

WEST AFRICA

Vital aid for flood victims
in Cameroon and Chad

SYRIA-TURKEY QUAKE

Swift help for Christians
displaced by disaster

MYANMAR (BURMA)

Basic needs for Christians
displaced by persecution

barnabasaid



30
years of serving
the suffering Church

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

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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Front Cover: An elderly believer in Myanmar receives practical aid funded by Barnabas

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Praise God for 30 years of Barnabas service to the suffering Church

“Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labour in vain.” (Psalm 127:1)
Little did Rosemary and I imagine, 30 years ago when we thought up the name “Barnabas Fund”, how He would build the work from its very small and simple beginnings. It was first used in print on 1 June 1993.

So we can say that 1 June 2023 is Barnabas’s 30th birthday. Yet, there is a sense in which 2023 could be taken as the 34th birthday of Barnabas, because the foundations of the “Barnabas house” were dug at a conference that took place in 1989 in Cyprus. At that time the world’s attention was focused on the Soviet Union, which was in the process of breaking up. It is not surprising that the average Western Christian thought only of Communism when the word “persecution” was mentioned. There was little awareness of churches existing in Islamic contexts and even less awareness of the suffering of believers in those contexts.

The conference in Cyprus, which I convened in response to requests from Christian leaders in various Muslim-majority countries, brought together senior Christian leaders from Africa, Asia and the Middle East (along with leaders from the West). It was the first of its kind in the modern world. What the leaders shared about their situations was so shocking that it was clear something had to be done. Two suggestions came out of the conference: (1) create an organisation to research and disseminate information on the plight of Christians in Islamic contexts; (2) find a way to bring them practical relief and assistance.

I started immediately on the research and information. It seemed that no one else was making known the situation of Christians under Islam. The news of their existence, and that Christians in non-Communist contexts were being persecuted, was hard for some readers to take in.

I also tried to find existing mission agencies and Christian aid agencies to assist with their needs. Sadly there was very little interest in giving practical help; perhaps this was partly due to the lack of awareness that a Church existed in Islamic contexts. Eventually, four years after the conference, Rosemary and I, with our colleague Caroline Kerlake, felt led of the Lord to start an aid agency for persecuted Christians. You could say that was when the first brick was laid above ground for the Barnabas house which the LORD has built.

We are amazed and humbled at what He has done. We are also immensely grateful to all our supporters, volunteers, colleagues, prayer partners and project partners. You have laboured long, hard and faithfully to serve the suffering Church and, by God’s grace, your labour has not been in vain. The LORD has built the work and millions of suffering Christians have been helped over the last 30 years. Looking to the future, we see a volatile and uncertain world. But one thing will not change: Jesus Christ will remain the cornerstone of the “spiritual house” that is Barnabas Aid* (1 Peter 2:4-6). Our Lord and Saviour must always be the basis of everything that Barnabas does. Barnabas Aid’s priority, above all else, is to glorify Christ through the service of His people.

Thirty years is sometimes considered to be the length of “one generation”. It is fitting, therefore, that God has now brought to Barnabas Aid a new generation of younger leaders for the work. As Rosemary and I get on in years, we are glad to hand over to this new generation some of our tasks, setting us free to concentrate on other areas of the Barnabas work. Please pray for them as you pray for us. What an honour and privilege it is to serve the suffering Body of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a joy it is to do so in partnership and fellowship with so many fellow believers around the world. To Him be the glory!

DR PATRICK SOOKHDEO

International Director, Barnabas Aid

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* Since its 29th birthday on 1 June 2022, Barnabas Fund has been called Barnabas Aid.

how barnabas is helping

\$39,623



New translation of Bible spreads God's Word in West Africa

An increasing number of people among the Muslim-majority Flame* speakers of West Africa are choosing to follow Christ thanks to an initiative part funded by Barnabas. We have helped to fund the translation of the New Testament into the Flame language, and work is progressing well on the Old Testament.

Church leaders have been trained in using the translation and passages have been broadcast on the radio in Flame. "We appreciate very much the Word of God that you have translated," said a new believer.

**Name changed for security reasons*



Translators work on the Flame language draft of Judges

Project reference: 00-362 (Bibles and Scriptures Fund)

\$18,818



Help for Christian victims of Islamist violence in Nigeria

"Thank you to Barnabas Aid. You have always been there for us." These are the words of a Nigerian church leader in thanks for the latest consignment of aid given by Barnabas to victims of ongoing attacks against Christians by Islamist militants in the Middle Belt.

We provided food, blankets, mats, mosquito nets and roofing sheets for displaced Christians following attacks in five Christian villages in Kagoro chieftdom, Kaduna State. Fulani extremists had looted the communities, razed homes and displaced thousands of villagers.



Christians welcome the arrival of Barnabas-funded food and practical aid

Project reference: 39-772 (Victims of Violence in Nigeria)

\$176,836

contribution to the annual running cost of St Aphem's



20 years of teaching Christian children at Bethlehem school

It is 20 years since St Aphem's School opened in Bethlehem and began providing a Christian education to Christian children in a safe environment in a city where Christians are a despised minority. The number of pupils at the school, built mainly with Barnabas funding and partially supported annually by us, has grown from 15 to 650.

"We thank the Lord for His graces upon us and remain in gratitude for Barnabas for their unconditional love and care for our school," said director Miss Amal Behnam.



Kindergarten children begin their school journey in the safe and secure Christian environment at St Aphem's

Project reference: 65-420

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.

\$46,460

covering 19% of the college running costs for a year



Bible college in Sudan praises God for harvest blessing

“We rejoice for the harvest God has blessed us with,” exclaimed a leader of a Sudanese Bible college, partly funded by Barnabas. Six of its graduates were ordained pastors and two as deacons in the first three months of 2023, among them students who studied on distance learning courses.

Another 140 students have used the college teaching materials to train 3,300 leaders and members in their home churches. This is helping to strengthen the country’s small Christian community, persecuted for many decades by the Muslim majority.



Sudanese students take part in group discussions as part of their pastorship training

Project reference: PR1386

\$168,313



Aid gives “light of hope” to Christians hit by floods in Pakistan

Two thousand Christian families struggling to survive after 2022’s unprecedented flooding in Pakistan received food, clean water and practical aid – including a tarpaulin and mosquito net each – from Barnabas. We also gave quilts to 950 of the families, 450 of whom also received sweaters for extra warmth during the winter months.

The aid became the “light of hope” for the families in Sindh province, one of the worst-affected areas, and strengthened their faith and trust in God their Provider, explained our project partners.



