

MEDICAL.GIVES

PPE delivered to African
Christian hospitals

FOOD.GIVES

Christians in Jordan
thankful for aid

THE SHEPHERD'S ACADEMY

Pastors blessed by
theological training

barnabasaid

Joy amidst suffering

Help for persecuted
Christians displaced in
Burkina Faso

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 or goods e.g. food)
- 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.

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Cheques in Singapore dollars payable to “Olive Aid Trust” may be sent to: Olives Aid Sdn Bhd, P.O. Box 03124, Subang Jaya, 47507 Selangor, MALAYSIA. Singaporean supporters may send gifts for Barnabas Aid online via Olive Aid Trust:
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Front Cover: Displaced Christian girl in Burkina Faso given place at Barnabas-funded school (see p.7 for more)



Registered charity
number 1092935
Company registered
in England number
04029536

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Turn your eyes upon Jesus

Soon after I became a Christian, I learned, at the little mission church I attended, an old chorus:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.¹

Later I discovered that these words are the refrain of a hymn which begins, “O soul, are you weary and troubled?”

Perhaps many of us are weary and troubled at present. We live in an age of turmoil, with wars looming and wars in progress, with atheism and secularism gaining ground in many societies, with a sharply rising cost of living. Some of us have personal concerns on top of the world situation: broken relationships, sickness or the frailties of old age, money worries, and much more.

Let us, therefore, rest our gaze on the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour. It is He who invites the weary and burdened to come to Him and find rest for their souls (Matthew 11:28-29). It is He who tells us not to let our hearts be troubled as we trust in Him and accept the peace He gives (John 14:1,27).

He Himself knew what it was to be troubled in soul or spirit for many different reasons (John 11:33; 12:27; 13:21) and went on to bear the sins of the whole world as He died in agony on the cross. As we fix our eyes on Him, we are encouraged to persevere through whatever difficulties He allows to come our way.

... let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith... Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart. (Hebrews 12:1b-3)

We are approaching the glorious celebration of Easter, the resurrection of Christ. His rising to new life is attested by many witnesses who saw Him and recognised Him (Acts 2:32; 3:15; 5:30-32). “I have seen the Lord!” said the first witness, Mary Magdalene, to the disciples (John 20:18). “We have seen the Lord!” said the other disciples to Thomas after Jesus had appeared to them in the evening of that first Easter Day (John 20:25). Thomas insisted not only on seeing Him but also on touching Him (John 20:17,25-28).

We may be tempted to envy those who saw Christ with their physical eyes, or those who have seen Him in visions and dreams. Yet in our hearts we can turn our eyes upon Jesus, as we focus our thoughts on Him, feeling our troubles recede as we gain an eternal perspective, and letting His peace and presence overwhelm us. Jesus, however, told Thomas, “Blessed are those who have not seen [me] and yet have believed.” (John 20:29)

And let us remember that one day, in heaven, we shall indeed see Him. We shall see Him face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12; Revelation 22:4).

In the words of another old hymn,²

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. Face to face with Christ, my Saviour,
Face to face – what will it be
When, with rapture I behold Him,
Jesus Christ who died for me?</p> | <p>3. What rejoicing in His presence,
When are banished grief and pain;
When the crooked ways are straightened
And the dark things shall be plain.</p> |
| <p>2. Only faintly now I see Him,
With the darkling veil between,
But a blessed day is coming
When His glory shall be seen.</p> | <p>4. Face to face – O, blissful moment!
Face to face – to see and know;
Face to face with my Redeemer,
Jesus Christ who loves me so.</p> |

DR PATRICK SOOKHDEO

International Director, Barnabas Aid

¹ Helen H. Lemmel, 1922

² Carrie Ellis Breck, 1898

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how barnabas is helping

£80,949
(\$100,000, €92,412)



Food boxes for needy Christian widows in Egypt

“Without this box we might have died from hunger,” said poor Egyptian Christian widows struggling to provide for their families because food prices are at their highest for 60 years.

Our grant provided staples like rice, pasta, flour and beans for 4,557 impoverished families for three months. Most recipient families were headed by widows unable to work because of their circumstances, or who have jobs paying meagre wages.



Food boxes are loaded for distribution to poor Egyptian Christian widows

Project reference: 11-220 (Needy Christians in Egypt)

£4,399
(\$5,397; €5,000)
For trees, planting and irrigation



New orchard supports Christians returning to ancient homeland

Barnabas is funding an orchard of 500 pistachio trees at a ministry centre in Turkey, in an area where there had been a strong presence of Syriac and Armenian Christians for centuries. Many of their descendants perished, or fled the area, as a result of the Ottoman genocide of Christians that peaked in 1915.

The ministry centre is supporting Christian families who are now returning to their ancestral homeland, including teaching their children the Aramaic language used by Jesus Christ.



Pistachio saplings funded by Barnabas supporters ready for planting in the orchard

Project reference: PR1594 (Small businesses in Turkey)

£2,500
(\$3,067; €2,841)



Christian converts in Kazakhstan given discipleship training

Around 100 Christian converts were helped to grow in their faith at Barnabas-funded discipleship seminars held in Muslim-majority Kazakhstan. Meetings were also held for Kazakh converts in Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia.

Participants learned to stand firm in the face of persecution, and share the Gospel in hostile circumstances. Our church partner said the seminars helped strengthen believers. “Christians have become more active and daring to serve the Lord,” he said. “They began to bring their friends, as well as other people, to the faith.”



Barnabas-funded discipleship seminars enabled Christian converts in Kazakhstan to grow in faith

Project reference: PR1564

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

£1,119
(\$1,358; €1,263)



Uzbek Christians receive help to survive the winter

“Believers understand they are remembered,” said a pastor in Uzbekistan thanking Barnabas for sending food to help poor Christians survive the cold winter months.

Twenty-three families – the majority of whom are converts from Islam – received food parcels including sausages, pasta, rice and other staples, and another Christian was given firewood. A church leader said the assistance strengthened and encouraged Christians to understand they are not alone and know “that the Lord takes care of us through other brothers in other countries”.



A Christian mother in Uzbekistan thanked Barnabas for providing food for her family while she was too ill to work

*Project reference: PR1506
(Winter food and fuel for needy Christians in Central Asia)*

£44,187
(\$54,201; €52,402)



Poor Sri Lankan Christians helped during economic crisis

“We are very grateful for this help. God bless you,” said Sirisena, a poor Sri Lankan Christian, who lost his income from selling vegetables because of the country’s economic crisis. Barnabas provided Sirisena with chickens and vegetable seeds to enable him to support himself and his wife and father, who have health problems.

His was one of 286 Christian families in acute need who received this help package. Another 2,000 Christian families suffering because of the crisis were given Barnabas-funded dry ration packs.



Sirisena cares for his Barnabas-funded chickens

*Project reference 85-760
(Sri Lanka General Fund)*

£2,588
(\$2,974; €2,753)



Vietnamese families praise God for swift aid after landslides

Hmong Christians in Vietnam praised God for the fast response of Barnabas after landslides caused by heavy rains damaged their homes in the mountainous north west.

Barnabas funding enabled our project partners to hire diggers to clear the fallen earth, and purchase building materials to repair houses. Rice, cooking pots and blankets were provided to 27 families. Christians in the area are suffering a rise in persecution from the authorities, and were encouraged by the aid and how quickly it arrived.



