

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

AFRICA

*Many Troubles Face a Land of
Increasing Christian Faith*

INDIA

*Your Gifts Help Christians
Meet the Covid Challenge*

PAKISTAN

*Apprenticeships Give Hope and
Security to Young Believers*

Africa

A Continent in
Desperate Need



The Barnabas Aid Distinctive

What helps make Barnabas Aid distinctive from other Christian organizations that deal with persecution?

We Work by:

- directing our aid only to Christians, although its benefits may not be exclusive to them (“As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, **especially to those who belong to the family of believers**” Galatians 6:10, emphasis added)
- channeling money **from** Christians **through** Christians **to** Christians (we do not send people; we only send money)
- channeling money through existing structures in the countries where funds are sent (e.g. local churches or Christian organizations)
- using the money to fund projects 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 its voice – making its needs known to Christians around the world, and the injustice of its 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 the church, society and mission in their own countries
- facilitate global intercession for the persecuted church by providing comprehensive prayer material
- safeguard and protect our volunteers, staff, partners and beneficiaries
- keep our overheads low

We Believe:

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

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

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Front Cover: This Zimbabwean Christian child is being fed by Barnabas Aid’s ePap project. See page 4.



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NAE | National Association of
Evangelicals



Enhancing Trust

Jesus Christ is the Same Yesterday and Today and Forever

At the start of 2022, we reflect back on two years characterized by human suffering on an enormous scale. This suffering, beyond anything seen in the lifetime of most of us, has produced much questioning, uncertainty, cynicism and distrust. We do not know what or whom to believe. Politicians, scientists, church leaders and commentators (expert or otherwise) bombard us with conflicting claims, especially on social media. Perhaps the growing intolerance of those whose views differ from our own has developed as a kind of self-defense. Hostility has become the normal tone for expressing disagreement. Gone is the idea that individuals have a right to hold and express their own opinions.

Saddest of all, some Christians have taken up this behavior. We assume the worst about our brothers and sisters in the Lord, instead of trying to think the best of them. We express our concerns rudely and belligerently, our device-tapping fingers as destructive as the tongue that James warned about (James 3:1-12). We even reject the cries of anguish of persecuted believers, disbelieving their facts and figures.

We should accept and even welcome criticism, especially from fellow Christians who may have more maturity and experience of the Lord: “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17). We must try to build each other up in our faith (Jude 20, NLT). But let us do so peacefully and lovingly: “... [M]ake every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification” (Romans 14:19). Let us remember the much-quoted words of the 17th-century German Lutheran theologian Rupertus Meldenius, recommending an attitude of love (*agape* in Greek, *caritas* in Latin, often translated “charity”): “In essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; in all things charity.”

In the Western World, churches are fragmenting, attendance is dropping and many young Christians, including evangelicals, are giving up the faith. Some believers seem unable to bear with one another (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13) and contemptuously reject anyone who differs from them in their experience of the Lord or any other matter. Those who come from contexts where there are “not many visions” (1 Samuel 3:1) react aggressively to those in other contexts who are encouraged and filled with faith when the Lord reveals Himself in supernatural ways.

As Christians we must be centered on Christ, not on our culture, our church traditions or what we read on our electronic devices. We should be Christlike as we respond to events around us. At the graveside of Lazarus, in the midst of death, mourning and tears, Jesus wept (John 11:35). He so empathized with His friends that He wept with them, even though He was about to raise their beloved brother from the dead, and thus remove the cause of their sorrow. Is this not the model for us as we face this age of suffering? Rather than focusing on the minutiae that divide us, or on identity politics and sectarian interests, can we not see behind these things to our Christian brothers and sisters, and indeed to the whole of humanity, who are suffering in the most appalling way? In a world of massive food shortages, devastating storms and diseases, let us have a compassionate empathy for the suffering even if they “think differently” from us (Philippians 3:15).

In the challenging issues that we face, surrounded by uncertainties and lacking the skills to evaluate the clamor of opinions, there is one thing we can be sure of: Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior is on His throne. He is the same yesterday and today and forever (Hebrews 13:8), and ultimately the only answer to our world’s needs. Remembering the centrality of Jesus, we can face the new year without fear or anxiety, but with confidence. All we must do is trust in Him.

DR. PATRICK SOOKHDEO
International Director

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How Barnabas Is Helping

Despair Turns to Joy as ePap Restores People to Health in Zimbabwe

“It is simply overwhelming to witness the levels of despair, poverty and illness. But this is counterbalanced with the joy that our program has brought to these desperate communities.” The words of our project partners as they distributed Barnabas-funded supplies of the nutritious porridge ePap to more than 16,000 hungry and malnourished Christians in Zimbabwe.

Barnabas delivered 52 metric tons of ePap through our new food.gives initiative to Matabeleland and Bulawayo, the areas most badly affected by hunger, where many were surviving on one meal a day. Our distributors showed how ePap is easy to make, by simply adding water to the pre-cooked powder. Rich in vitamins and minerals, it rapidly brings improvements to health.

Deliveries of ePap coincided with the reopening of schools after nearly two years of lockdown. Teachers reported that after receiving regular ePap, children were concentrating better and were no longer sleepy during class. Attendance also soared, up to 100% in some schools.



Schoolchildren are now full of energy, thanks to ePap supplied by Barnabas.

\$192,125 for 52 tons of ePap

Project Reference: PR721 (Feeding in Zimbabwe)

Senegalese Christian Widows Empowered to Stand Firm in Faith

“Without Barnabas, my children and I would live on the streets and starve,” said Senegalese widow Mariétou, a Christian convert from Islam. She had no means to feed her children after her husband, also a convert, died of Covid-19; her parents refused to help unless the family became Muslim again.

Sometimes the children went for days without eating, sustained only by meals provided by Mariétou’s church. Then Barnabas gave Mariétou a sewing machine, enabling her to make a living. “The project has empowered me,” she said. “I feed my children and all my children are in school. I thank the Lord for this miracle.”

Mariétou was one of 12 Muslim convert widows in similar situations, whom Barnabas enabled to become financially self-reliant and able to withstand pressure from their Muslim families to reconvert. Seven who had seamstress skills received a sewing machine. Three others opened stalls selling fish, vegetables and cosmetics. One started a food venture, another a poultry business.



“Barnabas brought me out of misery,” said mother-of-four Dior, 1 of 12 widows helped.

\$6,810 for small-business start-up equipment for 12 widows

PR1530 (Covid Emergency Fund)

Food and Shelter for Survivors of Haiti Disasters

Haiti suffered two natural disasters in quick succession in August. It was struck by a 7.2-magnitude earthquake that killed around 2,200 people and destroyed over 37,000 homes. Two days later the impoverished island was lashed by a tropical storm, which caused flooding in the already devastated southwest and destroyed thousands more homes. Many churches, vital centers of local communities, were reduced to ruins.

Survivors who lost everything when their homes were destroyed slept outside under flimsy tenting. “It is hard to understand, but God is still God, and He is still in charge,” said a pastor. “What we know is that He will still take care of His people.”

Barnabas provided food, shelter and medicines to meet the immediate needs of the homeless. “Hitherto hath the LORD helped us,” said our church partner, referencing 1 Samuel 7:12, adding, “And we know that He will continue to be faithful to the people of Haiti.”



Haitian families receive much-needed food provided by Barnabas.

