



barnabasprayer

Barnabas Aid - bringing hope to suffering Christians

To help you
pray for suffering
Christians

March/April 2023

barnabasaid.org

Thank you for your prayers for our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ, which make such a difference to them. We sometimes have to change or omit their names for security reasons, and we have only limited space to share their stories. But the Lord knows the people and places we are praying about. Please do not feel limited by the specific prayer requests, but pray as you feel led. On each Sunday we have provided a set prayer; please feel free to use these in their current form, to adapt them as you prefer, or to use the information they contain to frame your own prayers.

March

WEDNESDAY 1 A bomb explosion ripped through an evening baptismal service on Sunday 15 January, severing limbs and killing at least 17 people. The terrorist attack, which was claimed by Islamic State (IS, ISIS, ISIL, Daesh), took place in North Kivu, an area of the Democratic Republic of the Congo which has been suffering Islamist violence for years. This violence has escalated since March 2022 and the UN warned in December that one of the main groups had changed its tactics, going for “more visible and more lethal” bomb attacks in urban areas. Please pray for the bereaved, the injured, and the traumatised survivors of the baptism bombing that the Lord will comfort and heal each one.

THURSDAY 2 Give thanks for continued answers to prayer in Egypt as the government has licensed a further 125 churches and church-affiliated buildings. The government committee overseeing the licensing process has also offered help and practical support to churches in improving safety standards following the tragic death of 41 people in an accidental fire at a church in Giza in August 2022. This reflects the more tolerant attitude towards Egyptian Christians by the government of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. Pray that this support and tolerance

from the Egyptian authorities will continue, and that it will be increasingly shared throughout Egypt’s Muslim majority.

FRIDAY 3 Cry out to the Lord on behalf of Christians in highly authoritarian and repressive Eritrea. The communist authorities of this East African country permit only four expressions of religion – Eritrean Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Lutheran and Sunni Islam. Christian believers from unlawful denominations are vulnerable to arrest and lengthy spells in prison, often without charge or trial. They can be subject to terrible torture and abuse, with church leaders singled out for especially harsh treatment. Even those from the permitted Christian denominations can face intimidation and harassment. Pray that the LORD will protect His people in distress, sending them help from His sanctuary (Psalm 20:1-2).

SATURDAY 4 Believers in Christian-majority Ethiopia are suffering one of the world’s worst humanitarian crises, as a result of persistent conflict and droughts that are causing acute food shortages across the Horn of Africa. Christians in the Tigray region have suffered torture, rape and forced removals. Many pastors and church ministers are among the dead, churches have been destroyed or

looted, and harvests razed. It is estimated that 20 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance, with nine million at risk of famine. Ask the Lord to send much-needed rain, and pray that a fragile ceasefire agreed in November 2022 will hold, allowing humanitarian aid to reach those who need it most.

SUNDAY 5 Heavenly Father, we bring before You Christian children around the world, remembering especially those experiencing hostility from classmates or even teachers, simply for their faith in You. We pray for Your provision for those children unable to attend school because of acute poverty or displacement by terrorist violence. We ask that all children of persecuted Christian families will not be deprived of opportunities to learn and develop. We pray that as they grow up they will know the abundant protection of the Good Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. (John 10:11)

MONDAY 6 Give thanks that the government of Indonesia has taken steps to combat Islamist extremism and promote tolerance towards Christians. Nevertheless, Islamist attitudes persist among segments of society and in the policies of some local authorities. A jihadi group, the Islamic Reformist Movement, has emerged to replace two terrorist groups that were successfully dissolved by President Joko Widodo's government. Pray for the success of official efforts to counter the Islamist narrative, and pray that Christians will take heart, despite the troubles facing them, remembering that the Lord Jesus has overcome the world (John 16:33).

TUESDAY 7 Christians in Iran who worship in the national language of Farsi (Persian) are subject to considerable pressure from the authorities. As converts from Islam they are punished as apostates in line with sharia (Islamic law), which is rigorously enforced in Iran. The authorities also routinely charge converts and Christians who minister to converts with "acting against national security". Punishments include imprisonment, "internal exile", or restriction of freedoms (for example, a ban on meeting with other believers). Pray that God will renew the strength in mind, body and spirit of Christians in prison or those suffering other forms of punishment for their faith. Pray also that Farsi-speaking Christians will be permitted to worship freely in their own language.