A Christian family with some of the food and practical aid they received from Barnabas

Project reference: 41-919

\$10,832



Christians serving Kyrgyz Church given medical aid

Barnabas funded the purchase of medicines to help 26 Christians serving the regional Church in Kyrgyzstan to recover from Covid-related illnesses and other conditions. None of the recipients, the majority of whom are converts from Islam, could afford the year’s course of treatment prescribed by their doctors.

Illness left pastor’s wife Oksana too weak for her ministry. She thanks God and Barnabas for her recovery, adding that there “was strength and joy from being able to serve the Lord again”.



Oksana thanks Barnabas supporters for funding her medicines

Project reference: PR1530 (Covid-19 Emergency Fund)



An elderly believer in Myanmar receives practical aid funded by Barnabas

Barnabas Aid began as an aid agency to the suffering Church in 1993. Much has changed in the intervening three decades, but our core mission of providing practical help for our brothers and sisters wherever they are in need remains the same.

Barnabas Aid – then known as Barnabas Fund – was founded 30 years ago to meet a vital need: to alleviate the suffering of Christians wherever we could. In this we were guided by the Biblical command that Christians should “do good to all people, *especially to those who belong to the family of believers*” (Galatians 6:10, emphasis added), as well as the teaching of Christ that “whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” (Matthew 25:40).

In that time governments have fallen and risen. Wars have been fought. Militant groups have formed, splintered and realigned. New nations have been created. Millions of people have moved around the world as refugees. Once-rare weather extremes have become commonplace. New diseases have rampaged across the planet. The Church has grown in some countries where she was weak and shrunk in some countries where she was strong.

Yet, although much has changed in the last three decades, our calling to provide practical help to our Christian brothers and sisters remains unaltered. Barnabas is still a channel for Christians around the world to help their fellow-believers. We still enable gifts to go “*from Christians, through Christians, to Christians*”.

30 years of growth

When Barnabas began, one priority was to help Christian converts from other religions, who typically suffer greatly when they decide to follow Jesus. Our other priority was leadership training, because strong church leaders can strengthen their church members. In all the many kinds of projects we have funded in 30 years, these two are still our priority.

Yet, thanks to God’s grace and the generosity of our supporters, our work has grown. In 1993 the

donations received were few, so the grants made to our project partners were few. It was a part-time job for one person in the UK, and we helped only persecuted Christians in Muslim-majority contexts. Now in 2023 we have 123 staff based in 11 countries. Many colleagues have been with us for two or even three decades, and have gained wrinkles and grey hairs!

As donations increased over the last 30 years, we were able to expand to helping Christians suffering pressure or persecution from any ideological source, to strengthening Christians who are likely to face persecution soon, and even to assisting Christians suffering extreme poverty that is not directly due to their faith. In a typical year we now support 300-400 different projects in about 50 different countries. But those countries are not the same every year, so we have helped Christians in a total of 109 countries over the last 30 years.

Our network of trusted project partners and other contacts across the world has grown, giving us more channels for donations and enabling us to respond rapidly to urgent needs such as natural disasters.

30 years

of serving the suffering Church

Rapid response after the fall of Mosul, Iraq

Through our network of trusted project partners on the ground, Barnabas was able to give immediate aid to Iraqi Christians when the city of Mosul in northern Iraq fell to the advancing forces of Islamic State (IS, also called ISIS, ISIL, Daesh) on 10 June 2014. Our first grant was sent on 12 June to help Christians who had fled the city.

On 18 July IS issued a terrifying ultimatum to all remaining Christians in Mosul. The next day, 19 July, we sent another grant.

On 7–8 August IS fighters conquered the Christian towns and villages in the plains of Nineveh, near Mosul. Barnabas responded with three more grants in the next two weeks.

We are thankful to the Lord and to our generous supporters that we were able to help at least 30,000 displaced Iraqi Christians in the first ten weeks after the fall of Mosul.

We have also established our food.gives and medical.gives initiatives, enabling supporters to donate items rather than money if they prefer.

Through our Barnabas Today website and Barnabas+ streaming service, we are now channelling blessings back from the suffering Church to our supporters and donors. The mature faith of Christians who live with daily suffering such as discrimination, injustice, violence or extreme poverty can be a blessing to Christians in the West. It can help them cope with their own suffering, whatever form that suffering takes, as well as prepare them for the persecution that looks likely to come to the West before long.

We still strive to keep our overheads as low as possible so that as much as possible of our income is available to help suffering Christians. Currently our global overheads are around 12%. When we receive donations for specific projects, we still forward *100% of the donation to the chosen project*. (If the chosen project is already sufficiently funded we will use 100% of the donation for another project of a similar type or in the same country.)

The next 30 years

Only the Lord knows what the future holds, but His Word tells us that war, disaster, famine, disease and persecution will continue until Christ returns (Luke 21:9-12, 16-17). The Church will continue to share in the suffering of a world cursed with conflict, natural disasters, hunger and illness, while she will also undergo fierce persecution from a

world that hates and rejects her Saviour.

The need to alleviate the suffering of Christians will therefore persist, even as the global context shifts and the precise details of what causes suffering and persecution change.

Please join us then, in not only giving thanks for all that God has done in these last 30 years, but also in praying that He will continue to bless and sustain the work of Barnabas as an aid agency to the suffering Church – perhaps for the next 30 years and beyond, however long remains until our Lord's return.



Children praying at a Christian school in Pakistan. Barnabas has helped believers in 109 different countries over the last 30 years

Praise God, our Provider

**Christian victims of floods in
Chad and Cameroon thank
Barnabas for emergency relief aid**

"God of love, God Provider. We had lost everything and, lo and behold, we have received a lot." These are the words of a village chief in West Africa, thanking Barnabas Aid for the emergency relief aid given to thousands of Christians following devastating flooding in the region.

More than 6,000 families (over 29,000 individual Christians) received assistance in Chad and neighbouring Cameroon after the rivers Chari and Logone, which run between the two countries, burst their banks following the heaviest rains in more than 30 years.

At the time of writing, further Barnabas-funded aid was being distributed among another 1,000 Christian families (around 5,000 individuals) in Chad.

The damage inflicted in southern Chad and the Far North of Cameroon in October 2022 was catastrophic. Tens of thousands of people were forced from their homes, leaving behind their submerged crops. Livestock upon which many families depended for their livelihoods were lost beneath the rising waters.