\$65,000

Project Reference PR852

Compassion in Action

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 oppressed Christians.

Your Donations Save Lives of Many Covid Patients in Uzbekistan

Barnabas has provided four oxygen concentrators for a Christian team of doctors, nurses and volunteers caring for seriously ill Covid-19 patients (most of them Christian) in their homes in Muslim-majority Uzbekistan, where hospitals have been struggling to cope.

In one year the volunteers have helped more than 500 patients suffering severe breathing difficulties, providing them with oxygen concentrators for up to seven days, depending on the individual need. The new Barnabas concentrators are in constant use, helping the volunteers to reach even more of our suffering brothers and sisters. The team receives up to 30 calls a day for help.

A pastor wrote to thank Barnabas supporters. “Through your ministry many people’s lives have been saved,” he said. “I thank God there are people like you who are not indifferent to the problems associated with the pandemic. Despite the difficult time, you still sacrifice your finances to save people.”



This patient is linked to one of the Barnabas-funded oxygen concentrators.

\$2,790 for four oxygen concentrators

PR1530 (Covid Emergency Fund)

Emergency Food Aid Arrives Swiftly for Hungry Christians in Southeast Asia

Christians living in rural poverty suffered most when a Southeast Asia country experienced a recent surge in Covid-19, leading the police and army to seal off villages. Christians, already harassed and marginalized by the majority population, were largely ignored by the authorities when it came to receiving help, and families had little saved to see them through the crisis.

Barnabas provided 326 families with enough rice, cooking oil and salt to last them until the next rice harvest. Working swiftly through our established partnerships with churches in the worst-affected provinces, the food was delivered before the villages were sealed. “This aid has once again highlighted the extremely fast and effective response that our deep partnership with Barnabas is able to provide to those in need,” said a church leader.

A Christian said that without Barnabas, most families would have had to borrow money at high interest rates or sell what little they possessed.



A Christian man receives food from Barnabas to last until the next rice harvest.

\$5,225 for food for 326 families

PR1530 (Covid Emergency Fund)

Christians From Asian Mountains Send Thanks for Food, Bibles and Training

Isolated and persecuted Christians living in the mountains of another Southeast Asia country are a “wonderful tough people” who totally rely on their rice harvest to survive – but when disaster or sickness hits, there is often no Plan B, said our project partner.

Barnabas provided 100 Christian families, identified as being in dire need by local churches, with more than 40 pounds of rice each to help them survive difficult times. We also distributed 60 Bibles in the local language, and for many who received one, it was the first Bible they had ever owned.

Workshops providing training in income-generating skills proved so popular that we were asked to repeat them. Forty-two Christians learned motorcycle maintenance and received a set of tools to start them in business. Eight women were taught sewing and each given a sewing machine. It is the first time anyone had helped Christians in the locality, and they sent repeated thanks to Barnabas supporters.



Christians learn the nuts and bolts of motorcycle mechanics.

\$2,890 for food, Bibles and income-generation workshops

Project Reference: PR799



Hunger and food insecurity place Africans, such as this young woman in Mozambique, in danger of not only starvation, but also increased social unrest, violence and instability.

The second largest continent in the world, Africa is home to 54 nations.* Its population, currently 1.2 billion, is the youngest of all continents, with a median age of 19.7. According to some forecasts, Africa's population will double by 2050, outstripping both China and India, with Nigeria having a larger population than the U.S. By 2100 Africa may have tripled its current population.

Africa is not only the youngest but also the poorest continent (excluding Antarctica). Much of its nearly 20 million square miles is desert, and the vast Sahara is edging further south year by year.

Africa has been greatly blessed spiritually, with two periods of massive Church growth. The first, which focused on North Africa, was in the early Christian centuries, reaching its highest point around the year A.D. 500, when an estimated 40% of Africans were Christians, although only 45% of the continent's population had heard the gospel.

The advent of Islam in the seventh century gradually destroyed the African church except in Egypt, but before that destruction occurred, Africa had produced several important theologians and Christian leaders. One such was Hadrian from Cyrenaica (in modern Libya), who traveled to remote Britain and became abbot of a monastery in Kent in 670. Hadrian was hugely influential on the young church in what would become England, helping to turn it into "an intellectual powerhouse of the early medieval world."

The second period of rapid Church growth in Africa was in the 20th century. This time the focus was on the southern part of the continent, resulting in a vibrant and joyful Church. By 2060 it is thought that nearly half (42%) of the world's Christians – hundreds of millions of our brothers and sisters – will live in sub-Saharan Africa.

But Africa today faces many grave difficulties. The continent has in the past few years replaced the Middle East as the epicenter of jihad and Islamist violence.

Africa: A Continent in Desperate Need

This violence comes as Africa is bearing the brunt of food poverty, scarcity and famine. The global economic downturn caused by Covid-19 is also having a disproportionate effect on Africa, while foreign intervention is adding to Africa's mounting woes.

The Rise of Islamism

In November 2020 the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) reported that the “center of gravity” for Islamic State (IS – also known as ISIS, ISIL or Daesh) activity had moved from the Middle East to Africa. Africa is experiencing “a surge in terrorism.”

In September, to give just one example, Islamist militants killed 34 people – most of them women and children – in Kaura local government area, a predominantly Christian area of Kaduna state, Nigeria. Even by conservative estimates, around 10,000 people have been killed by Islamist violence in Nigeria since 2015.



Christians in Kajuru district were among those across Kaduna state, Nigeria, who suffered an onslaught of Islamist violence that killed 300 people and destroyed hundreds of homes in early 2019. Islamist violence throughout Africa continues unabated.

The South Africa-based Institute for Security Studies (ISS) estimates that in the 20 years prior to the 9/11 attacks in the U.S., 10,000 people were killed by Islamist violence across Africa. In the 20 years since that attack, the figure stands at 55,000 – more than five times as many.

The Islamist ideology seeping across Africa has deep roots, especially in West Africa. In the 1970s the Muslim World League – funded by Saudi Arabia – poured money into northern Nigeria, distributing Islamist literature, setting up Islamic schools and offering scholarships for religious universities in Saudi Arabia itself. This campaign bore fruit in 1978 with the founding of the Izala Society

(known formally as the Society of Removal of Innovation and Re-Establishment of the Sunnah).

The Izala movement was committed to Wahhabism – a Saudi Arabian ideology that seeks a return to a more “pure” and very strict form of Islam. The group remains dominant – it is virtually impossible to achieve rank or office in northern Nigeria without links to Izala.

A key figure in the rise of Izala was Abubakar Mahmud Gumi, who argued that Muslims should never accept the rule of a non-Muslim – this statement led to 12 northern Nigerian states adopting elements of sharia (Islamic law) after a Christian, Olusegun Obasanjo, became president in 1999. Another was Ahmed Idris Nasreddin, a highly successful Eritrean-born businessman based in Jos, Plateau state, Nigeria, who with the help of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, channeled funds from Nigeria to various Islamist causes, including to Osama Bin Laden and al-Qaida before and after 9/11.

Nigeria and the Sahel

The Izala movement provided the ideological and financial basis for the rise of Boko Haram, the Islamist militant group that originated in Maiduguri, northeast Nigeria. It gained international attention after the abduction of more than 270 schoolgirls from Chibok, Borno state, in 2014.