WEDNESDAY 8 Thank the Lord that the accounts of Christians who suffered under the Islamic State (IS – also known as ISIS, ISIL, Daesh) occupation of Iraq have been vindicated by an extensive UN investigation. A report by international human rights experts has concluded that IS engaged in war crimes and crimes against humanity in its treatment of Christians, and other minorities. After IS took control of around a third of the country in 2014, it seized Christian-owned properties, looted and destroyed churches and subjected believers to sexual violence, forced conversions and enslavement. Give thanks for the work of the investigators in revealing these terrible crimes. Pray that all Christians, and other minorities that suffered such persecution, will recover from the physical and emotional trauma they endured.

THURSDAY 9 Intercede for the members of a church in the Almaty region of Kazakhstan, which has had its bank accounts frozen almost continuously since 2017 because a donation from abroad towards the purchase of a new church building was flagged as “suspicious”. Kazakhstan does not prohibit registered places of worship from receiving funds from foreign countries. The church has contacted several state agencies, including the Financial Monitoring Agency, but has not been able to regain access to banking services. Pray that the situation will be resolved, and that the Kazakh authorities will see that the church does not pose a threat to national security.



Christians in Kenya

FRIDAY 10 Christian-majority Kenya is among several countries in the Horn of Africa suffering from ongoing drought. Kenya should experience two rainy seasons a year, but the last five seasons have failed, resulting in a national crisis of failed harvests and food shortages. Christians in northern Kenya are especially vulnerable, as many northern regions are predominantly Muslim and local Muslim leaders sometimes exclude Christians from aid distribution.

Give thanks for the thousands of our brothers and sisters who have received food aid through Barnabas, and pray that this will continue. Ask that the Lord will send the rain so desperately needed by all people in Kenya and its neighbouring countries.

SATURDAY 11 Give thanks that 15 more churches in Kyrgyzstan have gained official recognition in 2022, and are now permitted to operate lawfully. Among other requirements, churches must have 200 or more members in order to apply for registration, and the process can last for several years. Anti-Christian persecution in Kyrgyzstan tends to originate from the Muslim-majority community more often than from the authorities. Nevertheless, a new Religion Law drafted in December 2021 – but not yet implemented – would make the registration process even more onerous. Pray that these tighter restrictions will not come into force. Ask the Lord to give wisdom to smaller congregations who are not at present eligible to apply for registration.

SUNDAY 12 **Heavenly Father, we pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ who have been rendered homeless through persecution, war, extreme weather conditions or famine. We ask that they will be directed to places of safety and receive food, clothing, medicine and shelter, as well as spiritual counsel and comfort. Please direct those delivering aid to those most in need. We pray that all Christian refugees and internally displaced people will know You as their refuge and rock, and receive Your guidance and comfort as they seek to rebuild**

their lives. We ask in the Name of the One who is each believer's true foundation, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Psalm 46:1; 1 Corinthians 3:11)

MONDAY 13 Since 2019 Christians in Laos have had the right to conduct services, preach throughout the country and maintain contacts with believers abroad according to the "Law on the Evangelical Church". Believers, however, still suffer persecution and abuse at the hands of non-Christian neighbours or even local authorities, especially in rural areas. Christianity is often viewed as a Western religion and therefore treated with suspicion. Pray that the Laos government's commitment to freedom of worship is enforced nationwide. Ask the Lord to encourage Christians to remain faithful despite injustice, and that their steadfastness will be a powerful witness of Christ.

TUESDAY 14 The economic crisis in Lebanon is thought to be one of the worst to affect any country since the mid-nineteenth century. Lebanon's overall inflation rate was reported in November 2022 to be 142%, with food inflation at 171%. There are long queues to buy bread, and cooking oil is virtually unobtainable. Fuel is so costly that some dare not buy food items which require lengthy cooking. Christians have been particularly hard hit, for the neighbourhoods affected by the massive explosion in the Port of Beirut in 2020 were predominantly Christian. Give thanks for Barnabas-funded food, medication and other aid that has been distributed to believers in Lebanon. Ask that the economic crisis engulfing the country will come to an end.



Lebanon's Christians are suffering an acute economic crisis

WEDNESDAY 15 Continue to pray for a Christian convert from Islam in Libya who was sentenced to death for apostasy. At the time of writing there is no further news about our brother who faces execution. Ask the Lord to draw near to him, that his faith will remain firm and that he will continue to trust in God as his helper and sustainer (Psalm 54:4). Pray, too, that he will be spared from execution, if it is God's will. The death penalty for apostasy was introduced by Libya's 2012-14 General National Congress. Its laws were subsequently abolished by the Libyan House of Representatives, but the House of Representatives was in turn declared illegal by the Supreme Court.