A Hmong Christian woman receives a Barnabas-funded cooking pot, blankets and rice

Project reference: 83-1339

“We thank God for keeping us alive”

A Christian woman describes the day Islamist gunmen brought terror to her village in Burkina Faso

Sarah requests prayers for the many thousands of people who, like herself, have been driven from their homes by Islamist extremists

“T

here are no words to express our gratitude to those who donated us this food,”

said “Sarah” as she thanked Barnabas supporters.

Sarah was among 3,290 desperate and hungry Christians given Barnabas-funded rice, spaghetti, salt and cooking oil to sustain them after they were driven from their homes by Islamist militants in Burkina Faso. The majority of the recipients of this latest delivery of aid from Barnabas were children – more than 2,000 aged under 15.

Jihadists have waged a campaign of terror centred on the north and north-eastern regions of Burkina Faso for many years, much of it targeted against Christian communities and church leaders.

More than 40% of Burkina Faso is under the control of the extremists.

Thousands of civilian lives have been lost; churches have been destroyed or closed; homes, farms and crops lie in ruins; over 6,000 schools have closed and more than two million people have been forced to run for their lives.

Sarah's story

Sarah is one of those two million. The terrorists came to her village one Sunday, just as the church service had ended. Sarah and her friends were exchanging greetings and sharing their excitement about her wedding, due to take place the following day.

Children from the congregation, who moments earlier had run outside to play, came back to say there were "strange people" in the compound. The strangers were, in Sarah's words, "very armed".

"They surrounded us and sent all the women to sit under a tree next to the church," she told Barnabas. "Some of them were to keep us under control so that we would not run or cry.

"They asked, 'Who is your leader?' Our pastor replied that he is the leader. And they took the men – the

"We thank God for keeping us alive," said Sarah. "And we also thank Him for those who went before us to glory.

"We know that if God didn't allow this to happen it couldn't be so," she added.

Sarah and her husband fled their community along with other villagers to seek refuge in the nearest city, already crowded with internally displaced people (IDPs).

Her husband struggled to find work to buy food for Sarah, who was by then pregnant. More often than not they went hungry.

Weakened by a lack of nourishment, Sarah went into labour and, despite the best efforts of doctors, her baby – a boy – was stillborn and Sarah nearly died.

Christians refused government food aid

Our project partners say there are many traumatised Christian IDPs who, like Sarah, are in urgent need of food.

Distribution of government food aid is rare, and believers are sometimes refused a share by Muslim officials

"They started shooting behind the church. After that they warned us not to move"

pastor, a deacon and other members. Six people in total.

"They took them behind the church building. They laid them down there ... They asked us to bow and they started shooting behind the church. After that they warned us not to move."

The terrorists looted the village, taking all the community's food and livestock. They stole Sarah's wedding gifts. Before leaving, they set the church building ablaze.

The traumatised survivors buried their dead, and prayed.

because of their Christian-sounding names. Other Christian IDPs have been unable to register for it because they had fled without their identity cards or birth certificates.

Our partners told us that the situation has become much worse. More Christians are fleeing their homes because of the escalating violence and need help, yet there is often no food available to buy. The worsening security situation makes it increasingly dangerous for our partners to deliver aid.

"But by God's grace we always found ways and wisdom to serve," said a

Christian leader. "It is an enormous privilege to be able to serve like a channel of comfort to those in crucial need of it."

He added that, although many Christians struggled to find words to express their thanks for the Barnabas-funded food relief, "there is a great sense of gratitude in the hearts and on the faces of the thousands of IDPs that we are forwarding your colossal support to".

Barnabas funds school for displaced Christian children

Some Christian children displaced by the violence in Burkina Faso have been refused entry to government schools because of their faith.



Christian children like "Albertine" have fled their homes because of extremist violence. Many have then been denied a place in government schools because of their faith

Even non-Christian children may be denied a place just because they had previously attended a Christian school.

Barnabas has funded a new emergency school to enable 300 displaced Christian children, aged between 6 and 14, to continue their education. Each child receives a hot meal for five days a week as well.

The school has provided jobs for Christian teachers and they have received training to enable them to respond to the needs of children traumatised by the difficult situations they have endured.

Project reference: PRI596 (Emergency schooling for IDP children in Burkina Faso)



Investing in hope and health.

Christians around the world struggle to get the medical checks, advice and treatment that most in the West take for granted. That is why Barnabas Aid is making medical projects an urgent priority.

Medical staff in Africa thank Barnabas supporters for PPE

Christian hospitals in Africa have sent heartfelt thanks to Barnabas supporters for providing medical staff with much-needed personal protective equipment (PPE).

As part of our medical.gives initiative, around 50 million pieces of life-saving PPE, donated by the Irish government, have been shipped to health facilities in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe (see *Barnabas Aid*, November/December 2022, p.10). The PPE includes medical masks, gloves and scrubs.

“We want to say thanks so much,” the manager of the Jesse Kay Hospital for children in Nairobi, Kenya told us. “We have just received PPE that will go a long way to assist us.” Staff are especially grateful because they remember “the many days we went without the PPE”, he added.

The PPE consignment is worth around £25 million (\$33m; €30m) and was delivered in 40 shipping containers, in partnership with historic charity Crown Agents. Barnabas supporters covered the cost of £12,000 (\$16,000; €14,000) to transport each container to its destination. This worked out at just one penny for each piece of PPE.

The PPE was welcomed by Ummu Mwalimu, the Health Minister in Tanzania, in September and it was immediately deployed to protect medical staff from the highly contagious and deadly ebola disease. In Zimbabwe the consignment was distributed between Christian health facilities around the country. It was carried out “in true ‘ubuntu’ style where we share everything,” said a regional director of Crown Agents, referencing the African word that means compassion and concern for human dignity.

Staff at Mount Hampden Rural Clinic, Mahonaland West Province were delighted to receive masks that will help to protect them from Covid and other illnesses, as well as from the dust produced by illegal brick works in the area.

“The staff were so grateful because they had no masks in stock, and yet they



Tanzanian Health Minister Ummu Mwalimu officially receives the PPE from Mags Gaynor, representative of the Irish government [Image credit: Embassy of Ireland, Tanzania]

were attending to patients with all types of illnesses indoors,” said our Crown Agents partner.

“They expressed gratitude to Barnabas for coming in at such an opportune time to respond to their need. They were also grateful for the gloves since they were running low on their stocks.”

New medical training centre for India’s marginalised Christians

A desperate shortage of health professionals continues to be felt across India, especially in the most impoverished, rural areas. It is estimated that nationwide there is a shortfall of 6.4 million allied health professionals (AHPs), who provide

crucial ancillary support to doctors and nurses.

Christians in India – the majority of whom come from the most impoverished and disadvantaged communities – often lack training opportunities by which they can enter the medical profession.

Responding to this ongoing crisis, Barnabas Aid has entered a partnership with the Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI) to fund the building of a medical training centre in Vellore, Tamil Nadu, that will train Christian AHPs from across India for service in rural contexts where medical expertise is so desperately needed.

The centre will offer short-term medical skill courses of three to six months duration. Churches in rural areas will be encouraged to identify suitable candidates for training from among their own congregations. These underprivileged believers will be equipped as medical professionals and enabled to serve their communities. It is hoped that up to 120 Christian students will complete these courses each year.

The training centre will also provide a venue for workshops, seminars and conferences for CMAI’s existing 600-strong community of medical diploma students. Plans are in place for the creation of specialised postgraduate level allied health courses.

