

OPPORTUNITY AFRICA
Giving young believers
the skills to make a living

HOLDING STRONG
Christian principles in
the face of adversity

FAITH AND HOPE
Biblical training and
disaster relief in Nepal

barnabasaid



Lifeline for believers

Barnabas provides Christians
with access to free health care

WE WORK BY:

- directing our aid only to Christians, although its benefits may not be exclusive to them (“As we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, **especially to those who belong to the family of believers.**” Galatians 6:10, emphasis added)
- channelling money **from** Christians **through** Christians **to** Christians (we do not send people, we only send money or goods e.g. food)
- channelling money through existing structures in the countries where funds are sent (e.g. local churches or Christian organisations)
- using the money to fund projects which have been developed by local Christians in their own communities, countries or regions
- considering any request, however small
- acting as equal partners with the persecuted Church, whose leaders often help shape our overall direction.

WE SEEK TO:

- meet both practical and spiritual needs
- encourage, strengthen and enable the existing local Church and Christian communities – so they can maintain their presence and witness rather than setting up our own structures or sending out missionaries
- inform and enable Christians in the West to respond to the growing challenge of other religions and ideologies to Church, society and mission in their own countries
- facilitate global intercession for the suffering Church by providing a range of prayer materials
- safeguard and protect our volunteers, staff, partners and beneficiaries
- keep our overheads low.

WE BELIEVE:

- in the clear Biblical teaching that Christians should treat all people of all faiths with love and compassion, even those who seek to persecute them
- in the power of prayer to change people’s lives and situations, either through grace to endure or through deliverance from suffering.

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Front cover: One of the many Pakistan brick kiln families who regularly receive aid from Barnabas

Fasten your seatbelts

“Ladies and gentlemen, we’re about to hit some turbulence. You’ll notice that the ‘Fasten Seatbelt’ signs have been illuminated. Please take your seat, fasten your seatbelt, and return your trays to their upright positions.”

If you’ve ever been on a flight, you may have heard the captain make this announcement, to warn you that things are about to get a little bumpy. It’s a wonderful courtesy – being forewarned that your journey won’t be as smooth sailing as you expected it to be.

In a similar way, the Bible warns us that things in life will become difficult. We don’t always know when it will happen, but we are forewarned that as Christians we need to be prepared for suffering.

Paul writes in Philippians, “For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him” (Philippians 1:29). In 2 Timothy Paul tells us that everyone who wishes to live a life in Christ will be persecuted (2 Timothy 3:12). In this magazine (pp.12 -13) we explore how we can follow the example of Christ when we suffer for our faith in Him.

Throughout these pages you will meet brothers and sisters in Christ who have been through turbulent times and have weathered the storm by that very faith. You have also supported them through their struggles, whether in prayer or through generous giving. Their God-given faith has led them through natural disasters, displacement, violent attacks, hunger or ill health to name just a few of the difficulties they have faced. We hope that their stories encourage you in your faith, and tell of the difference you have made to the lives of believers around the world.

As well as giving us a warning, the Bible gives us an encouragement. We do not face the turbulence of life on our own, but are guided by a skilled pilot – the Lord Himself who has declared, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

“In this world you will have trouble,” taught the Lord Jesus. “But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

BARNABAS AID

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Compassion in action

How your donations are helping

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 suffering Christians.

\$21,796



Funding for Ukrainian refugees in Romania “an answer to prayer”

Four hundred Christian families who fled to Romania to escape the conflict in Ukraine have been provided with six months of food and hygiene items, thanks to Barnabas funding.

The aid was distributed at a relief centre run by our church partners in Romania, who also gave spiritual encouragement to the refugees. Our funding came at a financially challenging time for our partners as the authorities have cut support to relief centres. “Your organisation has been an answer to prayers and a great blessing to us,” said our partners.



A Ukrainian Christian refugee receives Barnabas-funded aid in Romania

Project reference: 96-1196
(Food and basic needs for Ukraine Christians)

\$151,870

contribution to the school's annual running costs



School for Christian children in Bethlehem gives thanks for blessings

“You are our strength and blessings,” wrote the director of a Christian school in Bethlehem to Barnabas. The Middle East crisis has devastated the city’s economy, especially its tourism sector, and many of the school’s Christian parents have lost their livelihoods as a result.

Thanks to the gifts of Barnabas supporters, however, the school is able to continue to support the education of affected pupils. “We always thank our Lord for being able to continue the services of the school and for Barnabas for the support granted spiritually and financially,” added the school director.



Pupils at the Barnabas-supported Christian school in Bethlehem take part in a drama workshop

Project reference: 65-420

\$11,252



Repairs carried out at flood-damaged Uzbekistan church

Repairs have been funded by Barnabas at a registered Uzbekistan church damaged following the breach of a nearby dam and heavy rains. Flooding caused the church’s perimeter wall to crumble, rendered its toilets unsafe and caused such dampness in the pastor’s home that the family became sick in winter.