THURSDAY 16 Nearly one and a half million people in the southern part of Christian-majority Madagascar are estimated to be in need of emergency food assistance. Years of drought followed by destructive tropical storms have devastated Madagascar, leading to deforestation and turning swathes of land into a dust bowl. Hungry families have been reduced to eating a cactus called raketa that provides little nutrition and causes stomach pains. Tuberculosis (TB), easily treatable by modern medicine, has raged through the

population whose immune systems are weakened by malnutrition. Ask that the LORD, who provides rain and sends water (Job 5:10), will restore the fruitfulness of the land. Give thanks for the help provided to Malagasy believers through Barnabas Aid's food.gives programme.

FRIDAY 17 Widely regarded as a tropical paradise, the Maldives – a group of islands in the Indian Ocean – is also one of the most repressive Muslim-majority countries in the world. The country's constitution states that “no law contrary to any tenet of Islam shall be enacted in the Maldives”. All non-Muslim worship is forbidden, whether carried out by visitors (most often holiday-makers or migrant workers), or by Maldivian citizens who the constitution assumes will be Muslim. Despite this assumption, there are a few indigenous converts who must live as secret believers or face reprisals both from the state and from their family and former friends. Pray for these Muslim-background believers, asking that the Lord will be especially close to them in their isolation, through His Holy Spirit, the Comforter (John 15:26).

SATURDAY 18 Pray earnestly for the release of Hans-Joachim Lohre, a German church minister, who was abducted by suspected Islamists in Mali's capital city, Bamako. At the time of writing two people have been arrested, but the minister, who has lived in Mali for around 30 years, has not been found. In recent years several church leaders and other Christians have been abducted by jihadists. Malian Christians report that the government treats them as equals, and that many Muslim leaders teach against Islamist extremism. Jihadi terrorism remains a danger, however, in

Mali and in neighbouring countries. Pray that the Lord will restrain those who threaten the safety of His children.

SUNDAY 19 Lord Jesus, we cry out to You for the encouragement and strength needed by those You have called to shepherd Your sheep. Please empower pastors and teachers with wisdom to make the knowledge they have acquired effective in building Your Church, especially those facing persecution and struggling in desperate poverty. Bless and sustain those who share the Good News. Give them fertile fields to sow the Word of God, knowing that You always lead Your servants in triumph in Christ Jesus. (2 Corinthians 2:14)

MONDAY 20 Christians – and moderate Muslims – in northern Mozambique have suffered for several years ongoing jihadi violence, with almost 6,000 people killed between October 2017 and December 2022. Now Islamists have demanded that Christians and Jews begin to pay a *jizya* tax as a sign of their *dhimmi* status – that is, their status as “People of the Book” who are subject to their Islamic conquerors. An announcement from Islamic State Mozambique declared that Christians and Jews must either convert to Islam, pay the tax, or be killed. The announcement also stated that Muslims who refuse to join the jihadi cause will be killed. Pray for our brothers and sisters, and all those who want peace, that the threats of Islamists will come to nothing.

TUESDAY 21 Lift up in prayer Christians in Myanmar who are being denied aid by the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw). In some areas, including Kayah and

Shan states, military roadblocks have been used to prevent aid from reaching people – many of them Christians – who have been displaced from their homes by the ongoing violence. It is also alleged that the Myanmar authorities have refused to distribute international aid in Christian-majority Chin State. Ask that the Lord will provide for His people despite the opposition they face. Give thanks that Barnabas-funded aid is reaching displaced Christians, and pray that this will continue.

WEDNESDAY 22 Pray for the protection of Christians in Muslim-majority Niger who comprise about 0.4% of the population, as the surge in Islamist terrorism in the Sahel region makes them especially vulnerable. The 2022 Global Terrorism Index attributed 588 deaths in Niger to terrorists, the highest in a decade. Tillaberi province, where most churches are situated, suffered the majority of the killings. In the deadliest assault, gunmen from Islamic State West Africa Province stormed into a Tillaberi village on motorbikes, killing 70 civilians. Pray for an end to Islamist violence in Niger and the Lord's provision for Christians uprooted by the crisis in this already desperately poor country.