The group pledged allegiance to IS in 2015, but split the following year with one section forming the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP) and a separate Boko Haram movement remaining independent of IS. After the death of Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau in June, however, reports indicated that some Boko Haram fighters were giving their loyalty (*bay'at*) to IS.

The western Sahel – Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger – has also become a hotbed of terrorism and unlawful Islamist governance. Three groups – Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Jama'a Nusrat al Islam wa al Muslimeen (JNIM) and Islamic State of the Greater Sahara (ISGS) – are active. All three have roots in the Algerian Salafist Group for Call and Combat, and all three have benefited from the illegal traffic of weapons and explosives looted from Libya after the fall of Muammar Gaddafi.

Boko Haram operates across borders, carrying out – for example – attacks on Christian communities in southeast Niger. ISWAP is active in this region, with an estimated force of 3,500 to 5,000 fighters based around Lake Chad. Further south, Islamist violence has displaced at least 228,000 people from Cameroon's border areas with Nigeria.

Eastern and Central Africa

The traffic of weapons and explosives from Libya has also flowed into east Africa. Somalia has suffered violence from the al-Qaida-linked al-Shabaab, which controls much territory in southern and central Somalia, enforcing sharia law. The Islamist group also carries out attacks in Kenya, murdering Christians and other non-Muslims.

Islamists have wreaked havoc in Mozambique. Al-Sunna wa Jama'a (known locally as al-Shabaab due to comparisons with the Somalia-based group, but regarded by the U.S. as an IS affiliate) took control of Cabo Delgado in Mozambique's far north in 2020, subjecting the population to shocking violence. It was only with the help of Rwandan and South African forces that in late 2021, Mozambique drove the terrorists back.

IS affiliates and other Islamists are also active in central Africa, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which has been afflicted with violent conflict for many years. For example, in October 2020, terrorists thought to have links with IS killed at least 120 and burned down a church building along with 45 houses in DRC's North Kivu province.

Hunger and Food Insecurity

Of 10 "extreme hunger hotspots" cited in an Oxfam report on global food insecurity, five are in Africa – DRC, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan and the western Sahel – these areas alone accounting in 2020 for 61.5 million people experiencing "crisis-level hunger." By November it was estimated that 239 million people in sub-Saharan Africa were at risk of malnutrition.

These reports and others indicate the overlapping and interconnected causes of the global food crisis afflicting Africa so deeply. Conflict is perhaps chief among the drivers of food insecurity, as farmers are forced off the land and food supplies are looted or destroyed.

Natural disasters also have a devastating impact. Persistent drought and desertification over the last five years have led to repeated failed harvests, and in turn, widespread malnutrition, acute hunger and desperate famine in Madagascar. At least half a million children under age 5 are malnourished, more than a million people are in danger of starvation, and many have already starved to death.

Economic shocks also drive hunger and famine. In early 2021, the World Bank reported that the pandemic had already pushed as many as 40 million Africans into poverty. This foreshadows further unrest and instability: "Africa's Covid crisis is yet to come," says Nic Cheeseman, professor of African politics at the University of Birmingham, U.K.

Food insecurity leads not only to hunger and starvation but also to further conflict. The ISS reported in September that "supply chain disruptions, climatic shocks, rapid spikes in commodity prices and lockdowns" have "created fertile ground for unrest." Conflict – a cause of food crisis – is also a result of food crisis.

Corruption, Instability and Misgovernment

Governments often unable, or unwilling to do anything about violence and hunger compound Africa's troubles. Government is characterized by instability, a fact that provides opportunities for Islamists. In Mali and Somalia,

for example, al-Qaida-affiliated groups have stepped into the role of government by providing services such as Islamic schools.

European colonialism has left a legacy of ethnic conflicts, due to European decisions about national borders that ignored the reality of African demographics.

The distrust of the West that exists across much of Africa is a major headache for Christian communities simplistically identified with Western colonialism. To nominal Muslims who see Christianity as a Western imposition, and who understandably balk at millionaire pastors and the so-called "prosperity gospel" that are often Christianity's most visible face, the purported purity of Wahhabi Islam becomes an attractive prospect.

A New Scramble for Africa

Today China is leading what some have termed "a new scramble for Africa." The communist state is now Africa's largest trading partner, with Sino-African trade worth an estimated \$200 billion annually.

China is providing much infrastructure in countries such as the DRC, Kenya and South Africa, and the Chinese recognize that government stability is good for business. Yet



Natural disasters have led to severe drought and famine in Madagascar. Hundreds of thousands are at risk of malnutrition, disease and death.

there are downsides. A likely reduction in Chinese lending could lead to a new economic shock. African countries who ally themselves with China rather than Western powers will face fewer difficult questions about human rights, including anti-Christian persecution.

Wagner – a Russian private paramilitary company with alleged links to the Russian state – is active in several African nations, creating a further threat to peace and security.

In the Central African Republic, says Joseph Siegle, director of research at the Africa Center for Strategic Studies in Washington, D.C., “Wagner has been implicated in human rights abuses, extrajudicial killings, rape and torture” as part of its profiteering mission to take control of mineral extraction, including the mining of gold, uranium and diamonds. Similar accounts emerge from Wagner involvement in Libya, Syria, Sudan, Mozambique and Madagascar.

Now the government of Mali plans to bring in 1,000 Wagner troops, ostensibly for security and training purposes as France scales back its operations in the Sahel nation. Yet Wagner has no interest in stability – indeed, the United Kingdom Foreign Office calls the organization a “driver of conflict” that “capitalizes on instability for its own interests.” The government of Niger – Mali’s neighbor – has already predicted trouble for the western Sahel if the Russian paramilitaries become involved.

“Africa’s Covid crisis is yet to come.”

An African Afghanistan?

The picture for Africa is bleak. Terrorism, violence and instability reign. Poverty and food insecurity will lead to more terrorism, violence and instability. African governments are unable to cope, Western and Chinese involvement is at best a mixed blessing, and Wagner threatens to destabilize regions of Africa still further.

The Taliban’s recent takeover of similarly dysfunctional Afghanistan was greeted joyfully by African Islamists, from al-Shabaab in Somalia to JNIM in the western Sahel. JNIM leader Iyad Ag Ghaly likened the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan to the French withdrawal from Mali, baldly declaring: “We are winning.”

Many African nations risk becoming failed states; several are already there. It does not take a great leap in imagination to see the western Sahel together with northern Nigeria becoming a vast West African Afghanistan.

Yet Africa remains a continent of deep and unyielding Christian faith. There are hundreds of millions of believers across Africa, with more turning to Christ every day. Increasingly the church in the West, where Christianity is in decline, will look to Africa for spiritual sustenance, support, leadership and evangelism. The kingdom of Christ increases even in the most seemingly helpless and hopeless of circumstances, and “of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end” (Isaiah 9:7, ESV).



The new food.gives initiative from Barnabas Aid is our way of helping our brothers and sisters in Africa.

You Can Help!

Barnabas Aid has been working for many years to alleviate the suffering of our African brothers and sisters, and you can help!

Our new initiative **food.gives** is a further way that Barnabas Aid is combating food insecurity, hunger and starvation. We have already delivered vital food supplies from South Africa to believers in Zimbabwe and Mozambique, and in Madagascar we are providing 234 tons of ePap – a special nutritious porridge designed to provide vital nutrients – for a rolling program over two years reaching over 79,000 Christians across Madagascar’s 22 regions.