The 44,200-square foot centre is to be built on land near to the Christian



An architectural illustration of one of the buildings at the Barnabas-funded medical training centre, which will equip impoverished and marginalised Christian students to serve their communities as allied health professionals



Barnabas has funded critical safety work at Lakhnadon Christian Hospital

Medical College in Vellore, which is recognised as one of the top three teaching hospitals in India. The administrative block of the centre will have classrooms equipped with the latest technology, a 50-seat conference hall, training rooms and a library. A separate auditorium will seat up to 250 people and include a dining area.

“The Vellore centre is strategically placed with access to a high level of expertise,” said Dr Priya L. John, General Secretary of the CMAI. “It will be established as a centre for research and the development of allied health science, as well as other health sciences.”

“This is a truly exciting development,” said Barnabas Aid’s International Director Patrick Sookhdeo. “In partnership with CMAI, we now have the opportunity to address a keenly felt need, and help train rural Christians in allied health skills.”

Vital modernisation work at Indian Christian hospital

Barnabas is also helping to modernise the aging facilities at a Christian hospital in Madhya Pradesh, India. Lakhnadon Christian Hospital was founded by missionaries from Scotland in the 1920s and is the place that the area’s small Christian community turns to for medical help.

The hospital has 12 in-patient and four high-dependency beds. It is a surgical centre and offers obstetrics, gynaecology and paediatrics services as well as dental and medical emergency care.

Health staff focus on social welfare activities and community health education programmes as part of their mission to empower underprivileged sections of the community.

Yet the infrastructure of Lakhnadon hospital is old and Barnabas is funding some of the changes required to bring it up to modern standards.

A priority has been to overhaul the hospital’s firefighting systems and equipment. This need took on new urgency following a blaze at a private hospital in Madhya Pradesh in August 2022 in which eight people died. Because short circuits are a common cause of the outbreak of fire, the work has included overhauling the hospital’s electrical wiring.

Barnabas is also replacing its two old generators with a new 62.5KVA generator that is sufficient to provide uninterrupted power to supply the hospital, its expanded operation theatre, laboratory and X-ray facilities and staff quarters. A new borewell will ensure there is sufficient water to meet the hospital’s growing needs.

Lakhnadon Hospital was forced to close in 2019 because of a shortage of doctors. It reopened in January 2022 following the recruitment of a new medical team. Since then the hospital has seen a steady increase in outpatient numbers, from 244 in February to 1,017 in August.

A hospital spokesman said, “We praise God for the work He is doing and establishing in Lakhnadon once again after years of very slow paced work.”

medical.gives

Barnabas Aid officially launched our new medical.gives initiative at a supporters’ meeting at the .gives warehouse in Swindon, UK, in October 2022.

The programme is run on the same “You Share, We Ship” principle as food.gives and transports medical equipment from Western countries to lands of great need and scarcity where Christians often struggle for access to medical care or treatment.

Some Christians are without hearing aids or glasses. Others may be without crutches. Christian clinics or medical centres may be in desperate need of equipment such as stethoscopes or blood pressure monitors.

You can help our brothers and sisters by donating the following:

- Crutches or a walking frame
- A wheelchair
- Reading glasses
- A blood pressure machine (sphygmomanometer)
- Test strips or glucose monitors for those with diabetes
- A stethoscope

Call 01793 744557 or email info@barnabasaid.org for information about how to make your donation.

Please ensure when making your donation that the item does not belong to the NHS, Red Cross or a medical company.

You can also donate financially to support the medical.gives shipping costs.

*medical.gives (PR1566)
Hospitals and clinics
in India (PR1597)
CMAI allied health training
building Vellore (PR1598)*



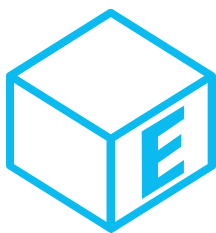
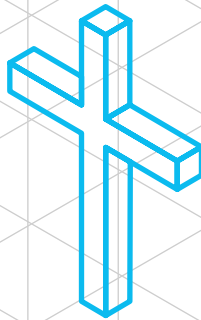
As Christians in a secular age, we need to understand what it is to be followers of our Lord Jesus Christ and to have Him at the centre of our lives. This is the first of a series of articles looking at what Jesus Himself said about this in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5 -7).



A Manual for Christian Living



Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount

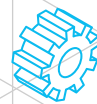
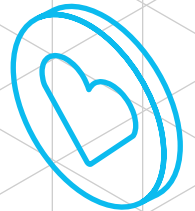


very seminarian of the Syriac Orthodox Church must learn by heart the Sermon on the Mount in Aramaic – the language in which Jesus originally spoke it.

These three chapters (Matthew 5 to 7) contain the undisputed heart of the radical new teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ. They are the most distinctively Christian pages of the Bible, at least in terms of instructions for living.

Although the Sermon on the Mount comes very near the beginning of Matthew's record of the adult life of Jesus, the evangelist records several

experiences that Jesus went through shortly beforehand. Firstly, He was baptised (Matthew 3:13-17). As He came up out of the water, there came down from heaven the Spirit of God and the voice of the Father saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." Those words combine the meaning of two quotations from the Old Testament about the coming Messiah. Psalm 2:7 affirms "You are my Son" who will rule the nations. Isaiah 42:1 speaks of the Lord's delight in His chosen one, the suffering Servant who will bring justice to the nations. At His baptism, therefore, Jesus received assurance of three certainties: He was the beloved chosen Son of God, in front of Him lay the way of suffering, but His final destiny was to be the victorious King.



Baptism was a key moment in the life of the Lord Jesus and is also key in the lives of His followers, albeit for a different reason. The early Church saw baptism as admission into the Christian community. Today this is seen particularly for those who come from a background of another religion or no religion and choose to follow Christ; it is often after baptism that their persecution begins. Baptism is a clear dividing line between the world we have left behind and the journey we are now embarking on. Baptism can be seen as the moment when we enlist in the Lord's army to fight the spiritual fight of faith.

The Apostle Paul says that in baptism we are buried with Christ and then raised to live a new life (Romans 6:3-4). In some early traditions, the baptismal candidate would descend three steps into the pool, at the first step stating their rejection of the world, at the next their rejection of the flesh and at the third their rejection of the devil, and they would affirm their new faith and commitment to the triune God as they ascended.

According to scholars the renunciation of the world, the flesh and the devil was used by almost every branch of the Church in their baptismal liturgies from the second century onwards, whether or not there were three steps to descend, but after the Reformation some churches began to abandon this practice.

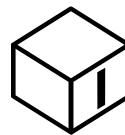
In some contexts, such as the pagan society in which the Church was born and certain religious contexts today, the need to renounce Satan and all his works is obvious, for example if there are idols or demonic rituals. Baptism was "the public act in which the Church declared to the world (and Satan) that the new Christian no longer belonged to the kingdom of evil",¹ that he or she had been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the kingdom of God's beloved Son (Colossians 1:13 ESV).