The floods were yet another blow to Christians on both sides of the rivers, many of whom were already suffering because of repeated attacks on their communities by Islamist militants.

A Christian woman in Chad thanks God as Barnabas-funded maize is distributed among believers displaced by the floods



Bags of Barnabas-funded maize ready to be distributed to Cameroonians in need



Women in Cameroon carefully share out grain into 50kg sacks

Flooding follows deadly terror attacks in Chad

In Chad, many Christians were struggling to recover and rebuild following a jihadi assault on seven villages in which 50 people were killed and many more wounded. The terrorists set fire to hundreds of homes, grain stores and five church buildings.

Then came the floods, and several of the homes that survived the terrorists' attacks were destroyed by the extreme weather. In some areas the level of the water was up to the chest of a tall adult, a church leader told Barnabas, and the only way to move from one village to another was by canoe.

The distribution of 50kg bags of maize to Christian families was overseen by church leaders, ensuring the aid reached those most in need.

In the first two phases of the distribution in Chad, a total of 3,012 families (an estimated 16,800 people) were reached. The same amount is being given to 1,000 families in Phase 3.

Our church partner said that Chadian Christians across the country rejoiced when they heard about the arrival of aid in flood-hit areas. "People were happy that Christians in other lands thought of them," he said. "People praised God and thanked Barnabas for coming to help them even though they were in

remote areas not known to the world."

Christians rejoice in Cameroon as aid arrives

There was great rejoicing also among Christians in Far North Cameroon when the aid was delivered to 3,082 families (an estimated 12,400 people). Each household received on average 50kg of maize or millet, as well as two litres of bleach and six pieces of soap to help combat the spread of waterborne diseases.

"A great Christian witness resounded in all the localities where the various distributions took place"

"A great Christian witness resounded in all the localities where the various distributions took place," our Cameroon church partners told us. There were "joys of thanksgiving on all sides", they added.

Christian widow Naomie, whose husband died four years ago, supports her children by collecting firewood in the bush to sell at market, although the money she receives for the bundles is very

small. She was overwhelmed to receive the aid funded by Barnabas supporters.

"Oh God, your kindness is immense!" she exclaimed. "Keep blessing these donors. Even if I have to go to the bush a hundred times, I cannot save to buy the quantity of millet that I received today."

Christians in the area live with the constant threat of attack from Boko Haram Islamist militants. In January 2023 alone there were ten assaults in which six men were killed, churches were attacked and homes burned.

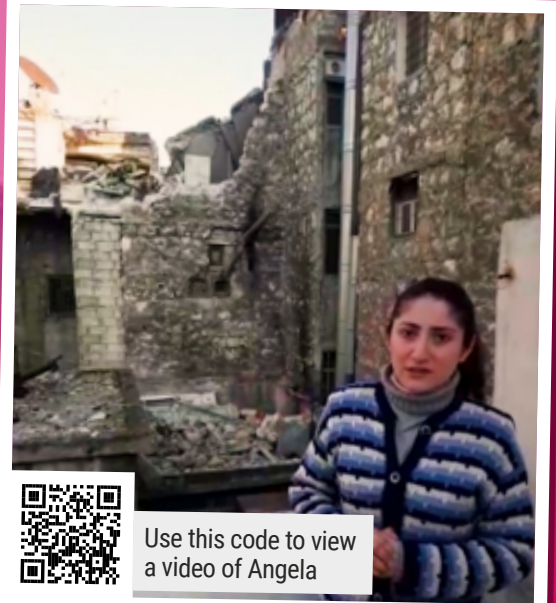
Barnabas has previously provided food and other practical aid for Christian victims of terrorist violence in Cameroon, including funding the start-up costs for small business ventures (*Barnabas Aid*, January/February 2023, p.5). The latest assistance, however, focused on people in need because of flooding.

A pastor thanked God and Barnabas for sending help to flood victims. "Today I understood that God is a God of miracles," he declared.

He said he was "full of emotion" to discover 60 bags of grain waiting to be distributed to Christians in need in the store of his church. "God is great and wonderful," he added. "God bless you and bless the donors."

Help swiftly given

to Christian victims of
Turkey–Syria earthquake



Use this code to view
a video of Angela

Angela standing on a balcony overlooking her badly damaged home in Aleppo

“T

hank you for being there,” said Angela in a video message to Barnabas Aid supporters. Angela is a Christian from Aleppo, Syria, whose family

home was severely damaged when powerful earthquakes devastated southern Turkey and northern Syria in February.

More than 50,000 people are known to have died, tens of thousands were injured and millions lost their homes when the disaster struck in the early hours of 6 February.

By God’s grace and with your help, Barnabas Aid was able to respond swiftly. Just three days after the disaster, we began distributing 1,500 food.gives boxes to Christian families in desperate need in the northern Syrian city of Aleppo.



One of the large, heavy-duty tents sheltering Christians in Turkey



A Christian in Aleppo receives one of 1,500 food.gives boxes distributed within days of the earthquakes

The boxes, given out by our project partners on the ground, contained ingredients for many nutritious meals, including rice, lentils,

“Our house was cracked everywhere and the only people who have helped us [were] Barnabas Aid,” said a Syrian mother from Latakia.

“Our house was cracked everywhere and the only people who have helped us [were] Barnabas Aid”

chickpeas, bulgar wheat, noodles and beans, as well as salt. We also handed out several hundred pairs of new shoes.

A second consignment of aid contained more food parcels, as well as blankets, health kits and coats. These were distributed in Aleppo and to displaced Christian families in the quake-affected Syrian governorates of Latakia, Tartous and Hama.

“Thank you for your generosity. May God bless you and maybe one day we shall go back to our home.”

“Everything is gone. We don’t have anything”

In the Turkish city of Antakya – the modern name for ancient Antioch – a pastor whose church and home collapsed texted on the day of the earthquake, “Everything is gone. We don’t have anything ... the help is not here yet.”

Help swiftly arrived as Barnabas is funding rented accommodation for the pastor, his family and another family from his congregation whose home was also destroyed.

We have also provided 30 large, heavy-duty tents to shelter Christians in Turkey from the bitterly cold winter weather, and wood-burning heaters that heat water for washing and dishes.

At time of writing a lorry was about to leave our warehouse in Germany heading for Turkey. It is loaded with supplies of food and much-needed day-to-day practical items including nappies, sanitary towels, toothbrushes, babies’ bottles and dummies, clothes, tents and sleeping mats. Further aid will also be going to Syria.