The church (which is also used by another congregation, enabling it to meet legally) is small and in a rural area, and was unable to afford the repairs. “Thank you for your care and hearts,” it wrote to Barnabas.



Barnabas-funded repairs restored the church's flood-damaged perimeter wall

Project reference: PR1424
(Church Buildings in Uzbekistan)

\$29,454



Support for 40 church planters in Muslim-majority Java

Barnabas supports 40 church planters on Java, Indonesia's largest island. Pastors endure intimidation from Muslim extremists and followers of traditional religious practices as they work to establish congregations. Often pastors are not granted an official church permit and, as a result, are accused of illegal operations.

The gifts of Barnabas supporters encourage church planters to realise they are not working in isolation but are part of the worldwide body of Christ. They are strengthened that Christians in faraway countries are thinking and praying for them.



Christians in Indonesia endure persecution from the Muslim majority and from animists and occult followers

Project reference: 00-477 (Pastors' Support Fund)

\$10,560



Practical and spiritual support for persecuted believers in Thailand

Barnabas helps support impoverished Hmong Christians in northern Thailand enduring discrimination from the Buddhist majority. We fund the living costs of two pastors who teach and encourage believers in their faith, support church-run Bible studies for children and young people and provide food and practical aid for Christians most in need.

We also help Christian refugees fleeing violence in neighbouring Myanmar, providing them with clothing, medicines and food. This includes support for a Hmong church that serves cooked meals for poor Myanmar and Hmong Christians after Sunday worship.



Myanmar and Hmong children receive food after worship at a Hmong church

Project reference: 83-1066

\$21,600

to provide 600 Christian families with a monthly food parcel



Regular food parcels change lives of poor Pakistani believers

"My family occasionally has to go to bed without eating anything, but we never skip prayer," said Irfan, a Pakistani Christian whose work is low paid and spasmodic. With inflation rising, he could not even afford milk for his children.

The provision of a monthly food parcel means that Irfan can now use money he would have spent on flour to make bread to instead buy milk for his children. Irfan's family is just one of 600 impoverished Christian families whose lives have been changed by our Pakistan Feeding Support Programme.



Elderly Christian widow Khursheed, right, was "incredibly happy" when her struggling family joined our Feeding Support Programme

Project reference: 41-331 (Feeding Christian Families in Pakistan)



The earthquake reduced many homes to rubble and made others unsafe to live in

Ray of hope amid ruins of earthquake

“I felt utterly helpless,” said Chitrapan, a Nepali church leader, as he recalled viewing the devastation left by a powerful earthquake that rocked a poor and remote, mountainous western region of Nepal. Then a “ray of hope” arrived, he said, giving thanks to God.

That ray of hope came in the form of desperately needed relief supplies paid for by the donations of Barnabas supporters.

Working through our church partners in Nepal, Barnabas-funded food parcels containing rice, pulses and cooking oil were distributed to 680 Christian households (about 1,600 individuals) in West Rukum and Jajarkot, the districts worst hit by the disaster.

We also provided blankets to 380 Christian households and warm clothes for 177 Christian children.

God’s love and provision

“The relief material sent by fellow Christians served as a tangible reminder of God’s love and provision,” said Kamala, a Christian in her 20s. “Their timely help reminded me that even in the midst of disaster, God works through His people to bring hope and healing.”

“Together we are rebuilding not just homes but spirits.”

The 5.6 magnitude earthquake struck close to midnight on 3 November 2023, killing more than 150 people – the majority of them children – and leaving tens of thousands homeless.

Survivors used whatever they could salvage to build makeshift shelters to protect themselves from the freezing winter temperatures as wave after wave of aftershocks caused further destruction to their already damaged homes. At least 20 churches were reduced to rubble.

“The earthquake left our village in ruins. We lost everything,” said Samana, a young Christian mother who also cares for her elderly in-laws. “But when the relief material from our Christian brothers and sisters arrived, it was like a miracle.

“Their compassion and selflessness touched my heart deeply. Their assistance not only met our physical needs but also strengthened our faith in God’s goodness and mercy.



A Christian mother and child left homeless by the earthquake in front of their makeshift shelter

“We are forever grateful for their unwavering support during our darkest hour.”

Resilience in face of adversity

Our church partners faced many challenges because of the difficult mountainous terrain and the damage the earthquake caused to roads and tracks. They set up distribution points

at accessible locations in order to reach as many Christian families as possible.

Rescue volunteer Prakash said being part of the church relief effort was a humbling experience.