According to Alexander Schmemmann, baptism is also a kind of exorcism:

In the baptismal rite, which is an act of liberation and victory, the exorcisms come first because on our path to the baptismal font we unavoidably "hit" the dark and powerful figure that obstructs this path. It must be removed, chased away, if we are to proceed ... the Devil is there defending that which he has stolen from God and claims as his possession ... a mortal fight is about to begin whose ultimate issue is not explanations and theories but eternal life or eternal death. For whether we want it or not, know it or not, we are all involved in a spiritual war that has been raging from the very beginning. A decisive victory, to be sure, has been won by God, but the Devil has

*not yet surrendered. On the contrary according to the Scripture, it is when mortally wounded and doomed that he stages the last and most powerful battle. He can do nothing against Christ, but he can do much against us. Exorcisms therefore are the beginning of the fight that constitutes the first and essential dimension of Christian life*²

Baptism is a clear dividing line between our old life and our new life in Christ.



Immediately after His baptism, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted (literally "tried") by the devil (Mark 1:12). Similarly the Israelites, having been wonderfully delivered from their enemies at the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 15:19-21), were immediately led by Moses into the desert with all its hardships (Exodus 15:22). Baptism, that vital declaration of faith in Christ, of having turned from an old life and begun a new life with Him, is often followed by a time of testing. Many Christians have found that, soon after their baptism, difficulties assail them. It could be sickness, depression, or various practical problems. It could be waves of desire to return to old sinful patterns of living that have been discarded. It could be mockery, criticism, rejection, even violence, from loved ones disapproving of their step of faith. All these trials are sent by the devil who, enraged by the baptism, is tempting the believer to forsake Christ and the Christian way of life.

In the case of Jesus Himself, we are told of three areas of temptation during His lonely 40-day fast in an area of the Judean desert which the Old Testament calls Jeshimon, meaning The Devastation (Matthew 4:1-11). The Greek word *πειρασθῆναι* (*peirasthēnai*) is often translated as "to be tempted" with the nuance of being enticed, but really it has a more positive meaning along the lines of being tested or tried or proved. The devil may intend to make us sin but, when God allows the devil to test us, it is so that we can conquer sin (1 Corinthians 10:13). Temptation is not meant to weaken us but to strengthen us, so that we emerge from the ordeal purified. Job, in the midst of his terrible sufferings, declared, "When he has tested me I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10). Some have said that temptation is the test which comes to a person whom God wishes to use.



Each of us will face our own temptations, perhaps different from those facing other Christians we know, and perhaps different at different times of our life. Our Enemy is cunning and keeps manoeuvring and adapting his mode of attack. We should not expect to reach a stage of our earthly Christian life when temptation ceases; that will come only with our heavenly rest.

Jeshimon was a dusty and sterile wasteland, near the Dead Sea, where little or nothing could grow. When the devil tempted Jesus there, the tests were those appropriate for a Person with supernatural powers but the basic principles are typical of many temptations that we commonly face: pleasure; prestige, pride and power; and possessions. Jesus was tempted to turn stones into bread to satisfy His physical needs. He was tempted to make a spectacular demonstration of His special status to amaze the world. He was tempted to accept a gift of all the kingdoms of the world in return for worshipping the devil. In response to each, Jesus rebuked the devil with verses from Scripture.



We all face temptations in a variety of forms. Satan will never stop attacking us, but we know that God gives us strength to overcome those temptations.



After emerging from His ordeal in the desert, Jesus began His ministry. Large crowds came long distances to follow Him, but Jesus climbed a mountain, leaving the crowds behind.

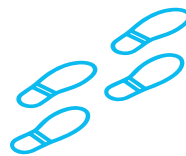
There, on the mountainside, He sat down and His disciples came to Him. Then, says Matthew, He opened His mouth and taught them (Matthew 5:1-2). Some Bible translations remove the apparently redundant words here (how could someone teach without opening their mouth?) and simply state that Jesus began to teach them. But these translations lose an important layer of meaning. The phrase to “open one’s mouth” was used in Greek to flag up to the reader that something unusually important was coming. It was a phrase that prefaced either a solemn and weighty utterance or an outpouring from the heart at a very intimate level. We must add to this the information given in the previous verse that Jesus was sitting down when He spoke. When a Jewish

rabbi was doing official teaching, he sat down. He might give unofficial teaching when standing or walking around, but he would sit down to deliver his main and central teaching.

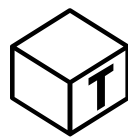
So we know that what Jesus is about to say is of paramount importance. But to whom is He opening His heart and giving this most significant teaching? To His disciples (Matthew 5:1). In the ancient world, a disciple (Greek μαθητής, *mathētēs*) was a dedicated learner who not only tried to absorb the teaching of their master but also wanted to interact with him and try to imitate his way of life, with the hope of eventually becoming like him. Personal, deep and permanent commitment to their master was the main characteristic of a disciple.

This is surely how the small group who gathered about Jesus on this particular mountainside differed from the vast crowds who had been following Him all over Galilee. To “follow” is a noble Bible word (ἀκολουθέω, *akoloutheō* in Greek). The literal meaning of the Greek verb is to be on the same road or the same way as someone else. Interestingly, the Book of Acts reveals that the early Christians described their faith as “the Way” (Acts 9:2; 19:9,23; 24:14,22) or the “Way of the Lord” or the “Way of God” (Acts 18:25-26).

Following was not only what the large crowds did (Matthew 4:25) but also what Peter, Andrew, James and John did when Jesus called them from their fishing nets and boats (Matthew 4:20,22). It is what Jesus later commanded all His disciples to do, in a context showing that He meant them to follow His example in life and if necessary by dying (Matthew 16:24). Sitting on the mountainside, Jesus spoke to the most steadfast and devoted of His followers, whom the Gospel-writers, using the language of their day, called His disciples.



Christ calls us to be His disciples, learning from His words and His way of life, faithful to Him in all things.



The Sermon on the Mount is therefore addressed to all of Christ’s committed followers today, for we – if we have given our lives to Him – are His disciples too. Indeed, making more disciples is what Jesus commanded the Eleven to do (Matthew 28:16-20).

In these three chapters Jesus tells us how to live as His disciples in the world – what should



be going on in our hearts, minds and wills, and how we should behave. He teaches us how to follow Him along the right path, the pathway of God, the narrow road that leads to life (Matthew 7:14) even as Satan tries to divert us on to wrong paths. He shows us how to prevent our natural desires causing us to fall into temptations, how to resist the devil's offers of getting pleasure, prestige, power and possessions by wrong methods or for wrong and often prideful purposes, or whatever the devil dangles before each one of us.

The Sermon on the Mount is instructions for radical discipleship, not defined by the Church or by culture or by history or by tradition but by the very nature of Christ. The Lord Himself is to be our model. The decision to be His disciple will affect every aspect of our lives.

The Sermon on the Mount is Christ's teaching specifically for those who have left the kingdom of darkness and entered His Kingdom; that is, His disciples, meaning all Christians.

Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones described the Sermon on the Mount as "nothing but a great and grand and perfect elaboration of what our Lord called His 'new commandment'. His new commandment was that we love one another even as He has loved us... here we are shown how to do it."³

The Sermon on the Mount teaches us how Christians ought to live: the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) show us what our inner attitudes should be, shaping our minds, emotions and desires, while the rest of the three chapters shows us what our actions should be.

But, we may ask, how can we possibly obey this teaching? The standards of the Sermon on the Mount seem unattainably high. Yes, it is true that we cannot do it in our own strength, but the Holy Spirit, at work in Christ's disciples, will help us.

We must also note that the Sermon on the Mount is primarily a description of character. It is not a new version of the Ten Commandments or an ethical code to be followed mechanically. It is a series of illustrations of Christians behaving in a truly Christ-like way.