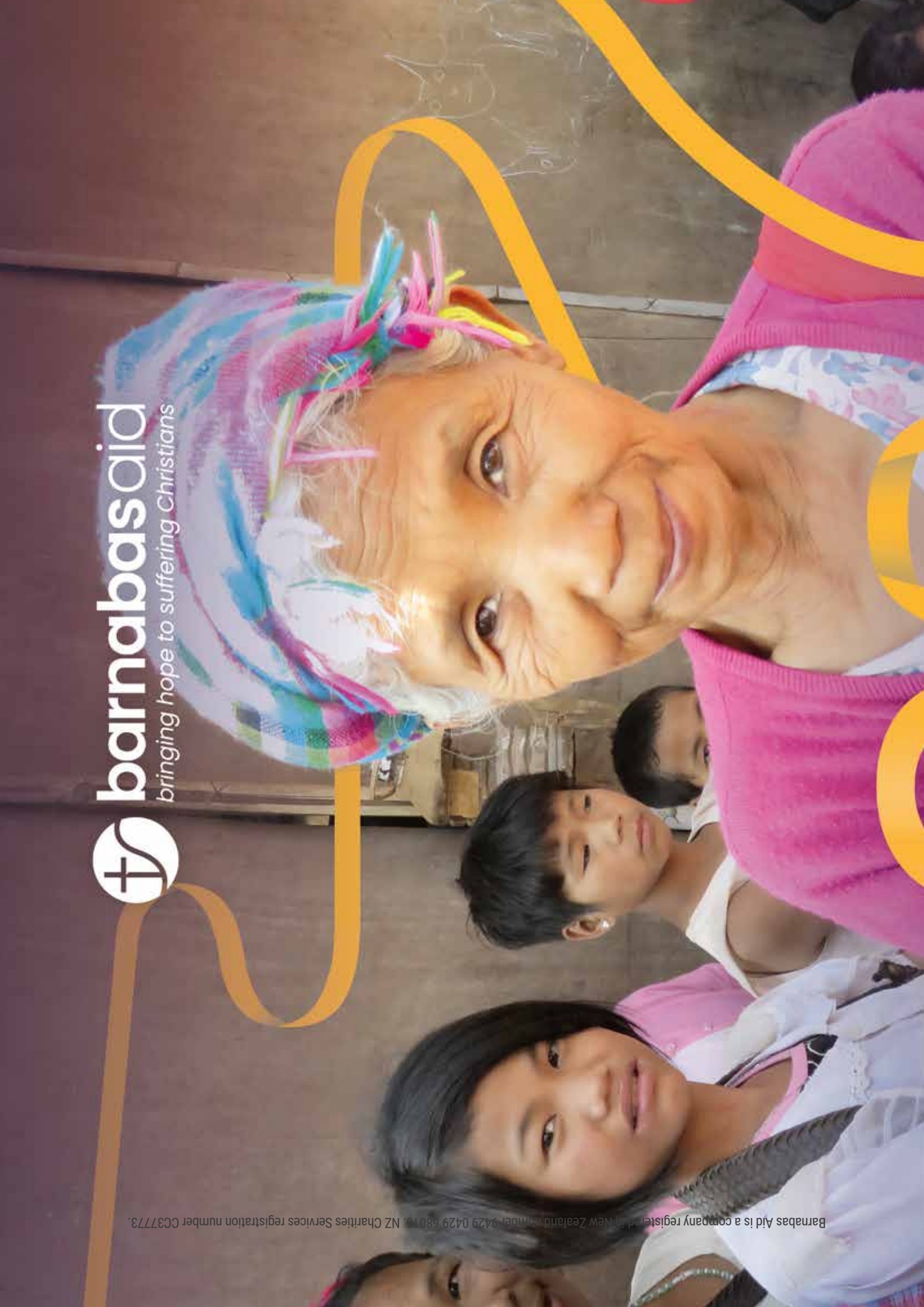
“I would like to thank the Barnabas organisation for its support,” said Angela in Aleppo. “Your support is much appreciated. God bless you all.”



barnabasaid

bringing hope to suffering Christians

Barnabas Aid is a company registered in New Zealand (number 9429 0429 68010, NZ Charities Services registration number CC37773).





30 years of serving the suffering church

Please make a note in your diaries to save the date of 17 June 2023 for our special 30th anniversary celebration.

We will be holding an online event at 7pm when the International Director of Barnabas Aid, Dr Patrick Sookhdeo, who founded the ministry with his wife Rosemary in June 1993, will share his vision for Barnabas Aid for the years to come. Our International Director of Projects Caroline Kerlake will give an update on how your gifts to Barnabas Aid are supporting our brothers and sisters around the world.

There will also be the opportunity to hear from Barnabas Head of Operations Australasia Stephanie Johnston, and the Chairman of Barnabas Aid New Zealand, Michael Hewat.

We would love to hear how some of you have been blessed by the ministry of Barnabas Aid over the years, if you would like to share your story, please visit barnabasaid.org/nz/30years

17 June 2023 7pm

The event is open to Barnabas supporters and anyone else interested in our work.

To register to attend, go to barnabasaid.org/events

For more information email office@barnabasfund.org.nz or call us on 0800 008 805.

They did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death

**“This girl
was in love
only with
your Christ”**



Esther John (14 October 1929 – 2 February 1960)

Qamar Zia found her new Christian school full of surprises. On the one hand the teachers were so kind and gentle. On the other hand she found herself required to study the Bible, although, as a Muslim, she did not like even to touch the book of the blasphemers, as she had heard Christians called.

One day the class was told to memorise parts of Isaiah 53. As Qamar struggled with the task, something happened, which she later described as follows:

God, by his grace, showed me that there was life and power in this book. Then I began to realise that Jesus is alive for ever. Through Isaiah 53, the first verse, He was saying to me with great sadness, “Who hath believed our report and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?” Now I knew and believed it and that His arm had been revealed to me. I knew that this was the true way.

Thus God put faith in my heart and I believed on Jesus as my Saviour and Forgiver of my sins. Only He could save me from everlasting death. I only then began to realize how great a sinner I was,

whereas before I thought that my good life could save me.

Now a living power began to work in me. When Satan would try to catch me with his nets and chains, I could resist him by reading the New Testament and trusting Christ. Sometimes Jesus would say to me as He did to Martha, “Martha, Martha, you are troubled about many things, but Mary has chosen the good part which shall not be taken from her.”

Soon Qamar was winning all the Scripture prizes at her school.