Barnabas-funded aid for displaced Christians in Myanmar

THURSDAY 23 In the last seven years more than 10,000 Christians have lost their lives to the perpetual Islamist violence that afflicts communities in northern and Middle Belt Nigeria – and the full total could be much higher than that. Only a few months ago, at least 39 believers were killed in attacks in Kaduna State. It was reported that six entire families were wiped out in the violence. “People are being killed every day and property destroyed,” said a church leader in the region. “We must be consistent in seeking the presence of the Almighty in what is happening in Southern Kaduna. It is only God’s intervention that can turn the ugly situation into a united and peaceful area.” Join with our Nigerian brothers and sisters in praying for peace.

FRIDAY 24 North Korea remains among the worst places in the world to be a Christian, with reports describing the fierce and brutal government repression of Christians. Testimony of former prisoners confirmed that detention periods in labour camps were longer for Christians than other groups. Witnesses reported that Christians are subjected to some of the worst forms of torture to force them to incriminate others during interrogation. Pray that North Korean Christians, officially classified as enemies of the state, will know God’s protection as they face danger daily, especially as they gather in secret. Ask that His strength will sustain those experiencing death, torture and abuse in the labour camps.

SATURDAY 25 Zafar Bhatti has been in prison in Pakistan for nearly 11 years and on death row for 14 months, convicted (without evidence) of “blasphemy”. He is appealing against his conviction. His lawyer, Saiful Malook, has also appealed

for bail on the grounds of ill-health: Zafar is diabetic and has had a heart attack in prison. At the time of writing no date has been set for either the appeal hearing or the bail hearing. Pray that Zafar's Christian faith will sustain him in his long ordeal and that he will soon be released and acquitted. Pray also for Saiful Malook, the brave and skilful Muslim lawyer who secured the acquittal of Aasia Bibi and Shagufta and Shafqat; he puts his life in danger by representing falsely accused Christians.

SUNDAY 26 Sovereign Lord, we lift up before You Christian women who are particularly vulnerable in places of persecution. We pray for widows and those whose husbands are in prison, who are left with minimal or no support for themselves and their children. Please enable them to lean on You, their heavenly husband, and know Your gracious provision. We ask that the abduction of Christian girls for forced marriage and forced conversion in Pakistan will cease, and that our sisters will develop and flourish in their relationship with their Saviour, in whose precious Name we pray.
(Psalm 68:5; Isaiah 54:5)

MONDAY 27 Give thanks for the steadfast faith of secret Saudi believers and expatriate Christians who follow the Lord despite the difficulties they endure in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Yet even in one of the strictest Muslim-majority countries and the birthplace of Islam, some reforms are being introduced. They include a reduction in powers of the religious police, an expansion in women's rights, and the removal of some material in school textbooks which had taught intolerance

of non-Muslims. Ask that these small reforms will lead to greater freedom of worship and that Muslims will be able to choose to follow Christ without penalty.

TUESDAY 28 As Sri Lanka grapples with its worst economic crisis for decades with food inflation, fuel and energy shortages, many very impoverished Christians suffer greatly owing to the nation's economic hardship. Their suffering is compounded by mobs led by Buddhist monks who disrupt church services, sometimes backed by local officials. False allegations insisting erroneously that special permits are required to hold worship services in Christians' homes are common. Pray for an end to hostility towards Christians, and that they will be able to worship without threat or harassment. Ask that the economic crisis and the consequent suffering of all people will be resolved.

WEDNESDAY 29 Christians in Sudan face an uncertain future as a military coup of October 2021 now threatens to restore repressive Islamist laws that were abolished just two years previously. This includes the apostasy law, which stipulated the death penalty for those who leave Islam and refuse to return. Four Christian converts from Islam were recently charged under this law, though thankfully the charges were dropped. Call on the Lord to give Sudanese Christians wisdom as they adjust to challenging times. Pray that just and stable government will be established, and that clamour for a return to Islamist governance will be rejected.

THURSDAY 30 Pray for peace and reconstruction in Syria, where Christians, like the rest of the population,

experience severe food and medicine shortages and the effects of sanctions. Christians are among those threatened by Turkey's military operations in north-east Syria. In 2022 Turkey's fighter planes continued attacks on the Assyrian Christian region of Tel Tamar, claiming to target the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), a group designated as a terrorist organisation by Turkey and the US. Yet operations have repeatedly hit Christian communities, including damaging a church and homes in the village of Tel Tawil. Pray for Christians to grow in hope, faith and endurance, as these military operations along with the rise of Islamist militant groups compounds the suffering of over a decade of civil war.