At the same time we must note that we are still meant to live by God's law and keep His commandments, just as Jesus did. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus emphasised that He had not come to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfil them, and that our righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees who were the "holiness movement" of Jesus' day (Matthew 5:17-20). It is true that our salvation has been granted to us by God's grace (His unmerited and free gift to us) and not by anything that we have done, as stated in Ephesians 2:8-9. It is His grace, continuing to work within us, which enables us to be faithful to His laws and commandments. We are not under the law in the sense that it condemns us. But we are still meant to live it, even to go beyond it. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us how. *We will begin to look in more detail at this in the next article.*

DR PATRICK SOOKHDEO

International Director, Barnabas Aid

¹ Steve Wilkins, "Baptism as Exorcism", Theopolis Institute, 24 March 2015, <https://theopolisinstitute.com/baptism-as-exorcism/> (viewed 13 January 2023).

² Alexander Schmemmann, *Of Water and the Spirit: A liturgical study of baptism*, Crestwood, NY, St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974, pp.23-24.

³ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount Vol.1*, London, Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1959, pp.15-16. He is referring to John 13:34.



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Published by Barnabas Aid 1934 Old Gallows Road Suite 350
 Vienna, VA 22182, USA © **Barnabas Aid 2023**

Boy martyrs: Bold and brave for Christ across time and space

“If anything happens to my pastor, I will not fear. I will take charge of pastor’s work and serve the Lord!” declared 14-year-old Samaru Madkami. It was no idle comment, for Samaru’s pastor was in real danger and Samaru was already active in ministry, sharing the Gospel with other young people and children in his village in Odisha state, India. He and his family had taken the decision to follow Christ about three years earlier and Samaru was, in the words of his pastor, “a passionate Christian”.

At one time there had been 13 Christian families in Kenduguda village. But persecution had driven most of them away so that by June 2020 there were only four Christian families left. Samaru’s father, a church elder, had received death threats, and Samaru’s older cousin, Unga, had twice experienced God’s deliverance when attacked: the first time, extremists had tried to tie him up in a jute bag and throw him in the river, and the second time a knife-wielding gang had abducted him and threatened to kill him. Pastor Bijay, however, as the leader of the little group of believers, was clearly the main target.

But in the end neither his pastor, nor his father, nor his older cousin had the honour of dying for Christ. That great privilege was granted to Samaru himself.

“... it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him” (Philippians 1:29)

Soon after he had made his brave declaration about carrying on the Kingdom work if his pastor were to be martyred, Samaru went missing. After two days, on 6 June 2020, his horribly mutilated body was found by the police. A gang had persuaded Samaru to come to a meeting in the jungle. There they had tortured him before slitting his throat, smashing his head with a rock and burying his body.



Samaru Madkami [Image credit: Kerusomen Gospel Ministries]

The stories of Samaru and Pelayo (Pelagius) can be found in Patrick Sookhdeo’s book of 366 daily devotional readings on Christian martyrs, *Heroes of Our Faith Vol. 2* (Isaac Publishing, 2021, ISBN 978-1-952450-15-0). See entries for June 6 and June 23. To purchase a copy please go to barnabasaid.org/resources/books or contact your nearest Barnabas Aid office (addresses on inside front cover) or write to sales@barnabasbooks.org.

“I have chosen: Christ!”

More than a thousand years earlier, and more than 5,000 miles to the west, another young Christian boy also suffered three years for His Lord and Saviour and then died for Him.

At the age of just ten, Pelayo¹ was given into the hands of the Emir Abdurrahman of Córdoba, to be held as a hostage. The Emir, ruler of much of Spain since 912,² had captured Hermoygius, Bishop of Tuy, who was Pelayo’s uncle, but agreed to let him go and hold Pelayo instead. Presumably the plan was that Bishop Hermoygius would raise the necessary ransom money in Tuy, send it to Córdoba, and then Pelayo would be freed. This, however, did not happen, and little Pelayo remained in prison for three years.

Then, in about the year 926, Emir Abdurrahman asked to see the Christian boy prisoner. Pelayo’s remarkable good looks amazed the whole court and the Emir offered to make Pelayo a court page-boy if he would convert to Islam. Pelayo refused the offer, saying that he would obey the Emir in everything “but first I am Christ’s. Nothing may part me from Him.” The Emir was enraged. As Pelayo steadfastly continued to affirm his faith in Christ, the Emir grew even angrier.

“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.” (1 Timothy 4:12)

Eventually he ordered that Pelayo should be hung up by his wrists, but despite the pain Pelayo still refused to deny Christ. He was brought back to court, bleeding. The Emir offered him a choice: “Happy freedom, honour, my favour and protection – or death. Choose!”

Pelayo replied, “I have chosen: Christ!”

The Emir had the 13-year-old boy torn to pieces with iron pincers, his hands and feet cut off, and what remained of him thrown in the river.

¹ Sometimes called Pelagius, but not to be confused with Pelagius the fifth-century British ascetic, after whom the heresy of Pelagianism is named.

² In 929 Emir Abdurrahman took the title “Caliph” and continued his rule from Córdoba for a further 32 years. He is generally known as Caliph Abdurrahman, also spelled Abd al-Rahman.

food.gives

aid reaches around 2,000 Christian families in Jordan



Barnabas has so far reached around 2,000 Christian families in Jordan, including refugees and Jordanians, with food.gives boxes



A young Iraqi Christian refugee receives a filled food.gives box for her family

Approximately 2,000 Christian families in Jordan have been reached with food.gives boxes filled with food aid from Barnabas Aid's

generous supporters. The recipients include Jordanian Christians and Christian refugees in Jordan from Yemen, Syria and Iraq. More than three million refugees currently live in Jordan, a huge number accounting for a third of the country's population.

Jordan has been badly hit both by the ravages of the pandemic and the ongoing economic crisis. Villages and impoverished urban districts, as well as refugee communities, have not recovered from the effects of Covid and have struggled to make ends meet as prices of goods have soared and unemployment has risen.

The arrival of two 20-foot containers of aid sent from the UK has brought timely relief to Christians in Jordan struggling to provide for their families (the first of these was reported in our last issue – see *Barnabas Aid* January/February, p.5).

Prior to this two 40-foot food.gives containers – one from Australia and the other from the US – carried urgently needed food aid to hundreds of Christian families. A second 40-foot container carrying dried soup mix is now heading from the US to Jordan, with a third 20-foot container from the UK to follow.

The boxes contain dry food items provided by our generous supporters – rice, lentils, chickpeas, flour and salt. These basic items enable families to make nourishing meals. Our project partner in Jordan has been able to make use of the flour supplied through

food.gives by working with bakeries in areas populated by refugees to provide good quality bread instead of the cheap, inferior bread they would otherwise have to rely on.

Sixty families in the growing community of refugees from Yemen near Amman, Jordan's capital, are among the grateful recipients. Some of the Yemenis became Christians before fleeing the conflict and persecution in their country, but a larger percentage have come to faith in Christ since arriving in Jordan. The community has grown in numbers and faith in recent years.

Around 200 Iraqi Christian families attending two churches also received food.gives boxes. Aid was also directed to all the families in four predominantly Christian villages in the south of Jordan, near Karak.

The aid was most gratefully received as refugees are not allowed to work and the majority of Christian refugees rely solely on aid from churches and NGOs. Jordanian Christians are also struggling to find employment.

