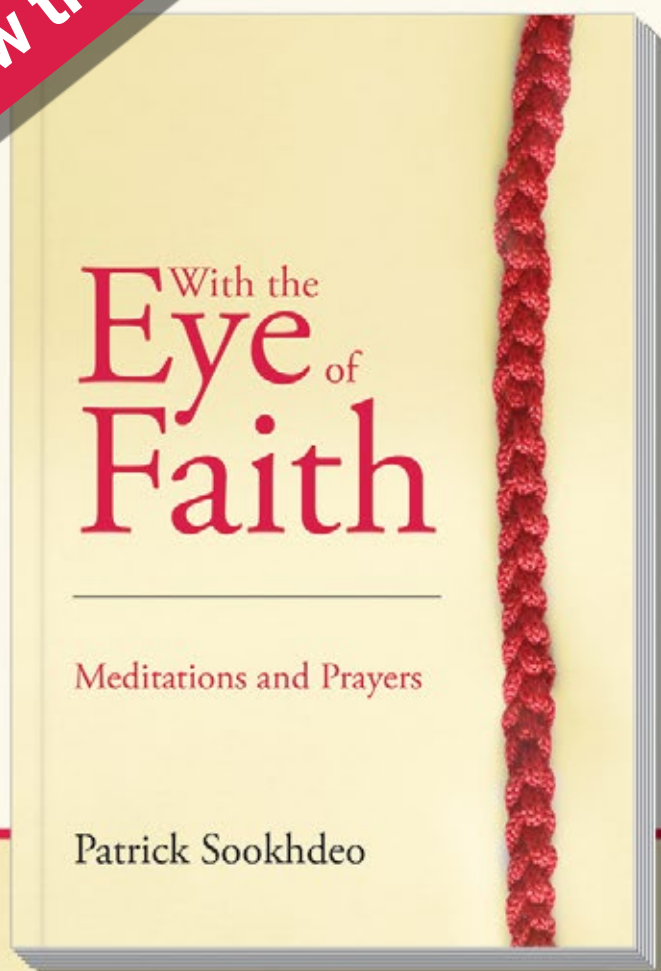
Barnabas Fund has once again partnered with Just Cards Direct, a Christian organisation that supports the work of Christian charities in the developing world. You can purchase their beautiful cards and gifts by using the form included with this magazine or online at: justcardsdirect.com. Just select "Barnabas Fund" on the website at the payment stage for Barnabas to receive 10% of the proceeds from all card sales.

How could
your church bless
suffering Christians
this Christmas?



Christians the world over will soon be celebrating the birth of Christ. This year so many of our already marginalised and persecuted brothers and sisters suffered additional hardship because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Could your church or group take up a special Christmas offering to make a difference to the lives of our persecuted Christian family who need our help?

New title



With the Eye of Faith

Meditations and Prayers

This book of 98 meditations and prayers is intended to help the reader encounter God and His love in a variety of situations, whether joyful praise or sorrow, loneliness, rejection, despair or even imminent death.

“May God bless us all as we follow in the steps of our Lord Jesus, journeying together to our heavenly Home, learning from one another and from His Spirit, and may He satisfy our longings with that vision of Himself.”

– Patrick Sookhdeo

Patrick Sookhdeo PhD, DD is International Director of Barnabas Fund, Executive Director and Chair of the Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life, and Honorary Professor in the Department of Religion Studies at the Faculty of Theology and Religion at the University of Pretoria, South Africa.

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That binds me to You.
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A silken thread
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