FRIDAY 31 Pray for churches in Tajikistan, where no congregation has been able to gain registration in the last ten years even though many meet the minimum requirement of having ten or more members. The authoritarian government of Tajikistan seems to be keeping a closer eye on religious activity, having sent questionnaires to non-Muslim places of worship in August 2022 seeking information about employees and their families, as well as any foreign sources of funding. The recent national census also included a question about religious identity. There are concerns that the results – not yet published – will be used to target Christians. Ask the Lord to protect His people, and to prepare them if necessary for increased persecution.

April

SATURDAY 1 Foreign-born church ministers appear to be viewed with suspicion and hostility by the government

of Muslim-majority Turkey. In early 2022 it was reported that 78 foreign pastors and their families had been deported since the beginning of 2019, often on spurious national security grounds. Yet at present many congregations in Turkey are reliant on these ministers. Pray that efforts to train and prepare Turkish pastors and ministers will be successful, and that the Lord will raise up faithful, qualified church leaders to shepherd His flock.

SUNDAY 2 Heavenly Father, we rejoice that Your grace is sufficient for our salvation and that our background is no barrier to experiencing Your gift of eternal life. We give thanks for the faith and courage of those who leave other religions to follow Christ, often at great personal cost. We pray that those from different religious backgrounds who trust in You will know the joy of the Lord as they encounter trials for their new-found faith. We ask that their faithful witness will have an impact on others, and that You will firmly establish them as more than conquerors through our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose Name we pray. (Ephesians 2:8; Romans 8:37)

MONDAY 3 Churches in highly authoritarian Turkmenistan find it almost impossible to gain official registration. As there are only about 20 registered churches, and religious meetings outside registered places of worship are banned, many Christians face the difficult choice between going without gathering for worship or worshipping unlawfully and risking arrest. If imprisoned, Christians often face torture and starvation. Ask that the Lord will help His people to navigate these difficult circumstances. Pray that

President Serdar Berdymukhamedov, elected a year ago, will enact greater religious freedom and tolerance.

TUESDAY 4 Give thanks that in Uzbekistan three more churches have gained registration, allowing them to conduct worship legally. The main obstacle to registration is that church ministers are required to have university-level qualifications, and congregations must have their own buildings. Sometimes churches can worship legally by sharing a registered building. In 2021 the number of church members required for registration was reduced from 100 to 50, but an additional stipulation was introduced stating that all 50 founding members must be resident in the same city or district. Pray that more churches will be able to meet these conditions and gain registration. Intercede particularly for congregations with many Muslim-background believers, that the pressure they face – especially from the Muslim-majority community – will be eased.

WEDNESDAY 5 Vietnam's Christians, frequently the targets of discrimination, need your continued prayers. Christianity is most prominent among the Montagnard and Hmong ethnic groups, both of which endure persecution. Thousands have been refused household registration documents or identity cards, rendering them unable to access healthcare or schooling. Converts are sometimes kept under surveillance, intimidated, beaten and held in arbitrary detention. Unregistered house churches may be closed and the property of Christians confiscated. Pray that the authorities will allow all Christians to worship freely, in keeping with Vietnam's constitutional

commitment to religious freedom, and that Vietnamese believers will stand firm in their faith whatever difficulties they face.

THURSDAY 6 Yemen continues to suffer what is widely regarded as the world's worst humanitarian crisis. The result of ongoing violent conflict, this crisis has led to a collapse in vital services and infrastructure, including healthcare and water supplies. It is estimated that 24.1 million people – around 80% of Yemen's population – are in need of humanitarian assistance. Yemen's tiny Christian community also suffers anti-Christian persecution. Converts from Islam are particularly vulnerable to reprisals from family and former friends, or an anti-apostasy law that stipulates the death penalty for those who leave Islam. Pray for the LORD's provision for His children, asking that He will prepare for them a table despite the opposition they face (Psalm 23:5).