When Qamar was 17 India gained its independence and Pakistan came into being as a homeland for Indian Muslims. Qamar’s family moved from Madras (now Chennai) in South India to Karachi, then capital of Pakistan. She had not yet told her family about her Christian faith, and could not bring her Bible with her. But she did manage to tell her old school in Madras where she was and they arranged for Marian Laugesen, a New Zealand missionary in Karachi, to visit Qamar. Marian was able to slip Qamar a New Testament, without the family seeing, and when, soon afterwards, the family moved again, Qamar

brought her New Testament along. For seven years that New Testament was her only spiritual support, for she did not meet another Christian or have any other Christian book.

As was customary, her family began to arrange a marriage for her – naturally it would be with a Muslim. But Qamar knew she could never live as a Christian if she had a Muslim husband, so on 18 June 1955 she ran away from home. She found Marian and stayed in the orphanage where Marian worked. It was apparently at this time that Marian gave Qamar the name Esther John.

Within a few days, Esther's family discovered her whereabouts and persuaded her to visit her widowed mother who was ill. When Esther arrived, the family began to accelerate her marriage plans. Esther fled again, moving hundreds of miles north to the Punjab, where she lived in the nurses' home at a Christian hospital in Sahiwal. Helping in the hospital, she delighted in serving others and in sharing her faith. She became known for her singing and sense of humour, often telling stories about her own mishaps.

Later that year Esther was baptised in the nurses' prayer room by the local pastor, Padri Alexander David, who spoke to her about the verse "I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, and you shall know the LORD." (Hosea 2:20 NKJV), Later he wrote about that day, "I told her that she did not belong to anyone in this world but only to Christ who had died on the Cross for her and betrothed her unto Himself forever and ever."

Esther was willing to marry a Christian, and let the hospital staff try to find a husband for her. They approached three families, but in vain. Esther never (knowingly) even met any of the chosen young men.

Esther had felt for some time that God wanted her to teach the Bible. "This book has great power. I want to see it do for others what it has done for me," she told friends. After three years at Bible college, she went to Chichawatni, a small town near Sahiwal. There she lived in the home of an elderly American missionary couple, Dale and Janet White, and travelled around the villages with Janet, evangelising.

Meanwhile Esther's family kept writing to her, urging her to return home, and arranged more marriages for her, all of which she refused. But Esther longed to see her mother, and after Christmas 1959 wrote a letter to her family saying that she would go home on two conditions: she must be allowed to live as a Christian and she must not be forced to marry. No answer came.



Esther (back row, third from left) studied from 1956 to 1959 at the United Bible Training Centre in Gujranwala

On 1 February 1960 the monthly overnight meeting of local pastors and evangelists was held at the Whites' home, the men sleeping in various rooms with quilts and blankets. The next morning Esther was found dead in her bed, her skull smashed twice with a heavy, sharp instrument.

The police suspected a disappointed suitor had killed her and searched the house for evidence. They went through Esther's books and papers, but afterwards said to Dale, "Sir, we have found no clue. This girl was in love only with your Christ."

Esther's murderer was never found, but it is thought that one of her brothers killed his sister, in order to restore the family honour. The act of leaving Islam is considered to bring great shame on a Muslim family.



A statue of Esther John can be seen above the west door of Westminster Abbey, London. She was included as one of ten statues of modern Christian martyrs, placed there in 1998, on the recommendation of Dr Patrick Sookhdeo

The story of Esther John appears in Patrick Sookhdeo's book of 366 daily devotional readings on Christian martyrs, *Heroes of Our Faith* Vol. 1 (Isaac Publishing, 2012, second edition 2021, ISBN 978-1-9524501-2-9) See entry for February 2.

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

A longer version of her story can be found in *The Terrible Alternative: Christian Martyrdom in the Twentieth Century* edited by Andrew Chandler (Cassell, 1998). See the chapter on "Mission and conversion in Pakistan: Esther John (Qamar Zia)" by Patrick Sookhdeo (pages 102-116).

Food and medical aid sustains Myanmar's displaced Christians



A Christian mother and two children, displaced from their home, receive Barnabas-funded food and blankets

“**T**he Myanmar military came into our village and started shooting big guns ... They burned down our entire village. Besides this, they also attacked us by air with war planes shooting and bombing our areas.”

This was just one of the traumatic accounts told to our project partners in Myanmar by suffering and displaced Myanmar Christians. It came from “Hla”, a Christian in Karen State, forced by the military assault to flee her village along with her three-year-old daughter and all of her neighbours.

Barnabas continues to provide vital aid to Christians suffering from this ongoing conflict. Around 3,500 Christian families (an estimated 17,500 people) were reached in the nine months from April 2022 until the end of the year. In addition to rice and other staples, our partners have transported various vital medical supplies and materials for shelter.

Displaced believers receive food, warmth and encouragement

Since the military coup of February 2021, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Myanmar has swollen to 1.4 million. Hundreds of thousands of Christians are among them. Many have lost loved ones as well as treasured possessions. Often they cannot return home as their

villages have been surrounded by landmines. Sometimes the IDP camps are attacked, forcing our brothers and sisters once again to run for their lives.

Our partners work in great difficulty and danger to ensure that aid funded by Barnabas supporters' donations reaches its destination. The terrain is unforgiving. In one distribution in late 2022, several boat trips were needed to transport aid to an IDP camp, followed by an onward journey by four-wheel-drive truck. Other journeys required an ox and cart.

Food items include staples such as rice, noodles, fish, vegetables, beans, peppers and oil. Our partners have also distributed baby formula to those with infants, along with medical supplies, tarpaulins, blankets – the latter of which were desperately needed as winter drew closer and parts of Myanmar endured near-freezing conditions. After more than 1,000 blankets were distributed at one IDP camp in December, a Karenni Christian woman joyfully responded, “We are very thankful to receive warm blankets from you today; this is a good day. Our children will sleep well tonight!”

The partners shared the Word with the displaced families and prayed with them. These IDPs said that, whilst aid is greatly appreciated, it was the Word of God that encouraged them most.



This boat is loaded with Barnabas-funded aid for “Hla” and others from the village where they used to live until their homes were destroyed by the Myanmar military

God's faithfulness endures forever

Churches in Uzbekistan thank God and Barnabas for help



This new Uzbek church building, partially funded by Barnabas, is designed to be easy to dismantle and rebuild

Praise the LORD, all you nations ... For great is his love towards us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.”

These opening verses of Psalm 117 were chosen by a congregation in Uzbekistan to give thanks to God for the construction of their new church building, partly funded by Barnabas.