Please donate online or visit www.food.gives to see how you can help.



Anita hones her sewing skills as she pursues her goal to be a fashion designer.



Adeel has impressed in his training despite the challenges of Covid lockdown, when the workshop was closed.



Training as a barber has given Yasroon the opportunity to provide for himself and his family.

Lives Transformed Through Apprenticeships in Pakistan

“I prayed all the time and sought God’s help. My prayers got answered when one day I happened to meet the team of Barnabas Aid,” said Yasroon Hanif, apprentice barber.

Yasroon’s testimony typifies the experience of young Christians in Pakistan. Many have to leave school to go out and earn money to support the family, for example in a case of death, accident, sickness or layoffs affecting one of the parents and preventing them from continuing to work. When his father lost his job with the 2020 lockdown, Yasroon had to abandon schooling to seek a means to support his family. Because of the discrimination Christians face in Pakistan, finding work is always difficult. Yasroon faced the constant refrain that he lacked the necessary experience and skills. Once supported with a monthly stipend of 2,000 rupees (\$12) from Barnabas Aid, however, he enrolled as an apprentice barber. He has now started receiving a regular wage and has learned much in the process.

A Range of Opportunities

Barnabas is currently supporting over 500 young Christians in apprenticeship programs organized by our Pakistani Christian project partners on the ground in Rawalpindi/Islamabad, Lahore, Hyderabad, Faisalabad and Multan. The partners identify those youngsters who can most benefit from the training provided. The monthly stipend covers training, travel and lunch expenses and a proportion of the project supervisors’ costs.

Employers do not provide a wage, but they train the apprentices, who work for free while they are learning. When the trainees are sufficiently experienced, they can seek paid jobs for themselves or even set up their own small business. The apprenticeships offered that can open these doors include mechanics, beauticians, carpenters, electricians and many others.

Hurdles Overcome Through Spiritual Support and Prayer

Sania, a dressmaking apprentice, describes the typical financial obstacles encountered before receiving support from Barnabas. “It is very difficult and expensive to learn any kind of skill,” she explains. “Technical institutions are very expensive.” Many Christians in Pakistan are, like Sania, too poor to pay for the vital vocational training, without which they are unable to acquire the skills to help them secure employment.

Shahmaz appreciated the practical guidance offered by the Barnabas Aid team. He recalls that he opted for a welding apprenticeship after being “counseled” and “encouraged”.

Regular field visits by Christian project supervisors check on the apprentices’ wellbeing and progress, and maintain good working relationships with trainers. Barnabas Aid has provided motorcycles to facilitate their work.

Monthly fellowship meetings between apprentices and project partners, including Bible study, prayer and counseling, have provided wonderful opportunities to share experiences and encourage one another.

Successful Training Inspires Vision for the Future

On August 24, a ceremony held in Lahore celebrated the progress made by 25 apprentices. Twelve received recognition as graduates who had completed their training, some of whom have started earning a regular salary. Among them was Kosar, now drawing a monthly wage as a beautician, who says, “Every night in our family prayer, all my family members pray for the whole team of Barnabas Aid, and we wish more prosperity for them.”

Sufyan, an apprentice mechanic, and Anita, learning dress designing, expressed their aim to set up their own businesses so they can provide training and employ Christian youth.



Graduation day for apprentices in Lahore.

Sana sums up the impact of the ministry of Barnabas Aid and its partners. “They are helping save the lives of those youngsters in distress, and they are providing them with new hope to face the challenges of life. I think through this help, they are changing the future path of many of the families.”

**Project Reference: PR1531
Apprenticeships in Pakistan**



Job and the Mystery of Suffering

In “God’s Answer to Suffering” (*Barnabas Aid*, November/December 2021 pp. 12-14), we saw how suffering came into the world when Adam and Eve, tempted by Satan, sinfully rebelled against God. Genesis 3:15 explains how Satan became our enemy, but God provided an answer to both sin and suffering through Christ’s death and resurrection. Until Christ returns, however, Satan continues to hurt and destroy, causing as much suffering as he can.

How does this suffering manifest itself? God has given us a detailed case study in the Book of Job. Here we are confronted with an unfolding panorama of human suffering – suffering later fulfilled in the suffering of Jesus Christ during His life on earth. Job is representative of all humanity, and there are aspects of his suffering with which every human being can identify, for he experiences catastrophic economic loss, death of loved ones, physical illness, social alienation and spiritual turmoil.

The Challenge of the Book of Job

Job is a challenging book. The graphic descriptions of Job’s profound suffering, and his vehement, agonized speeches, must distress any reader. Furthermore, it gives no answer to the question of why we suffer. It is an oriental book about a concrete example, written mainly in poetry, which creates difficulties for Western readers used to thinking in general and abstract terms and analyzing texts phrase by phrase.

Scholars cannot agree who wrote Job or when. Nor can they agree on the geographical location of Uz, which was clearly not in Israel. But perhaps this vagueness helps to make his story more universal.

The Suffering of the Man Job

Job’s terrible afflictions are summed up in 1:13-19 and 2:7,8. First, four messengers bring reports of disastrous loss and bereavement. His oxen and donkeys have been seized and the men looking after them killed, his sheep and the shepherds have been killed by “fire from heaven,” his camels have been taken and the servants with them killed, and a wind has blown down the house of his eldest son, killing all 10 of his children inside. Later Job’s skin breaks out in painful sores from head to toe.

This first set of afflictions led to more. We know that Job was a tenderhearted man, concerned for the weak and poor (30:25). He must have been greatly distressed by the sufferings of others caught up in “his” disasters – his wife and the loved ones and dependents of the slaughtered servants. To watch others suffer is a dreadful experience. We remember Mary watching her son’s crucifixion; surely this was the sword piercing her soul foretold by Simeon (Luke 2:35).

When Job falls sick, he goes to live on a dung heap, created by years of excrement piled up and periodically burned. In this despised and filthy place, all he can do to ease his pain is scratch the sores with a piece of broken pottery.

Further suffering comes from the reactions of those around him. From a position of prominence and respect (chapter 29), Job’s misfortunes have brought him down to the lowest possible place: “He has stripped me of my honor” (19:9). People mock and ridicule him, even spitting in his face (30:1,9,10). His wife finds him repulsive (19:17). His close family, his extended family, most of his intimate friends, his acquaintances and his house guests all reject and abhor him. His servants refuse to obey him. Even young children scorn him (19:13-19). He feels excluded and alienated.

It is interesting to note the similarities with the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, the “man of sorrows” (Isaiah 53:3, AV) for whom it was “the will of the Lord to crush him with pain” (Isaiah 53:10, NRSV). He too was despised and rejected (Isaiah 53:3).

The Responses of Suffering Job

Job’s initial responses are reasoned, wise, humble and faith-filled – the outcome of many years of walking with God. He is, at this point, able to govern his emotions. When he hears of the loss of all his children, and most of his servants and riches, he falls to the ground in worship, saying:

"Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised" (1:21).

When his hideous illness begins, he responds “Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” (2:10)

But before long, Job’s emotions overwhelm him and can no longer be reasoned into submission. Chapter 3 is the first of many cries of extreme anguish. A recurring theme is his effort to retain some shreds of hope. He loses hope (7:6), then clutches hold of it again: “Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him” (13:15).¹ But by chapter 19, Job is saying that God has completely taken away his hope. It has gone forever like an uprooted tree (19:10).