“They were very thankful and send their prayers for the sending families and organisation,” our project partner reports.

Distribution was made through local churches. Our partner commented on the strong links established to maintain food security for the families affected. “We give praise for all the churches that are willing to host refugees and work with us to provide aid to them,” he says, “and the families who are willing to share their painful stories and continue to demonstrate strong faith in God's enduring love.”

barnabas+

The home of high quality
Gospel-centred Christian content for
you and your family



Roku SMART TV fireTV Apple TV iPhone androidTV

Many Christians are struggling to know where they can turn to find reliable, trustworthy Christian content. Mainstream entertainment and information media are not guaranteed to reflect a Biblical worldview. These needs are now being addressed by Barnabas+.

Barnabas+ is an exciting streaming service that offers a variety of quality Christian films, animation, documentaries, and more – available on smartphones, the web or TV.

In 1 Corinthians 14:3 the Apostle Paul instructs us to strengthen, encourage and comfort one another as Christians. This is exactly what Barnabas+ seeks to do through devotionals, praise and worship, sharing of testimonies and Bible teaching – as well as informative Christian documentaries, Gospel narration and content for children.

Barnabas+ has something for everyone to grow in your faith and love for Christ. The service is free to use, with no monthly subscription. Viewers can watch whenever they want, for as long as they want. The service, initially launched in June 2022, has received thousands of views as more

people each day sign up to receive the Barnabas+ service.

Encouraging and comforting believers

Barnabas+ seeks to encourage, comfort and strengthen Christians through a variety of content.

Barnabas+ Originals are short, informative films telling the personal stories of suffering Christians – those facing persecution, disease and natural disasters – whose faith in the Lord remains strong. These films include supporters' stories and testimonies from Barnabas Aid projects in various countries such as Bangladesh, Jordan and Zimbabwe, as well as features about refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine.

Full-length films of the entire story of all four Gospels head the series *The Bible*, which also includes shorter presentations of the Gospel. There are insightful documentaries including journeys to Bible lands and inspiring biographies of heroes of the faith such as John Bunyan and Hudson Taylor. Powerful sermons by Martin Lloyd Jones, faith-affirming apologetics, and worship videos by talented musicians all provide enrichment for each viewer's soul. Children's animation series based on Bible stories will keep younger viewers captivated.

Barnabas+ can be accessed at www.barnabasplus.tv and is available on multiple devices. New programmes are added every month.



The Barnabas+ team make adjustments to their equipment as they film 11-year-old Dudu sharing her dreams of becoming a doctor and the various trials of growing up in Zimbabwe



Building up the leaders of the global Church

Grassroots church leaders hard at work in the library of The Shepherd's Academy study centre in South Sudan – one of five TSA study centres in five different countries. TSA programmes combine self-study, online classes and in-person tutorials at these local study centres

The change is undeniable.” These are the words of Pastor Oliver Chaplain, a church leader in South Sudan, reflecting on how his ministry has grown and developed thanks to Barnabas Aid’s The Shepherd’s Academy (TSA).

TSA is the undergraduate section of the Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life (OCRPL), providing training opportunities for grassroots church leaders in the Global South who often struggle to access formal training or education.

Pastor Oliver is one of 97 students working towards an undergraduate degree qualification. Another 321 registered students are undertaking

TSA short courses that enable them to sharpen their skills as under-shepherds of the Lord’s flock. God willing the total number of TSA students will grow to more than 600 by the end of 2023.

“TSA has helped me in my ministry in a tremendous way,” says Oliver. “My understanding of the Word of God was seriously challenged and shaped. I had to unlearn many things; learn new and right things; and so far, I am able to teach and guide people in the church more effectively than before.”

Strengthening the Church

According to recent estimates, around five million of the church planters and pastors ministering throughout the Global South have had no opportunity for training. This can limit the

effectiveness of even the most faithful servants of Christ’s Church.

As the Church grows rapidly, younger believers can find themselves in positions of spiritual leadership and oversight far earlier in their walk with the Lord than is often the case in the West. Such courageous and godly individuals need help and support to fulfil their burden of responsibility.

There is, therefore, a desperate need for leadership training in order to provide guidance to the global Church. Well-equipped leaders help to build up the faith of all Christians. Furthermore, in some countries it is required by law that church leaders have appropriate formal qualifications in order to engage in ministry.

The aim of TSA is to provide this leadership training, strengthening church leaders and, in turn, the Church itself. "We aim to train a new generation of leaders," explains Dr Patrick Sookhdeo, International Director of Barnabas Aid and Executive Director of the OCRPL. "Our mission is to form in them the character and integrity that will give them the foundation to face their challenges, find hope in hopeless situations and counter untruth with truth."



Pastor Oliver Chaplain has grown in knowledge and understanding through The Shepherd's Academy, as well as developing a sense of "godly fear and reverence" regarding his calling

"Our vision is to train up 10,000 grassroots Christian leaders in the next five years," adds Dr Prasad Phillips, OCRPL's Deputy Executive Director. "Some will join our full bachelors (undergraduate) programme; others will take certificate or diploma courses, or standalone courses, that address the gaps in their ministry training."

"Every day I learned something new"

Pastor Oliver serves a church in which many of its members – who are predominantly women, children and young people – are impoverished and lack formal education. In some African contexts, Islam has made inroads into Christian communities, often owing to Christians' lack of familiarity with Biblical teaching and theology.

All this underlines the need for clear, contextually relevant teaching, as

well as strong, firm leadership. "I know that I would not have had the opportunity to undertake this kind of training without The Shepherd's Academy," says Oliver. The same is true for all TSA students.

The lack of suitably qualified leaders in these contexts also means that it may not be possible for church ministers to be away from their congregations for any length of time. Additionally, many pastors must support themselves and their families with work outside the church, and cannot take a leave of absence for theological study. For this reason, TSA programmes are designed to allow students to study alongside their church responsibilities and any other employment.

Another advantage of this, explains Oliver, is that new knowledge and insights can immediately be shared with the church. "It was beneficial to be able to continue in my ministry while studying because every day I learned something new and got the opportunity to share with others." This also helped develop Oliver's understanding, as new insights did not remain as theoretical "head knowledge" but were immediately applied to the needs and lives of the believers in his care.

TSA programmes combine self-study, online classes and in-person tutorials at local study centres, of which there are currently five – one each in South Sudan, Cameroon, Nepal, Pakistan and Zambia – each with its own regional co-ordinator. Oliver adds that these tutorials are important in helping the students apply the self-study material to their own cultural contexts.

As well as allowing church leaders to continue in their ministry while studying, this approach helps to keep running costs low. Costs are further reduced by using the facilities of existing theological colleges or Bible colleges for the TSA study centres. The TSA course material is being translated into Chinese, Russian and Tamil, with further translation into Arabic and Bengali to follow.

"Godly fear and reverence"

Not only do students grow and develop as pastors and leaders, but most also discover that they are personally blessed by studying with TSA. "The Shepherd's Academy helped in my personal walk with the Lord," says Oliver.

"I felt like through this course God is committing lives and destinies to my hand, and I will be held accountable if I lightly esteem it or do not take it seriously," he continues. "This alone developed a sense of godly fear and reverence in me that drew me even closer to the Lord."

This sense of godly fear demonstrates that, as well as skills and knowledge, young church leaders are attaining a powerful grasp of the spiritual significance of their calling. In every way, by God's grace, the under-shepherds of Christ's flock are being shaped and equipped for their vitally important work.