Barnabas funding has enabled hot water to be provided in a rural church's newly refitted kitchen

Their old church was poorly constructed and provided worshippers with little protection from the intense heat of the summer, the biting cold of the winter or the heavy rains of the autumn.

The new building that replaces it has a 400-seat worship hall with air conditioning and a ventilation system, a baptistery and a room for parents with young children.

“The hall has turned out to be bright and comfortable,” said a church leader. “It is easy to cool in 45 degree heat and warm in winter.” He added, “We

express our great gratitude to Barnabas for the financial and prayerful assistance provided.”

Church endured years of persecution

The design of the new building is unusual. It is made to be collapsible so that, should the church be forced to move because of a resurgence in persecution, then the building can be dismantled and reassembled elsewhere.

This church, formed around the time of the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, was one of the first to be persecuted by the authorities in the newly created Republic of Uzbekistan. The authorities were alarmed because of the church's growing number of members, particularly Uzbek converts from Islam.

In the later years of the 1990s, the church was fined, some members were arrested, and its leaders were forced to work in secret or to flee the country.

Today this church is legally registered and is one of the largest in Uzbekistan, with 33 daughter churches across the country. In common with the Uzbek Church as a whole, it is benefitting from the authorities' more tolerant attitude towards the country's small Christian community.

Restrictions on church registration, religious teaching and Christian events remain. However, state hostility towards Muslim-background believers has reduced, and the number of churches granted official registration is slowly increasing.

Warmth for a rural Church

We recently helped a small registered church in a rural area of Uzbekistan to complete the refurbishment of its dilapidated church building.

Most of the congregation are converts from Islam. Many are pensioners because young, able-bodied people leave the area in search of work. As a result the church barely has enough to pay its utility bills.



Barnabas funding has helped to provide heating in a rural church so that its dining room is now a comfortable space for meals and children's activities

The church shares their building with two unregistered churches whose congregations would otherwise have to meet illegally in unregistered buildings.

Before the refurbishment, the church building was so cold in winter that Christians sometimes had to resort to worshipping in cars with the heaters on.

With funding from Barnabas, the church has a new boiler providing hot water in the kitchen, which has been refitted by worshippers, and heating in the building.

“What dreams are made of”

**Strengthening the Church through
Barnabas Academia**



Through OCRPL, Lucas Nyaware has been given the knowledge and understanding to defend the Christian faith against the arguments of Muslims

“I thank God each day for the opportunity to be able to study with the Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life,” says Selby Lyembele, a pastor in Lusaka, the capital city of Zambia. Selby ministers to a congregation of around 100 believers in this impoverished, Christian-majority, southern African nation. He is just one of the pastors and church leaders across the Global South to have benefitted from pastoral and theological training provided through Barnabas Academia.

Barnabas Academia incorporates The Shepherd’s Academy (TSA) and the Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life (OCRPL, so named because it is registered in Oxford, UK). The TSA provides undergraduate-level opportunities for church leaders who would not otherwise have opportunity to undertake any formal training or theological education. OCRPL offers postgraduate opportunities for church leaders to enhance and improve their skills, as well as undertaking research that can benefit the Church as a whole.

There are currently OCRPL students in Angola, Antigua, the Bahamas, Bangladesh, Burundi, Canada, Cyprus, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guyana, India, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, South Sudan, Uganda, the United States, the UK, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Pastor Selby believes that undertaking his master’s-level study with OCRPL has been a blessing to him, both as a minister and in his personal walk with the Lord. “I am not only a better Christian but also a better minister of the Gospel, able to rightly divide the Word of God,” he says, referencing 2 Timothy 2:15.

“I appreciate my faith in Christ more,” he continues. “My walk with the Lord has been greatly enriched because my Bible-reading skills have greatly improved. My research and writing skills have also been greatly strengthened through OCRPL.”

Overcoming barriers

There are several reasons why pastors and church ministers in the Global

South may lack the opportunities to undertake theological and pastoral training. These under-shepherds of Christ's flock often share in the overall poverty of their nations, and cannot afford tuition fees. Similarly, many are bi-vocational, with paid employment away from the church taking up much of their time. Some labour in Christian-minority lands, where there are few, if any, seminaries or theological colleges, or even suitable books or other resources. The churches themselves often lack the resources to provide this training to their pastors, elders and ministers.

Yet theological study serves to build up the Church – it is not a luxury but a necessity. The ability to understand the Bible, to pass its teaching on to the Lord's people, and to make a defence of the Christian message to the world needs to be developed and refined.

OCRPL works to overcome these barriers and equip the leaders of the Church for their high calling. Students are guided by well-qualified teachers in developing skills and gaining understanding. They are given access to online theological resources, while the use of online teaching keeps tuition fees as low as possible. Part-time study allows learners to continue in their ministry and, where needed, their employment outside the church while undertaking their studies. Master's degrees take between a year and three years to complete; Ph.D. study between three and five years.

“The materials we studied have been very helpful,” says Pastor Selby. “I can safely say I have been enriched in a great way both as an academic and a minister of the Gospel. The programme has a very rich course content, which I believe is second to none. I can safely say I am a better tool in the hands of the Master.”

The challenge of Islam

One of the more urgent needs of the Church in Africa, Asia and the Middle East is to counter the challenge of Islam. Christians are often ill-equipped to counter the arguments of Muslims in favour of Islam, for they lack knowledge of Islam and often of their own Christian beliefs. “The Muslims seemed to have a better

grasp of both the Quran and the Bible!” says Lucas Nyaware, a Kenyan believer who ministers in Nairobi, the capital city.

Lucas was describing his experience of public debates between Muslims and Christians in several Kenyan cities – Kisumu and Mombasa, as well as Nairobi. While Kenya is a Christian-majority country, there is a sizeable Muslim community. In parts of Kenya's northern and eastern coastal regions, Muslims form a majority. “On a daily basis Muslims organised debates in which they give the Christians an opportunity to defend Christianity,” he explains. “In almost all these debates, I noticed that the Muslims won the debates hands down.”

“I noticed that the Muslims won the debates hands down”

As a teacher in the church – Lucas helps lead a discipleship group as well as teaching Sunday school – Lucas badly wanted to be able to better engage his Muslim neighbours, as they “would always show supposed ‘discrepancies’ and ‘incoherence’ within Christianity”, but he lacked the confidence to do so. “Now, with the knowledge gained from studying with OCRPL, I feel equipped to handle such situations and engage Muslims from a position of understanding.”