It seems to Job that God is furiously angry with him, an anger that has passed into enmity:

"His anger burns against me; he counts me among his enemies" (19:11).

We readers know that God was not angry with Job at all. On the contrary, God was very pleased with him and had every confidence in him. But it was an essential part of Job’s testing that he should not know the reason for it.

Meanwhile, poor Job thinks that God has coordinated all His forces to attack him simultaneously (19:12, NRSV). He feels not only excluded by his community but also cast off by God, a spiritual pain worse than his physical suffering. We are reminded of our Savior’s cry on the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46).

But Job rallies his faith and suddenly bursts out with the staggering declaration: “I know that my redeemer lives” (19:25).

The Hebrew word translated “redeemer” is *go’el*, the kinsman-redeemer whose duty was to avenge wrong done to their close relatives, or to buy them back if they were sold into slavery. From our side of Calvary, we think of Jesus redeeming us from our sins (Galatians

3:13; Titus 2:14; Revelation 5:9). But Job has in mind the restoration of his good name, which had been dragged into the mud by afflictions that everyone assumes are a punishment for sin. God is his *go’el*.

It is striking that Job claims kinship with God, for he is not even an Israelite. Despite this and despite his present experience, he believes that God, in His mercy and love, will not cast him off forever and will ultimately clear his name. As Henry Ellison, son of a Jewish convert to Christianity, says:

"Job ... discovers in the furnace of affliction that he has been so bound up with his God that he can turn to Him and call on Him for vindication as a right, for God has made him His."²

Satan’s Role

Satan’s first appearance in the Book of Job is among a group of angels before the LORD (1:6) who questions Satan about where he has been. Satan (which means “the Accuser”) replies that he has been roaming around the world, the implication being that he has been seeking those he may accuse. Then Job’s name is introduced into the conversation – not by Satan but by the LORD, who says that Job is blameless and upright, fearing (i.e. revering) God and shunning evil (1:8). Satan claims that Job’s praiseworthy attitude is only because he has been so wonderfully blessed in material terms and that Job would curse the LORD if his possessions were taken from him. The LORD replies by giving Satan permission to do his worst with everything that Job owns – “everything he has is in your power” (1:12) – but not to hurt Job himself.

Off Satan goes and wreaks havoc on Job through four simultaneous tragedies. God allowed it and Satan did it. Many believers in Job’s situation might attribute their suffering to the hand of Satan, but Job is wiser. He recognizes God’s sovereignty (1:21). God made use of Satan’s malicious character, but the origin of Job’s sufferings goes back to the LORD Himself, for which no explanation is ever given (see also 42:11).

In chapter 2 another heavenly meeting takes place, and the LORD commends Job’s response to his suffering. Satan declares that Job’s integrity will fail if Job’s own body is afflicted. God allows Satan some more power; now he can touch Job’s body, but must not take his life (2:1-6). The terrible sores erupt on Job’s skin, but still he does not curse God as Satan had expected. Again Job sees the hand of God at work (2:9,10).

The Faithful Friends of Job

Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar (2:11) were men of wealth and standing, respected for their wisdom. Yet they left

their homes and journeyed to visit their disgraced friend Job, with whom nobody else would associate. They sat with him on the disgusting dung heap for a week. They wept. They tore their robes and threw dust on their heads to show that they shared his grief. With sensitivity and compassion, the visitors refrained from speaking “for they saw that his suffering was very great” (2:13, NRSV). In the end it is Job who breaks the silence with the long howl of chapter 3, cursing the day he was born. Only after this first venting of his feelings does one of his friends speak, very tentatively and anxious not to offend (4:2). One could hardly ask for more devoted friends.

Yet, as the book unfolds, it becomes clear that their well-meant words are not helping Job, or at least not in the way they intended. The viewpoint of the three friends (and of Job) is that good people should prosper, as God blesses them, and not suffer.

Job’s problem is that if the theology he has always believed is correct, then the disasters that have come on him mean that he must be a terrible sinner. But he knows he is not. The testimony of his heart is in conflict with the theology on which he has built his life. Job’s friends, repeatedly urging him to repent of the sin they believe must have brought the troubles on him, increase his anguish. But their words help him crystalize his thoughts and force him to turn from human “help” to God.

Finally, God overwhelms Job with a revelation of His majesty (chapters 38-41). Job bows before the sovereign LORD, accepts His will, drops his questions, quiets his raging and repents (42:1-6).

Drawing Strength From Job

Some Christians give up the faith because of suffering. But few will have suffered as much as Job, who kept his faith, or the many martyrs who died rather than deny Christ. So what can we learn from Job?

We often feel that we could bear our suffering better if we understood *why* we were suffering. Perhaps we even envy our persecuted brothers and sisters, because their suffering is a direct result of their stand for the Lord Jesus and clearly glorifies Him. But one of the main messages of Job is that often there is no answer to “Why suffering?”, only an answer to “What is suffering?”

Job never knew why he was afflicted, but he concluded that humankind cannot always understand God’s ways and that God does not always reveal His will. Even though we readers are privy to the discussions between the LORD and Satan (of which Job was unaware), we do not know why the LORD acted in this way. We must, like Job, be satisfied with what the LORD does reveal. For Job, that was God’s majesty as shown in His creation. We have also “the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

The mystery of suffering can only be embraced, not analyzed or assessed: “In acceptance lieth peace.”³

The restoration of our fortunes may not happen in this life. It did for Job, when God doubled his wealth, gave him another 10 children and caused his relatives to welcome him back (42:10-17). But this is rather rare. For many believers, it will happen when they are in heaven.

Wisdom cannot give an answer to “Why am I suffering?” Job’s three friends were reckoned by their contemporaries among The Wise, as was Job himself, but none of them had an answer. The only answer we have is to continue to trust in the Divine sovereignty and providence of God no matter what, following the example of Job:

"As an example of suffering and patience, beloved, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Indeed we call blessed those who showed endurance. You have heard of the endurance of Job..."
(James 5:10,11, NRSV).

DR. PATRICK SOOKHDEO

International Director

Note: Translating the Hebrew in Job is highly complex, so no single Bible translation adequately represents the meaning.

1 There are a variety of translations of this verse, some with very different meanings.

2 H.L. Ellison, *From Tragedy to Triumph: The Message of the Book of Job*, Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1958; paperback edition, 1967, p. 70.

3 Amy Carmichael, *Toward Jerusalem: Poems of Faith*, first published London: SPCK, 1936; Triangle edition 1987 © The Dohnavur Fellowship, Dohnavur, Tamil Nadu, India, pp. 40,41.



Helping and Healing Our Brothers and Sisters in India's Covid Crisis

The new Covid-19 care center in Maharashtra will provide medical care for impoverished and neglected tribal people.

Barnabas Aid has channeled more than \$325,000 of your generous donations to support Christian medical ministries in India that are still responding to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. This has enabled our brothers and sisters, called to minister to the sick and the needy, to continue to provide care and treatment in such dire circumstances, particularly to our fellow Christians.

Your donations have supported many hospitals and medical ministries in various parts of India. This includes the installation of four power generators, provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) kits to 12 hospitals, the purchase of oxygen cylinders and oxygen concentrators, and other vital equipment including pulse oximeters, stethoscopes, thermometers and an ECG machine.