The Shepherd's Academy in numbers

418 students are registered for short courses or undergraduate study

16 countries are represented in the TSA student body

600 students will, God willing, be registered by the end of 2023

5 countries host TSA study centres

Can you support the work of The Shepherd's Academy? Just £18 (\$25; €21) can support a TSA undergraduate student for one month. Please continue to pray for Pastor Oliver and the other students, that the Lord through His Holy Spirit will continue to mould and to shape church leaders with the necessary knowledge, skill, character and spiritual insight.

Pastor active in evangelism found dead at roadside

LAOS

A pastor in Laos was found dead a few days after disappearing, with villagers alleging that he was murdered for his faith.

A resident of Donkeo village in Nakai district, Khammouane province, said that he saw three men bundle Pastor Sy Seng Manee, 48, into an unmarked black truck and take him away.

Pastor Sy's body was discovered on Sunday 23 October 2022 alongside his motorcycle, at a roadside near the village. He appeared to have been badly beaten.

"His death was due to his belief in Christianity," claimed one resident, who alleged that Pastor Sy had been arrested and killed by the Nakai district authorities. Others added that Sy may have been targeted for his bold evangelism among non-Christians.

Police had not made any arrests concerning Pastor Sy's death by mid-December.

Pastor Sy had previously been arrested in August 2018, while he was conducting



Christians in Laos expressed dismay that those responsible for Pastor Sy Seng Manee's death had not been arrested weeks after his body was found [Image credit: Radio Free Asia]

weekly meetings in his house. He refused to sign a document renouncing the Christian faith and promising to stop preaching, and received a three-day jail sentence

and a fine. He had recently resumed preaching.

Although Christians have the legal right to conduct services and preach throughout Laos, locally

they are often subjected to harassment and violence, especially in rural areas, while the government imposes onerous registration requirements on churches.

European court rules government violated rights of Greek church

TURKEY

The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) ruled that Turkey violated the rights of a Greek church by refusing to allow it to register its land.

The court stated on 15 November 2022 that Taksiarhis Church had been subjected to discrimination by the Turkish authorities. It ordered Turkey to pay €5,000 (£4,400; \$5,120) in costs and expenses to the church, whose building was constructed in 1899 in

the Arnavutkoy district of Istanbul.

The dispute centred on the church's attempts to register an 8,394-square metre plot of land, which it stated had been in its possession for a long period of time and had been mentioned in its foundation declaration of 1936.

The European Union, which Turkey is seeking to join, has called on the government to return seized properties to minorities and expand their religious and cultural freedoms.

At least 39 killed in attacks against eight Christian villages in Kaduna State

NIGERIA

At least 39 Christians were killed in separate attacks by suspected Fulani militants on 13 and 18 December 2022 in Kaura Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

The assaults targeted the village of Mallagun and seven surrounding villages. Among the victims was 105-year-old Monica Kunal Ajuwai. Six entire families were wiped out. The attackers looted homes of grain and valuables before burning down 102 houses.

Elisha Rosi, 1st Vice President of Southern Kaduna Peoples Union (SOKAPU), addressed the burial service held at a school in Mallagun on 22 December. Expressing horror at the carnage, he called for vigilance at all times and prayed for God's healing of the land.

The killings took place within two miles of Madamai village, where in September 2021 more than 30 Christians were killed by Islamists.

Christians were victims of Islamic State war crimes, investigators confirm

IRAQ

A report by a team of United Nations investigators confirmed that Christians were victims of war crimes committed by Islamic State (IS) after the jihadists seized around a third of the country in 2014.

Christian Ritscher, the team's leader, told the Security Council on 1 December 2022 that evidence collected in Iraq concluded that IS seized Christian-owned properties, looted and destroyed churches and subjected believers to sexual violence, forced conversions and enslavement.

Ritscher said the team identified leading IS members who seized control

in August 2014 of three predominantly Christian towns in the Nineveh plains – Hamdaniyah, Karamlays and Bartella. It has also started collecting evidence on crimes committed against the Christian community in Iraq's second largest city, Mosul.

The report follows the restoration to their rightful owners, in February 2022, of property previously seized from Christians (see *Barnabas Aid* "In Brief", May/June 2022).

An estimated 75% of Iraq's Christians (around 1.5 million in 1990) have left the country in the last 30 years because of anti-Christian hostility and violence.



Barnabas Aid has provided filled food.gives boxes for Iraqi Christian refugees sheltering in Jordan (see p.12)

Egypt grants approval to further 125 churches

EGYPT



Egypt's Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouli, centre, oversees the meeting of the church licensing committee [Image credit: Wataninet]

The government of Egypt licensed a further 125 churches and church-affiliated buildings on 14 November 2022.

It is the 24th batch of approvals made since the government committee overseeing the licensing process started work in 2017.

The decision brings the number of churches granted licences to 2,526 out of the 3,730 that applied for registration after a Law for Building and Restoring Churches abolished Ottoman-era restrictions on church buildings in 2016.

At the committee's previous meeting in April, members approved 239 churches, their largest batch.

The government has continued with the licensing process following the tragic death of 41 people, including 18 children, in a church fire at Giza, near Cairo, in August 2022. The committee has offered help and encouragement for churches to improve safety standards and facilities.

To obtain a licence, churches must prove land ownership and comply with structural and safety regulations, including the provision of fire extinguishers.

Christians are permitted to worship in unregistered buildings pending the completion of the licensing process.

Islamists demand payment of *jizya* tax as violence continues

MOZAMBIQUE

Islamists in northern Mozambique have demanded the payment of a *jizya* tax by Christians and Jews as a sign of their submission to an Islamic caliphate.

The demand was issued by the Islamic State (IS)-affiliated organisation Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jama, known locally as Al Shabaab (not the Somali-based group of the same name) and internationally as Islamic State Mozambique (ISM).

The concept of *jizya* is derived from classical Islam and sharia (Islamic law), which teaches that non-Muslim "People of the Book" – that is, Jews and Christians – who do not convert to Islam are allowed to live so long as they accept a second-class *dhimmi* status. These practices are no longer officially enforced by the government of any Muslim-majority country.

In a note, handwritten in Swahili and shared on social media, ISM pledges to kill all Christians and Jews unless they either convert to Islam or pay the tax. This demand also appears in the 10 November issue of IS weekly newsletter *al-Naba*. The letter calls upon moderate Muslims to join the Islamist cause or face death.

The demand comes as violence against Christians and moderate Muslims persists in

northern Mozambique. At least 21 Christians were killed by ISM in violent attacks throughout October 2022 in Cabo Delgado Province.

Jihadists set fire to a church building and several houses in Chiure district, Cabo Delgado, on 26 October, killing one person. The Islamists also announced the killing of 20 Christians and the displacement of hundreds more in the province between 3 and 20 October.

How you can support the suffering Church

Christians praying in Pakistan. Do you have a desire to help and support suffering Christians around the world?

As a world-renowned international aid agency, Barnabas Aid serves the global suffering Church by channelling practical aid to Christians in over 80 countries. This is an opportunity to be part of an organisation that transforms the lives of our brothers and sisters throughout the world.

Do you have the desire to help and support Christians around the world? Barnabas Aid is looking for passionate and committed individuals to partner with us in our ministry to the suffering and persecuted Church. If you are interested in volunteering as a church partner, area partner or Barnabas speaker, or applying for a paid position as a regional co-ordinator, we would love to hear from you.