Lucas is able to share his knowledge with the church in Nairobi, helping his brothers and sisters to have confidence in the Christian faith and resist the arguments of Muslims who seek to draw believers away and persuade them to convert to Islam.

Training those who can train others

One of the long-term objectives of OCRPL is to train church leaders who can then train others – the principle outlined by the Apostle Paul to Timothy (2 Timothy

2:2). Both Lucas and Pastor Selby are among the OCRPL students who have stepped up to support the work of The Shepherd's Academy (TSA).

Lucas is working with Kenyan Christians who have signed up to TSA's short course, “Unveiled: A Christian Study Guide to Islam”, which aims to help Christians understand the differences between Islam and Christianity, how Islam has spread and is spreading across the world, and how to share the Gospel effectively with Muslims.

For Pastor Selby, teaching with TSA is the fulfilment of a long-term desire to serve the Church. “My dream has always been to be able to impart knowledge to other Christian leaders and through TSA my dream has been fulfilled,” he says.

“My work at TSA has enabled me to pass on what I have learned to other Christian leaders who in turn are impacting members of their congregations on a day-to-day basis,” he adds. “In my opinion, this is simply what dreams are made of.”



Pastor Selby Lyembele has long dreamed of helping to train other Church leaders, which he is now doing with The Shepherd's Academy

Christian woman suffers acid attack after refusing to convert

PAKISTAN

A Christian woman was treated in hospital in Pakistan after a Muslim man, Kamran Allah Bux, threw acid on her while she was getting off a bus in Karachi on 1 February.

Sunita Munawar, 19, received treatment for burns to her face, right hand and right ankle.

Kamran, who was arrested the following day, admitted his crime, saying that he threw acid at Sunita for rejecting his proposal that she convert to Islam and marry him.

Sunita's family had previously complained to police about Kamran's unwanted advances over the course of several years, but their concerns had been ignored.

False "blasphemy" claim is condemned

Also in Karachi, a female Christian security officer at Jinnah International Airport was threatened by a Muslim male colleague with accusations of "blasphemy".

An altercation happened on 6 January at the airport's cargo area when the

security guard admonished her colleague for allowing an acquaintance's vehicle through security without the required pass.

In footage of the incident on social media, the colleague is heard threatening to register a "blasphemy" case against her, saying he will "call preachers ... I am mad and will cut [you] up". The female officer responded by refusing to back down despite the threat.

Accusations of "blasphemy" are highly dangerous as the death sentence is mandatory for those who make what are deemed derogatory remarks about Muhammad, the prophet of Islam. The accused, their families, and Christian communities can also suffer mob violence at the hands of extremists.

The colleague has since been suspended by Pakistan's Civil Aviation Authority. His threats have been widely condemned by many in the Muslim community, including Pakistan's former president Asif Ali Zardari.



Sunita Munawar underwent surgery after an acid attack in Karachi on 1 February [Image credit: CLAAS]

President affirms minorities' rights to religious freedom

INDONESIA

The president of Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority nation, has spoken out on behalf of the country's religious minorities.

During a meeting with heads of provinces and districts on 17 January, President Joko Widodo reminded local authorities that they should be upholding religious freedom. He said that Christians and other non-Muslims "have the same

right to worship. They have the same rights in terms of freedom of religion and worship."

Widodo specifically highlighted the role of the Forum for Religious Harmony in each region, which often makes decisions – such as forbidding the construction of church buildings and other places of worship – which he argued are contrary to the constitution.

The president also called for the 2006 Joint Ministerial Decree to be revoked. This legislation currently requires minorities to secure the approval of other religious groups before building a house of worship. Widodo said this regulation "violated the constitution".

Halili Hasan, research director of the Setara Institute for Democracy and Peace, a research and

advocacy institute for religious freedom, praised the president's speech as "one of the strongest messages conveyed openly" in calling for removal of obstacles to the establishment of places of worship.

Islam, Protestantism, Catholicism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Confucianism are all officially recognised religions in Indonesia.

Fifteen Christian families evicted from their home village

LAOS

Fifteen Christian families have been expelled from their home village in rural north-western Laos. The families were driven out after their conversion to Christianity and have been left with no place to stay.

The authorities have sought to negotiate with the village leadership in order to allow the families to return

to their homes, but, at the time of writing they have had no success.

The country's Law on the Evangelical Church, introduced in December 2019, gives Lao Christians the right to conduct services and preach throughout the country, and to maintain contacts with believers outside Laos. Locally,

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

This incident follows previous evictions of Christians in Laos. In March 2022 a Christian family of 12 were driven from their home in Savannakhet province

because of their faith, and pressured to remove social media posts describing their ordeal.

Five Christian families from two villages in Ta-Oey district of Salavan province were evicted in October 2020 and January 2021, respectively, for refusing to renounce their faith. Their homes were demolished.

Pastor and two sons shot dead in Islamist attack

NIGERIA



The burial service for Pastor Musa and his two sons

Musa Hyok, a pastor in Plateau State, Nigeria, and his two sons were shot dead by suspected Islamists in an attack on 4 March.

The pastor's wife escaped unhurt when Fulani extremist gunmen launched the assault in Ganawuri community of Riyom Local Government Area (LGA).

Residents say the family was targeted in reprisal for the deaths days earlier of three Fulani youths following a dispute over a stolen motorcycle. The pastor and his family were not involved in and had no knowledge of the incident.

In a separate Islamist attack in Zangon Kataf LGA, southern Kaduna State, on 14 March, ten people from the Christian-majority Atyap Kingdom were killed and several injured.

Dr Sam Achie, National President of the Atyap Community Development Association, said, "I urge the government to match words with action by arresting the perpetrators."

At the time of writing, more than 80 have been killed in anti-Christian violence in the Middle Belt since the 25 February Nigerian election.

Six abducted Christians released, as government continues licensing churches

EGYPT

Six Egyptian Christians were released on 17 February after being abducted and illegally detained in neighbouring Libya earlier in the month.

The six men, all construction workers from the same family in Sohag Governorate, were held at an unofficial detention centre, not controlled by the Libyan authorities.

Meanwhile, Egypt's government issued licences to a further 73 churches and church-affiliated buildings at a meeting on 24 January.

This batch of approvals was the 25th since the government committee overseeing the licensing process started work in 2017.

The decision brings the number of churches granted licences to 2,599 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.

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.