FRIDAY 7 Give solemn thanks to our Father God, remembering that His Son the Lord Jesus Christ chose suffering and death in order to "save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Praise Him that Christ did not die merely as a victim of injustice, but as an atoning sacrifice through whom redemption is accomplished. Rejoice that, in the words of the hymn writer, "His blood can make the foulest clean." Give thanks that this work is finished (John 19:30), and that the Holy Spirit applies it to all of God's people. Praise Him also that throughout the centuries the Spirit has strengthened many believers to face persecution and death with faithful confidence in the Lord who "poured out his life unto death" (Isaiah 53:12).

SATURDAY 8 Around 60% of the population of Christian-majority Zimbabwe are in “acute food insecurity”, with 3.5 million children among those suffering chronic hunger. Diseases and conditions caused by malnutrition have become common, especially in particularly impoverished areas such as Matabeleland. Give thanks that, at the time of writing, Barnabas Aid’s food.gives programme had delivered 229.5 tonnes (that’s 8,757,500 meals) of nourishing ePap porridge to Christians in Zimbabwe. Pray that all efforts to alleviate suffering will be successful, and ask the LORD to provide for His people, as all His creatures look to Him to provide food at the proper time (Psalm 104:27).

SUNDAY 9 **“He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.” Lord God and Heavenly Father, we give thanks for these words of the angel to the women who journeyed to the tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ that first Easter Sunday morning. Thank You that through His death and resurrection, the Lord gained the victory over sin, death and hell, and that all His people share in that victory. Thank You that we are reconciled to You and saved through the death and resurrection of Christ. We pray that all Your people around the world this Lord’s Day, no matter how harsh their suffering or the persecution they face, will be able to rejoice in His resurrection power, for we ask in the Name of our Risen Saviour. (Matthew 28:6; 1 Corinthians 15:57; Romans 5:10)**

MONDAY 10 A pastor in Laos, Sy Seng Manee (aged 48), was seen being bundled into a van by three men. Later

his dead body was found by the road, showing marks indicating a serious beating. It is believed Sy was targeted because he continued his ministry, despite serving a prison sentence in 2018 for his Christian work and for refusing to deny Christ. Give thanks for Pastor Sy’s faithful trust in the risen Lord (Acts 2:32).

TUESDAY 11 Praise God that Barnabas Aid was able to provide swift support to Christian families in north-west Vietnam whose homes were damaged in a landslide caused by heavy rains. These believers from the Hmong ethnic group are among those at increased risk of persecution and harassment from their neighbours and the local authorities. Our partners hired diggers to clear the fallen earth and supplied building materials to repair the houses, as well as providing the families with rice, cooking pots and blankets. Give thanks that the LORD, the Rock of our salvation, cares continuously for His people (Psalm 95:1, 7).

WEDNESDAY 12 Pray for the historic Christian community of Myanmar’s Sagaing Region, where three Christians – including a seven-year-old child – in the village of Mon Hla were killed in a joint land and air attack by the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw). A church and a Christian school were among 200 buildings destroyed in fires started by soldiers. Just a few weeks later another 300 houses were burned down by soldiers in the neighbouring Christian village of Chan Thar. Ask the Lord to comfort and sustain His people in Sagaing and across Myanmar as brutal anti-Christian violence continues, and pray that peace will come.

THURSDAY 13 Lift up in prayer the family and friends of a five-year-old girl who was killed in a Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) artillery attack on a kindergarten in a Christian-majority area of Kayah State. The girl and her family were sheltering at the kindergarten, having been forced to flee their home when it came under heavy shelling. Other members of the family were injured, including a ten-month-old baby boy whose condition was described as critical. Pray for the full recovery and healing of the baby. Ask that the Lord will comfort the bereaved with a peace that passes understanding (Philippians 4:7), and that they and others in the area will find a safe refuge.

FRIDAY 14 Barnabas Aid has entered a partnership with the Christian Medical Association of India (CMAI) to build a training centre in Vellore, Tamil Nadu, that will equip hundreds of Christians to work as allied health professionals. There is an acute shortage of such medical professionals across India, and the training centre will help address this need for India's Christians, often among the most impoverished and disadvantaged. "This is a truly exciting development," said Barnabas Aid's International Director Patrick Sookhdeo. "In partnership with CMAI, we now have the opportunity to help equip poor rural Christians with much-needed skills." Pray for the success of the training centre in equipping believers for service and giving our brothers and sisters the gift of health.