Throughout summer, India was ravaged by Covid. At the peak in May, more than 300,000 new cases were being reported every single day. This in turn led to health care services being overwhelmed. Many died while waiting for space in overcrowded hospitals;

severe shortages of oxygen meant that others on intensive-care wards suffocated to death.

India, as of November, has officially recorded 460,000 Covid deaths, and a study by the U.S.-based Center for Global Development estimates that the full Covid death toll could be more than 10 times that number. The pandemic is not yet over – your gifts have already saved lives and will doubtless save many more.

The Church Response

The church in India has been devastated. In June it was reported that more than 2,000 pastors and Church leaders had already succumbed to the virus. At least 40 ministries in India were in danger of closing down, simply because their leaders had died and there was no one able to replace them, leaving Christians without spiritual care and support at the time they needed it most.

“The second wave of Covid infection has created devastation and panic in India,” said an Indian church leader. “We lost thousands of people to this deadly virus.”

Yet the church has also made a significant contribution to the pandemic response. Barnabas Aid created an emergency taskforce of church leaders from across denominations, chaired by our International Director Patrick Sookhdeo. We have worked closely with Christian medical ministries such as Emmanuel Hospital Association and the Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI).

All this ensures that your gifts are used as efficiently as possible to help and support our suffering Christian family.

“We Praise God for His Mercy”

“At our hospital we did not have an ICU [intensive-care unit] or even an HDU [high-dependency unit] set up,” said Dr. George Varghese, the Senior Administrative Officer at Prem Sewa Hospital in Gandhinagar, near Balrampur, Uttar Pradesh. This small hospital is just one example of where your donations have made a life-saving difference to the lives of Christians.

The hospital has been able to set up a 10-bed Covid care center as well as a five-bed ICU. Along with the new wards, Prem Sewa Hospital has installed an



Your gifts are helping Christian nurses, doctors and other caregivers to combat the onslaught of Covid-19 in India.



The new generator at Nav Jivan Hospital in Jharkhand state provides power for medical equipment as well as the onsite living quarters of hospital staff.

oxygen-generating plant that will prove vital to the survival of the most severely afflicted Covid patients.

The hospital only receives an average of 15 hours' power supply each day – an amount that can vary considerably – while the oxygen plant requires continuous power. Your contributions have allowed the purchase and installation of a new 45-kilovolt-amp (kVA) generator to overcome this barrier.

These improvements will be of special help to the Christian community of Balrampur. Dr. Varghese says that members of local churches

can now get “quality health care service from the hospital, and they don't have to be referred to far-off hospitals for the medical care.” He concludes, “We praise God for His mercy upon our small hospital.”

New Generators Minimize Risks to Treatment

Prem Sewa is one of many Christian hospitals and medical ministries across India that we have supported. The Nav Jivan Hospital in the village of Tumbagadad, Palamua, Jharkhand state, is typical of rural hospitals that suffer from an inconsistent supply of electricity and the risks to treatment that follow.

“Power outages caused staff to grope in the dark,” says hospital administrator Helen Paul, as well as causing vital equipment to fail and leading to delays in surgery and other procedures.

Thanks to your donations, a new 62.5-kVA generator has been purchased and installed, delivering a continuous energy supply to power the hospital. If power from the main units comes to a halt, the generator immediately whirs into action, ensuring that there are no potentially deadly gaps in power

supply. In the same way the generator immediately stops when main power is restored.

“Now there is no cause for any apprehension,” explains Helen. “Work has become very smooth, and power outages do not hamper work flow.”

It was a similar story at Broadwell Christian Hospital in Fatehpur, Uttar Pradesh. Dr. Jesudoss explains that the frequent power cuts had made an alternative power source a necessity, but that the hospital's small generator was unable to cope. As well as placing patients at risk, the power outages made life difficult for doctors, nurses and other hospital staff who live onsite.

The hospital has installed a new 125-kVA generator, capable of supplying power both to the hospital itself and to the domestic areas that are home to staff, including 25 family quarters and a women's hostel. Previously, says Dr. Jesudoss, “we were not able to provide power to the domestic area during daytime.” Now there is enough power for these areas, as well as operating rooms, ventilators, monitors and other medical equipment.



Home health care is provided by a Bangalore-based Christian ministry to those with Covid who cannot afford hospital care.

Christian Ministries Providing Help and Hope

The 70-bed Burrows Memorial Christian Hospital in the Cachar district of Assam has also been fitted with a new 140-kVA generator. Johnson Singson, the hospital administrator, explains that as a rural hospital in an area vulnerable to summer monsoons, continuous power could not be guaranteed. “As our hospital is situated in a far-flung area, there are frequent load-shedding and power-fluctuation problems,” he says, and “during the monsoon months, between May and October, heavy rains destroy grid infrastructure resulting in interruption of power supply for a good number of days.”

“God has answered our prayers at the right time through Barnabas Aid.”

Now, says Johnson, the hospital “will be able to provide uninterrupted services” to those in need of critical care. “Thank you very much for your valuable support and kindness toward our hospital ministry,” he adds, “God has answered our prayers at the right time through Barnabas Aid.”

In the Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra, Barnabas is providing vital medical supplies for a Christian

ministry serving a tribal area of more than a million people by running a 20-bed Covid isolation facility. “There is an absence of health infrastructure in the villages,” explains Christian leader Vaibiv Moon, adding that the few hospitals in the region “are unable to cater to the huge need.”

The isolation facility has been equipped with PPE kits, IV drip stands, thermometers and bedding, along with food and kitchen utensils. Our project partners have purchased three oxygen cylinders, as well as four oxygen concentrators – machines that purify the air and actually produce oxygen for Covid patients.

Tribal people are often despised and neglected, and are among the

most destitute and impoverished of Indian society. “We have been always considered as untouchables,” said Shakar Jaganath, a tribal leader in Gadchiroli. “Thank you for setting up this center here in our community. We feel valued.”

*Project Reference: PR1530
Covid Emergency Fund*

Practical Help in Time of Need



Working with the CMAI, Barnabas Aid has provided \$31,000 to set up a 10-bed

Covid care center at a Christian hospital in the city of Nadiat, Gujarat. The new center allows the hospital to fulfill its Christian mission of caring for the sick. The center will continue to be put to important use even if the virus recedes, as a respiratory clinic that will provide much-needed care long into the future.



A grant of \$161,000 has also allowed CMAI to provide new PPE kits – including masks,

face shields, gloves, coveralls and other items – for 10 Indian hospitals.



Often the disadvantaged of India – Christians among them – cannot

afford hospital care. A Christian ministry in Bangalore has taken it as its mission to serve those who must remain at home. A grant of \$25,000 has provided health care staff with equipment such as pulse oximeters and digital thermometers in order to carry out home assessments.

These are just a few of many examples of how we are using your gifts to help our needy brothers and sisters. Medical care, say our project partners, will be based on Christian values of service – values sorely needed at such a time of crisis.

Atrocities Against Christians Mount as Tatmadaw Attacks Chin Town

MYANMAR



Fires caused by a Tatmadaw artillery attack soon spread across the small town of Thantlang. [Image credit: Chinland Post]

The Myanmar military (also known as the Tatmadaw) shelled the town of Thantlang, Chin state, on October 30, causing fires that destroyed or damaged more than 160 homes and three church buildings.