Six Egyptian Christians have been released after being abducted in Libya [Image credit: Wataninet]



Sharing the Lord's Blessings

"And [Jesus] directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the people" (Matthew 14:19)

The Lord's disciples were not passive observers as He provided for five thousand men, plus women and children. Rather, the food was given first to them, and they distributed it to those in need. This is a ministry to which the Lord still calls His people – to share out the blessings that He has given – and which Barnabas Aid seeks to fulfil.

For 30 years Barnabas Aid has provided millions of hungry and impoverished Christians with food. There are regular feeding programmes in places such as Central Asia, Lebanon and Pakistan. We respond swiftly to crises such as the conflict in Ukraine, the 2022 West African floods, the recent blockade of Nagorno-Karabakh, and the Turkey-Syria earthquake. Our food.gives programme now allows donations of dry food to be sent direct from our supporters.

In one six-month period,* we shared more than 950 tonnes of food with our Christian family around the world.

Yet the principle of sharing out the Lord's blessings applies to more than food alone. We have helped many communities build wells and access clean water. We have provided clothes,

blankets and mosquito nets, as well as rebuilding the homes of victims of violence or those affected by natural disasters.

We have created medical.gives as a way of getting much-needed medical supplies into the hands of Christians. We have also funded health centres, mobile health clinics and hospitals, and are now funding a medical training centre in India (see *Barnabas Aid March/April*, pp.9-10).

In the 12 months from 1 November 2021 to 31 October 2022, Barnabas funded 8,746 small business livelihood projects for around 43,730 Christians. We provided schooling for 10,405 children in 126 Christian schools, as well as training 1,451 apprentices and funding other vocational training.



Supporting Christian schools – such as this one in Pakistan – is just one of the ways in which Barnabas Aid is sharing out the Lord's blessings

Barnabas provided 47,000 Bibles or other Christian literature, as well as helping to build, repair or equip church buildings and other ministry premises. We also support the living expenses of pastors and evangelists, as well as online, TV and radio content for suffering Christians.

Operation Safe Havens helps persecuted Christians find safety (most recently, the Afghan Christian converts who were settled in Brazil). There are projects designed specifically to help converts who may have lost all earthly sources of support, as well as refuges for persecuted Christian women, who are especially vulnerable. We give practical help to the displaced and other victims of violence.

Through Barnabas Academia, Church leaders across the Global South are accessing reliable and affordable theological training (see p.14). Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life provides doctoral and master's-level opportunities, while 418 grassroots Church leaders registered with The Shepherd's Academy are undertaking undergraduate study or short courses that will equip them for their calling (see *Barnabas Aid March/April*, pp.14-15).

The work of Barnabas Aid is varied as we seek to meet many different needs within the global Body of Christ. We are blessed to be sharing out the Lord's blessings.

* 1 September 2022 – 28 February 2023

Congregation frees nine Christian brick-kiln families in Pakistan

Nine Christian families have been freed from the yoke of bonded labour in Pakistan's brick kilns thanks to the generosity of worshippers in Christchurch.

Members of St Stephen's Church were moved to help after learning through a talk and video presentation given by a Barnabas Aid co-ordinator of the hardships the families endure.

The congregation raised more than \$7,000 during their annual Christmas appeal, which closed in January 2023, and this was boosted to over \$8,000 by the parish.

The total sum – at least double the \$2,000 to \$4,000 usually raised by the church's mission appeals – paid the debts of the nine families. These ranged from \$1,264 to \$578.

Pakistani brick-kiln workers are low paid and families live at survival level. If someone falls sick, or another family crisis occurs, they have to take a loan from their employer, the brick-kiln owner.

These debts keep the families bonded to their brick kiln, with money deducted from their meagre wages to pay the interest. It is virtually impossible for them to pay off their debts, and families feel trapped, almost like slaves.

Answer to prayer

Sardar Masih, 37, and his wife Shakeela Bibi, 36, are one of the nine families freed by the congregation's gifts.

The couple prayed for a miracle to free them from the \$865 in loans they took out when their first child was born, and when Sardar needed urgent medical treatment.

The worry of how to meet his family's needs on his reduced wages was making Sardar feel anxious and low emotionally.

Thanks to St Stephen's Church he is now "tension-free and happy with my family".

"I am very thankful for this huge blessing," added Sardar.



Sardar Masih, his wife Shakeela Bibi and their three children are now tension-free and happy



Some of the members of the St Stephen's Church mission committee, from the left, Jiawen He, Margaret Butterfield, Juliet Page and Jan Rawstron

Thank you for helping Christian victims of cyclone

We thank you for your generous response to our appeal to help Christians whose homes and livelihoods were devastated when Cyclone Gabrielle brought havoc to New Zealand in February.

We are partnering with churches and other Christian organisations to assist in meeting the needs of our brothers and sisters on North Island, which was worst hit by the disaster.

We are also donating a book, *Lifting Up the Downcast*, written by Patrick Sookhdeo, International Director of Barnabas Aid, to ministries and marae. It explains how the Word of God brings us peace, comfort and strength in difficult and challenging times.

We look forward to providing you with stories of hope from those we help through our partners on the ground in the next issue of *Barnabas Aid*.

End of the year receipts

We are working on getting the end of the year receipts out to all of you. In efforts to save money on postage we are going to email receipts out this year unless you have requested to receive by post.

If you need to update your email or postal address please contact office@barnabasfund.org.nz or call 09 280 4385.

Join us for our 30th anniversary celebration

Please make a note in your diaries to save the date of **17 June 2023** for our special 30th anniversary celebration. See back cover for details.

SAVE
THE
DATE



30

Join us for our 30th anniversary celebration

Please make a note in your diaries to save the date of 17 June 2023 for our special 30th anniversary celebration.

We will be holding an online event at 7pm when the International Director of Barnabas Aid, Dr Patrick Sookhdeo, who founded the ministry with his wife Rosemary in June 1993, will share his vision for Barnabas Aid for the years to come. Our International Director of Projects Caroline Kerslake will give an update on how your gifts to Barnabas Aid are supporting our brothers and sisters around the world.

There will also be the opportunity to hear from Barnabas Head of Operations Australasia Stephanie Johnston, and the Chairman of Barnabas Aid New Zealand, Michael Hewat.

We would love to hear how some of you have been blessed by the ministry of Barnabas Aid over the years. If you would like to share your story, please visit barnabasaid.org/nz/30years

17 June 2023 7pm

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The event is open to Barnabas supporters and anyone else interested in our work. To register to attend, go to barnabasaid.org/events

For more information email office@barnabasfund.org.nz or call us on 0800 008 805.