SATURDAY 15 Pupils at the Divya Shanti Christian school – which is partly funded by Barnabas – in Bengaluru (Bangalore) celebrated the 75th anniversary of India's independence in August 2022 with a pageant that

traced India's 4,500-year history. The pageant highlighted the pioneering contribution of Indian Christians in the development of education, medicine and healthcare for women as well as in the field of technology. Students aged 3 to 16 took part and were praised by members of the local community for their performances. Give thanks for the Christian contribution to the nation of India. Pray that the school will continue to provide comfort and hope to poor and needy Christian children for many generations to come.



Rajesh is one of the Divya Shanti pupils sponsored by Barnabas supporters

SUNDAY 16 Heavenly Father, we intercede for Your people who live in countries where disease is rampant, whether through poverty, natural disasters or poor healthcare provision, often exacerbated by discrimination. We ask You to cause medicine and personal protective equipment to reach hospitals and clinics where they are most needed, and that You will multiply Christians' limited resources to enable them to access this care safely. We thank You that You are the Lord who heals and that You are willing to set people free of sickness. We pray that Your healing touch will

be extended in the world's poorest regions, for we ask in the Name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. (Exodus 15:26; Matthew 8:3)

MONDAY 17 “We are very grateful for this help. God bless you.” These were the words of Sirisena, a poor Sri Lankan Christian, who lost his income from selling vegetables because of the country's economic crisis. Sirisena was among around 286 Sri Lankan Christians who received chickens and vegetable seeds funded by Barnabas as a means of supporting themselves. Another 2,000 suffering Christian families were given Barnabas-funded food aid. Give thanks for the Lord's provision despite Sri Lanka's desperate circumstances, and pray that He will continue to nourish His people both physically and spiritually.

TUESDAY 18 Pray for the small Christian community of Bangladesh, that they will experience God's protection and provision. Whilst the Christian minority of less than 1% enjoys greater freedom than in many Muslim-majority countries, believers experience discrimination from the Muslim majority, with converts from Islam the main targets. Tribal Christians, such as the Santal people group, are often the victims of land-grabbing or targeted violence. Pray that Christians will continue to present a powerful testimony of God's love.

WEDNESDAY 19 The re-establishment of strict Islamist rule is continuing in Afghanistan more than a year after the Taliban takeover of power. In November 2022 the Taliban government ordered judges to fully impose sharia (Islamic law), and in December carried out what is believed to be the first public

execution. Pray especially for Afghan Christians, who if discovered will be executed as apostates from Islam. Ask that the Lord will continue to care for His people, sustaining them in their most holy faith and their hope of the life to come (Jude vv.20-1).

THURSDAY 20 “Believers understand they are remembered.” These were the words of a pastor in Uzbekistan as Barnabas-funded aid was distributed to needy Christian families. Many had family members who suffer illness and disability, and most were converts from Islam, which makes them vulnerable to discrimination. The families were provided with food parcels that included sausages, pasta, rice, flour and sugar. “I thank you and our Lord for your kind heart,” said one grateful recipient. Give thanks that the LORD “provides food for those who fear him; he remembers his covenant forever” (Psalm 111:5).

FRIDAY 21 “Christians have become more active and daring to serve the Lord,” reported a Barnabas project partner in Kazakhstan after a series of teaching seminars, funded by Barnabas, for Kazakh Christian converts from Islam. Around 100 Christian converts were helped to grow in their faith at the discipleship seminars held in Muslim-majority Kazakhstan, while meetings were also held for Kazakh converts in Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia. Participants were helped and encouraged to stand firm in the face of persecution, and share the Gospel in hostile circumstances. Pray that the Lord, by His Holy Spirit, will help our brothers and sisters to remember and implement what they have learned. Ask that, if it is His will, He will make them ready to face hostility and persecution.

SATURDAY 22 Give thanks that many believers are returning to the historically Christian region of Tur Abdin in south-east Turkey. Many Christians in this region were killed during the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek genocides of the early twentieth century, in which 3.75 million believers were killed by Ottoman Turks. Those who survived often left the area in search of safety. Barnabas Aid has funded the creation of an orchard of 500 pistachio trees at a Christian ministry centre, which, God willing, will provide an ongoing income for the centre. Pray that the Lord will indeed provide for His people as they return to their ancestral homes.