Church partners are representatives of Barnabas Aid within their own congregations. As a church partner, your role will be to raise awareness of the work of Barnabas and the needs of the global Church. This might involve raising items for prayer, or perhaps starting a prayer meeting for the suffering Church using Barnabas resources such as our prayer diary or our *Prayer Focus Update*. Church partners also distribute our bi-monthly magazine to others in the church, or reprint our features and articles in church magazines or newsletters.

Barnabas church partners may also request that church leaders mark special events, such as our annual Suffering Church Action and Awareness Week (usually the last week in October). They can organise collections for the work of Barnabas or the kind of

fundraising activities you may have seen reported in our magazine. Church partners also take the lead in requesting Barnabas speakers.

Volunteer area partners perform a similar role for a particular region of the country, helping to support and co-ordinate the work of church partners and seeking to generate speaking opportunities at different churches.

Volunteer Barnabas speakers are those who visit churches and Christian organisations in order to explain the challenges faced by the persecuted and suffering Church, as well as testifying how the prayers of faithful believers together with their generous giving enable Barnabas to meet the needs of our Christian brothers and sisters. A Barnabas speaker's aim is to encourage people to respond, mainly by praying, giving financially to the work, or perhaps donating food or medical items to our food.gives and medical.gives programmes.

If you are interested in any of these voluntary roles please email partnership@barnabasfund.org or, in the island of Ireland, ireland@barnabasfund.org. You can also contact us to request a speaker or inquire about our online and in-person prayer meetings.



Barnabas Aid is also inviting applications for the role of regional co-ordinator. We are seeking candidates for this paid position particularly in East Anglia, the North of England, South-East England, South-West England, and Wales. Your role will be to make known and grow the work of Barnabas Aid in your region, through connecting with individuals and churches and building a strong network of supportive churches and individuals. Any successful candidate will need to be committed to Barnabas Aid's ethos, statement of faith and aims, and have the right to work in the UK.

For more information please contact personnel@barnabasaid.org or call 01793 744557. To make an application, please visit [barnabasaid.org/jobs/apply](https://www.barnabasaid.org/jobs/apply)

In Touch



More than 30,000 people thronged to last year's Big Church Festival [Image credit: Big Church Festival]

Come and join us at the Big Church Festival 27 – 28 May 2023

Come and join us at this year's Big Church Festival (BCF) at the glorious Wiston Estate in West Sussex, UK, from 27 to 28 May.

The festival (formerly known as Big Church Day Out) will feature some of the world's finest Christian bands and musicians, as well as an array of family-friendly attractions. These range from fairground rides and climbing walls to food vans, sports activities, and arts and crafts. There are also fabulous facilities for camping, too.

Barnabas is one of the primary partners of the festival, which last year attracted more than 30,000 people.

We are calling on everyone interested in our mission to come along to BCF 2023 and enjoy worship and fellowship together with members of our team.

We'll be easy to find! Barnabas staff will be serving at the festival's seven designated water points the whole weekend. They will be happy to share the latest news and information about our .gives initiatives, our work to help the suffering Church worldwide and our new streaming service Barnabas+.

We will also be at the Barnabas Café in the main camping ground, at our own expo stand packed with Barnabas literature and books, and helping at the festival hospitality tent for international guests and artists.

For further details about the festival and ticket prices go to bigchurchfestival.com.

Could your church take up an Easter offering for Barnabas Aid?

This Easter, as we remember the crucifixion and celebrate Jesus Christ's victory over death, could your church take up an Easter offering for Barnabas Aid, to bring hope and support to believers who are suffering because of their faith in Christ?

As the Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthian Church, when one part of the Body of Christ suffers, every part suffers with it (1 Corinthians 12:26). For suffering believers, the knowledge that

Christians around the world are praying for them and supporting them is a great encouragement.

"I have seen the love of the Church," said a Christian woman after Barnabas delivered food and practical aid to survivors of a deadly jihadi attack on a predominantly Christian village in South Sudan. "I did not know that there are people who could come and help us like the church people. We will never forget their support."



Barnabas-funded aid is distributed among survivors of a jihadi attack on a Christian-majority village in South Sudan

Praying for the Suffering Church

The Apostle Paul instructs Ephesian believers – and in turn, all Christian believers in all times – to "always keep on praying for all the Lord's people" (Ephesians 6:18).

The 2023-24 edition of our annual booklet, *Praying for the Suffering Church*, is included with this *Barnabas Aid* magazine.

It provides information on 39 countries where Christians experience persecution, discrimination or poverty, together with associated praise and prayer points to help you intercede for our brothers and sisters.

Copies are also available from your local Barnabas office.

UK Supporters' Weekend cancelled

We regret to announce that our Supporters' Weekend, due to take place from 24 to 26 March at Yarnfield Park, Staffordshire, has been cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances.

An Easter reflection on
Christian suffering

The Mystery of Suffering

BY PATRICK SOOKHDEO

As we approach Easter, many believers take the opportunity to reflect on the sufferings of Christ. Along with the joy of knowing that Christ's death on the cross atoned for our sins, we are also encouraged and strengthened with the reminder that the Son of God was willing to share in the suffering of humanity.

This is important because we live in a world of suffering. But why is the world God made so wracked with suffering? Why does He not at least protect from suffering those who love Him dearly? Does God Himself suffer when He sees our distress? And how should we as Christian believers respond to suffering, whether our own or that of others? What should we do? How should we pray?

"Suffering is a profound mystery," writes Dr Patrick Sookhdeo in the introduction to his new book. "God has lifted a corner of the curtain and allowed us to understand a little of the mystery from His Word. But He deals with each of us individually. In the following chapters, I have tried to share what I myself have learned and what has strengthened and sustained me, hoping that it will help others too."

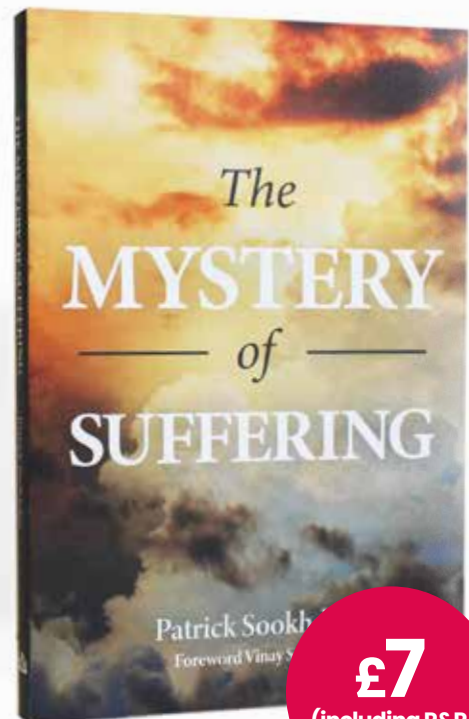
The Mystery of Suffering looks at the issue of suffering Biblically, theologically, pastorally and devotionally. The Fall, the role of Satan in causing suffering, and Jesus's ultimate triumph through His suffering on the Cross are interwoven with chapters on Job and whether God Himself can suffer. The final two chapters deal with "Coping with suffering" and "Preparing for persecution".

ISBN: 978-1-952450-16-7
Cover: Paperback

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Founder of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies



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bringing hope to suffering Christians