The town had already been largely evacuated owing to the threat from the military to civilians in Christian-majority Chin state, including earlier artillery strikes against Thantlang.

The attack is one of at least 20 cases documented by human-rights groups and media outlets in which Myanmar's military government has deliberately targeted Christians, pastors and church leaders, church buildings and other

Christian sites.

Chin Human Rights Organization deputy director Salai Za Uk Ling labeled the extensive destruction as “war crimes and grave breaches of international humanitarian law.”

In September, 31-year-old Pastor Cung Biak Hum was shot dead in Thantlang while trying to put out a fire caused by Tatmadaw artillery. Soldiers then hacked off Pastor Cung's finger in order to steal his wedding ring.

The ongoing violence in Chin state has displaced thousands of people, with an estimated 1,800 fleeing across the Indian border to seek refuge.

Egypt Lifts Four-Year State of Emergency Imposed After Church Bombings

EGYPT

Egypt is to lift its nationwide state of emergency imposed four years ago following bomb attacks against churches, which left dozens dead and more than 100 wounded.

President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi announced his decision in a Facebook post on October 25, stating that Egypt had become “an oasis of security and stability in the region.”

The state of emergency was imposed by President al-Sisi after suicide bombers targeted two major

churches in Alexandria on Palm Sunday 2017, killing at least 65 people and injuring 126, for which Islamic State (IS – also known as ISIS, ISIL, Daesh) claimed responsibility.

Christians, who make up 10% of the population of Egypt, say that their situation in the Muslim-majority country is now better than it has been in living memory. The government is working steadily to legalize churches following the repeal of Ottoman-era restrictions in September 2016.

Forced Marriages and Conversions of Pakistani Christian Girls Continue

PAKISTAN



Arooj gives her account of being threatened with death and forced into marriage and conversion to Islam. [Image credit: CLAAS]

Two sisters, both Christians, were abducted and forced to marry Muslim men and convert to Islam, according to Barnabas Aid contacts in Punjab, Pakistan.

Arooj, 18 years old, and Kinza, 14, were kidnapped on June 29 from Lahore, and taken to their captors' hometown of Mian Channu.

Arooj was released on July 12 after the girls' father, Aslam Masih, asked local leaders in Mian Channu to put pressure on the family to hand them over; Kinza was held in captivity for a further month before she escaped. Their captors, who were cousins of each other, threatened to kill them if they did not go through with the marriages and forced conversions.

Both girls are now in a safe place, and the Center for Legal Aid Assistance and Settlement has filed to have the marriages annulled. Police have registered a case against 21-year-old Abdul Rauf and 22-year-old Muhammad Shakir, who allegedly forced Arooj and Kinza to marry them.

Also in Lahore, the High Court has ruled that a 14-year-old Christian girl who was abducted in Faisalabad, forcefully converted to Islam and married to a Muslim man should not be returned to her Christian family.

Even though the legal age for marriage in Pakistan is 16 (except in Sindh where it is 18) the judge ruled that Chashman Kanwal – who was 13 when abducted in July – is mentally mature enough to consent to marriage and conversion.

In a judgment on September 24, Justice Tariq Nadeem ruled according to the sharia (Islamic) principle that marriage to a girl who has reached puberty is legal, arguing that Islamic jurists place greater importance on mental age than physical age.

Chashman's father, Gulzar Masih, expressed his determination to appeal against the court's decision.

Karnataka Plans Anti-Conversion Legislation as Extremists Use Laws to Harass Indian Christians

INDIA



Christians protest against an attack on their community and the proposed anti-conversion law in Karnataka. [Image credit: Kiran Bakale]

The chief minister of Karnataka confirmed the state government's intention to introduce a new anti-conversion law. If such a law is passed, Karnataka would join nine other Indian states, including Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh, in criminalizing conversions carried out through force, fraud or allurement.

nationalists disrupted church meetings in Karkala and Hubballi, on September 10 and October 17, respectively, to protest against alleged forced conversions. As a result, hundreds of Christians staged a demonstration on October 25 in Hubballi in opposition to the proposed anti-conversion law.

Across India, violence, intimidation

“What we do is share the Good News with people, tell them about Jesus, but without forcing anyone to convert.”

Basavaraj Bommai announced on September 28 the plan in response to incidents of allegedly forced conversions, which he claimed “have become rampant” across the state. Earlier, on September 24, a group of Karnataka church leaders had met with Bommai to express their opposition to any anti-conversion law, arguing that accusations of forced conversions in the state were “malicious” and “untrue.”

The state government on October 13 also ordered a detailed investigation into all churches, Christian leaders and missionaries in Karnataka, a move strongly opposed by the Christian community.

Christians are often falsely accused of attempting to gain converts unlawfully. Groups of radical Hindutva

and false accusations against church leaders are increasing as extremists continue to use anti-conversion laws as a means of harassing Christians.

On September 28 Pastor Charlie John and two other Christians were arrested after extremists ordered them to stop distributing Bibles and leaflets in Rampur, Himachal Pradesh. The pastor denied accusations, saying, “What we do is share the Good News with people, tell them about Jesus, but without forcing anyone to convert.”

The following day, in Madhya Pradesh, radical Hindutva nationalists disrupted a Christian wedding ceremony, alleging that the bride had unlawfully converted from Hinduism. The reception was disturbed “based on a false allegation of religious conversion,” said Patras Savil, a local pastor.

Indian Teenager Dies From Acid Attack After Refusing to Stop Prayer Meetings

INDIA

A Christian teenager who had suffered burns on up to 70% of his body following an acid attack in Gaya, Bihar state, India, died in a hospital on Sunday, September 26.

The family of Nitish Kumar believes the attack was carried out by radical Hindutva nationalists in reprisal for Nitish's refusal to stop holding daily prayer meetings in his home.

Nitish was attacked on August 11 when he went to buy vegetables. He had just left his house when three men on a motorcycle threw acid on him.

Police claims that Nitish burned himself to death in response to a family argument were vigorously disputed by his family, which has received increased threats since the attack.

Fifteen Christians Re-Arrested in Eritrea

ERITREA

Fifteen Christians have been re-arrested in Eritrea and taken to the Mai Serwa maximum security prison in the capital Asmara following raids on their homes.

Some had already endured as many as 16 years of incarceration until being freed in September 2020 as part of anti-Covid-19 measures. They were re-arrested after the discovery of a list of Christian contacts.

The arrests followed the detention in July of two elderly pastors, Girmay Araia and Samuel Gebreweldi, from the Full Gospel Church of Eritrea, who were taken to Asmara's Second Police Station. No reason has been given for their arrest.

It is estimated that there are now some 160 Christian prisoners in Eritrea, almost certainly enduring brutal conditions.

In Touch



Talk to your financial advisor about the many ways you can benefit by giving to Barnabas Aid.