SUNDAY 23 **Our Father in Heaven, we ask Your protection for those entrusted with transporting scarce resources to our brothers and sisters in need. Please protect lorry drivers and others as they travel long distances to bring essential food, medical supplies and other aid to Your suffering people. Guide them and empower them with Your energy as they transport their precious cargo across conflict zones and rough terrain. Grant them to complete deliveries safely to be Your means of blessing to Christians suffering throughout the world for their faith in Jesus Christ, in whose Name we pray.**

MONDAY 24 Lift up in prayer Iranian Christian convert Naser Navard Goltapeh and others in his family after the recent death of his mother. Naser served five years of a ten-year prison sentence for “acting against national security” because he belonged to an unlawful “house

church”. He was pardoned and released from prison in October 2022. Sadly his mother, Sahab, who campaigned throughout his imprisonment for his release, died just over a month after he returned home. “While I was in prison,” said Naser, “my constant prayer was that God would keep her healthy so that I could see her once again. God heard this prayer.” Give thanks for Naser’s answered prayer, and pray that the Lord will bring comfort to those who mourn (Matthew 5:4).

TUESDAY 25 Intercede for a church in the Egyptian village of Ebis, Beheira Governorate, which was attacked by extremists as Christians were attempting to make repairs to the church building. A crowd of Muslim extremists, chanting Islamic slogans, threw stones at believers as work was taking place on the church roof. Police responded, allowing work to continue, but the mob gathered further down the road to block lorries carrying building supplies from reaching the village, forcing construction to come to a halt. The church has also felt forced to close its health clinic, which serves both Christians and Muslims, for fear of attack. Pray that hostilities will cease, and that the church will be able to continue to minister in peace.

WEDNESDAY 26 “Without this box we might have died of hunger.” These were the startling words of impoverished Christian widows in Egypt after they were reached with Barnabas-funded food boxes. A total of 4,557 impoverished families received three months’ supply of food boxes containing nutritional staples like rice, pasta, flour and beans. Food prices in Egypt are at their highest for 60 years,

while widows struggle particularly to provide for their families as most are unable to work or have jobs paying minimal wages. Give thanks for the Lord's provision through these difficult circumstances, and pray that He will continue to give food to the fatherless and the widows (Deuteronomy 10:18).

THURSDAY 27 Clement and Christiana Ukertor and their younger daughter Dooyum (aged 17) were killed in a raid on their family farm in Benue State, Nigeria by suspected Fulani extremists. The older daughter of this Christian family, who is named Blessing, survived but suffered multiple machete wounds. Pray that Blessing (aged 20), who at the time of writing was in a serious condition in hospital, will make a full recovery. Ask that her heavenly Father, the God of all comfort, will draw very close to her to console her in the terrible loss of her family (2 Corinthians 1:3).

FRIDAY 28 Praise God for the release of a church minister who was abducted while conducting a worship service in Enugu State, Nigeria. Victor Ishiwu was kidnapped by gunmen who attacked an early morning service and began shooting into the air. He was released a few days later in good health. Give thanks that the Lord heard and answered our prayers on behalf of our brother. Ask that some way will be found of curbing the activities of Islamists and bandits who continually threaten the Nigerian Church.

SATURDAY 29 "I felt like through this course God is committing lives and destinies to my hand, and I will be

held accountable if I lightly esteem it or do not take it seriously." These were the words of Pastor Oliver Chaplain, from South Sudan, one of 418 students currently registered with Barnabas Aid's The Shepherd's Academy (TSA). TSA provides training opportunities for grassroots church leaders across the Global South, including full undergraduate degrees and short courses. Students gain not only vital Biblical understanding, theological knowledge and pastoral skills, but also a deeper sense of the gravity of their awesome and solemn calling. This, added Pastor Oliver, "developed a sense of godly fear and reverence in me that drew me even closer to the Lord". Pray for all the students, that the Lord through His Holy Spirit will continue to mould and to shape church leaders with the necessary knowledge, skill, character and spiritual insight.

SUNDAY 30 Lord Jesus, we remember Your humility and eagerness to learn from teachers and grow in knowledge and wisdom. We pray for those whom You have called to further study of Your Word at Bible colleges around the world. We ask for financial provision for those who have made great sacrifices out of their poverty to commit themselves to their studies. Please give them perseverance to accompany their zeal, understanding as they grapple with difficult but rewarding truths and insight into how to apply their knowledge. Above all, cause their hearts to be warmed with love for You as they study and for those to whom You call them to minister. (Luke 2: 40, 46; Romans 12:11)



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Front Cover: Displaced Christian girl in Burkina Faso given place at Barnabas-funded school