Different Ways to Support Work of Barnabas Aid

There are many different ways to support Barnabas Aid's work financially. In addition to check or card donations, below is a list of additional giving opportunities. Please discuss these options with your financial advisor so you make the best choice for your situation:

- Stocks – A donation of stocks or shares to our Merrill Lynch account (details available upon request) can minimize the tax implication and give maximum impact to Barnabas Aid. We can easily cash in any stocks/shares and we will happily apply the proceeds to a project of your choice, 100%, without any deduction for overheads.
- IRAs – Giving from an individual retirement account is an often overlooked option.
- QCD – Individuals age 70½ and older can direct up to \$100,000 per year from an IRA tax-free through Qualified Charitable Distribution.
- RMD – Required Minimum Distributions have returned. All donors age 72 and older are required to take a minimum distribution from their IRA, and you can utilize it as a QCD (Qualified Charitable Distribution).
- Universal Deduction – Non-itemizing taxpayers can take up to \$300 in cash as an above-the-line deduction. In addition, and new for 2021, couples can claim up to \$600 above the line (donor-advised funds and private foundations are excluded).
- Increased Deduction Limit – Itemizing taxpayers can deduct up to 100% of their Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) as shown in their tax return.
- Legacies – You can leave an amount or a percentage of your estate to Barnabas Aid in your will. Please email usa@barnabasaid.org or call us on 703-288-1681 if you would like a copy of our free Will Guide.

Contact us if you would like more information. Please also discuss these options with your financial advisor to see if they would benefit you, as well as us, and help offset your tax implication.

Prayer Focus Update Marks 25 Years and 300 Editions

Barnabas Aid is delighted to celebrate the 25th anniversary of our monthly resource for prayer groups, now called *Prayer Focus Update*. It first appeared in October 1996, and has been published every month ever since, for more than 300 editions.

Prayer is at the heart of everything we do at Barnabas Aid. We believe in the power of prayer to bring change. In 25 years PFU, used by many individuals as well as prayer groups, has guided supporters to intercede for specific needs and situations of our persecuted church family, in times of triumph and tragedy. We thank you for your diligent prayers on behalf of our suffering brothers and sisters, asking Almighty God either to remove their persecution or give them strength to stand.

PFU is available to download in letter and large-print formats, as well as a new Spanish edition, at www.barnabasaid.org/pray. It is the same website address to sign up to receive the monthly update by email. If you would like to a print version, please contact our office at 80 Abbeyville Road, Lancaster, PA 17603 or telephone 703-288-1681.

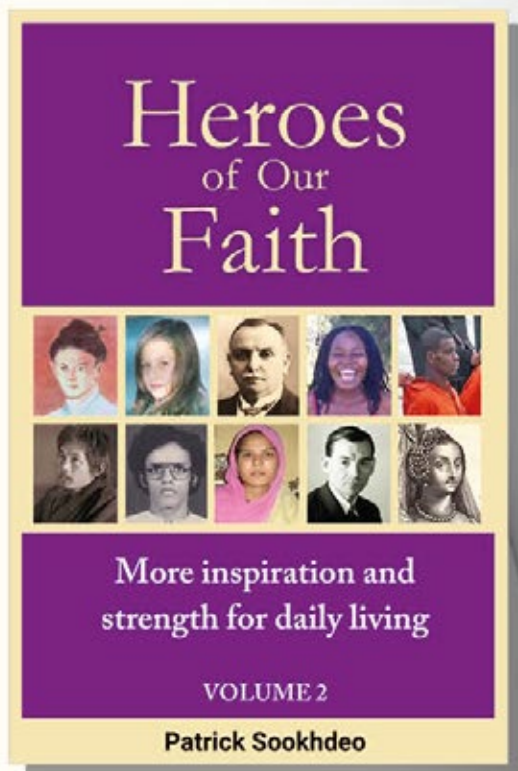


Start the Year With

Heroes of Our Faith – Volume 2

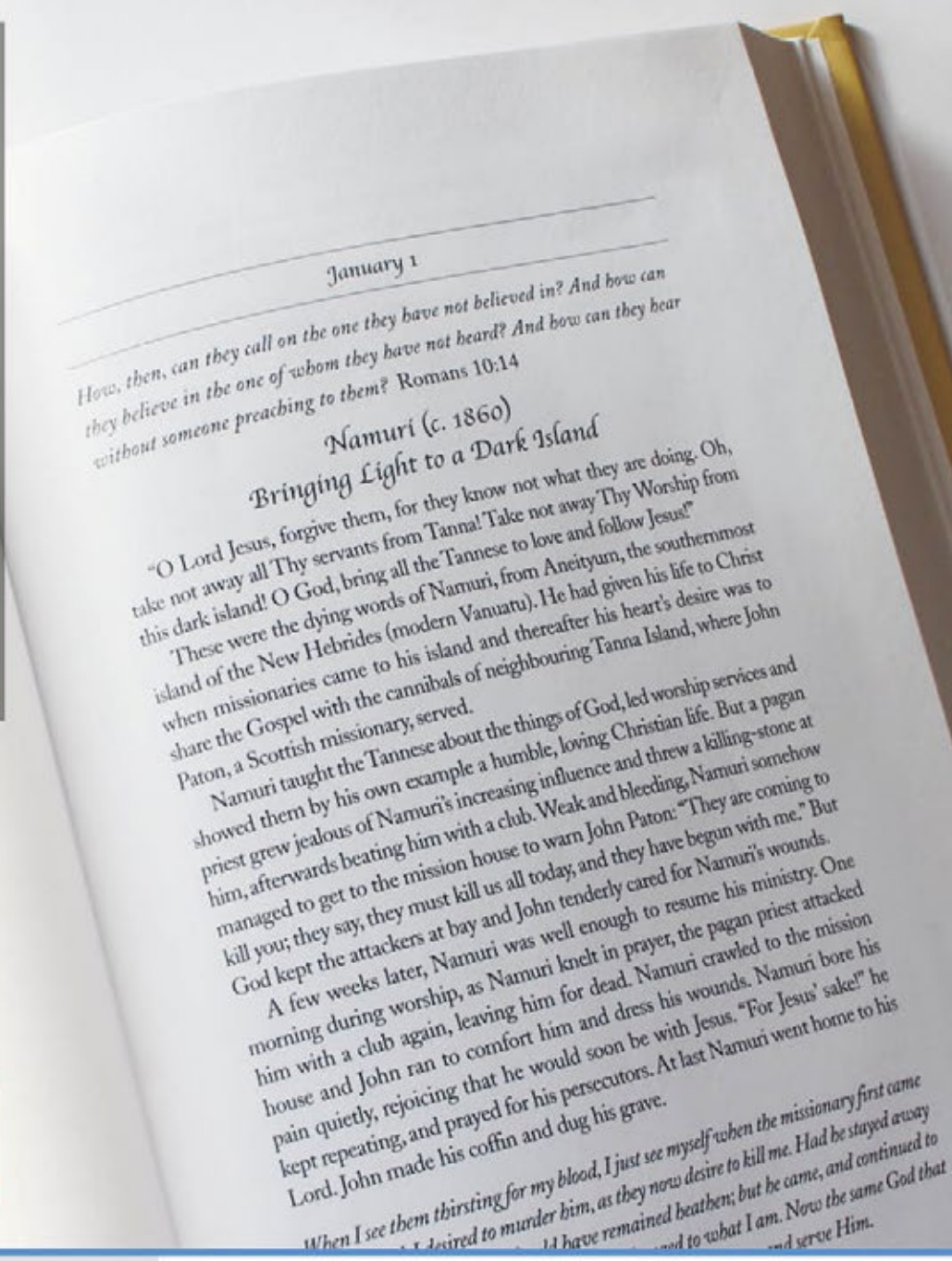
by Patrick Sookhdeo

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