Barnabas-funded aid is unloaded ready for distribution to Nepali Christians suffering as a result of the earthquake

“We’ve seen the resilience and strength of the community in the face of adversity,” he explained.

“Our role has been to offer a listening ear, a comforting presence, and practical assistance to those who have been most affected.

“Together we are rebuilding not just homes but spirits.”

The aid provided made a “significant difference” to the lives of hundreds of Christians.

A local pastor concluded, “The relief efforts by Barnabas Aid have brought hope to many families who have lost everything.

“Through our distribution of food, warm clothes and prayers we have helped to restore dignity and resilience in the midst of devastation.”

ood

A community Bible studies training day drew Christians from over a wide rural region of Nepal

Believers strengthened in their faith

Praise God for the wonderful growth of the Church in Nepal. In the early 1950s there were virtually no Christians in the country, whereas today it is estimated that believers number 1.5 million, or about 5% of the population.

The pace of expansion is creating a huge yearning among Nepali Christians to increase their Biblical understanding.

Greater knowledge enables Christians, who are either first- or second-generation believers, to stand firm in their faith in the face of harassment and hostility from extremists within the Hindu majority. It also equips believers for leadership roles in their local churches.

A grassroots training ministry, supported by Barnabas, is filling that thirst for knowledge by providing Bible studies for believers, especially to the many Christians living in remote rural areas where it is especially needed.

“Bible college at home” enriches 5,743 students in their faith

The courses are taught through a combination of self-study and discussion groups led by trained tutors in homes and churches. Students have lovingly nicknamed the ministry “Bible college at home”.

In 2023 alone, 5,743 Christians were enriched in their faith through the courses. They were taught in 643 study groups by 255 tutors.

“Seeing our people in our church excited to learn and discuss makes us feel blessed,” declared Asmita, whose church uses the training ministry’s

course books for study sessions. “This has brought a huge change in our lives.”

The students at Asmita’s church range from women who are barely able to read to people undertaking degrees.

Course books explain Biblical subjects in simple language that everyone can understand and each theme is enhanced through illustrations and pictures.

Help is given to Christians wherever they may be in their faith. One course explains concepts such as sin, forgiveness and new life, preparing new believers for baptism. Another teaches further about the life of Jesus, His ministry, life, death and resurrection, and is designed for those seeking leadership development to serve their churches further.

“I wish I could have taken this course 15 or 20 years ago. How much more meaningful services could have been done in our village,” said Bharat, a deacon of his church.

Relationship with God strengthened

Rupil explained that a course “changed my thinking”. It taught

him the importance of Bible study, prayer and service, which he had previously neglected. He now leads a church where he uses the courses to strengthen others in their faith.

Nishma, who is 14, said each lesson gave her new insight into the Bible.

“I learnt about baptism, prayerful life, how to overcome our temptations,” she said. “Above all, lessons about how to study the Bible changed me ... This course has helped me in my relationship with God.”

Christianity is viewed as an “alien faith” by the majority of the population of Nepal.

A law that came into force in 2018 made it illegal to attempt to convert a follower of a religion “being practised since ancient times”. This is interpreted as a religion passed down through at least three generations, thus protecting Hindus and Buddhists but excluding most Nepali Christians.

There is a growing religious nationalist movement in Nepal, officially a secular state since 2008.



“Bible college at home” has changed the lives of many hundreds of Christians including (from the left) Asmita, Nishma and Bharat

Helping our suffering Christian family in Africa

Continuing our introduction to Opportunity Africa – a new initiative from Barnabas Aid

Dalyop (left) is one of many young Christians being trained in digital content creation, giving them the skills to earn a living

In the previous issue of *Barnabas Aid*, we began our introduction to Opportunity Africa – a new and varied Barnabas Aid initiative designed to help and empower suffering and persecuted Christians in 36 countries across sub-Saharan Africa. In this issue we take a deeper look at how just some of the projects included in Opportunity Africa are helping our brothers and sisters in Africa's most populous country, Nigeria.

"Nobody ever asked me what I can do ... except Barnabas Aid." These were the words of Dalyop, a young believer who lost both his parents to anti-Christian violence while only a child – his father in 2008 when Dalyop was 10 years old, and his mother just two years later.

"I had lost hope and didn't know what to make of my life," said Dalyop. "I have been jobless for years, barely managing to survive day to day." Dalyop is one of thousands of Christians in Nigeria now studying digital content creation, a course that is funded by Barnabas and being delivered by an experienced training organisation.

Dalyop's experience is sadly typical of believers in Nigeria and other parts of Africa. A combination of anti-Christian violence and lack of opportunity had almost completely derailed his life. But now he has been empowered by Barnabas Aid through our new initiative, Opportunity Africa – a series of long-term projects that will help Christians become resilient, self-sufficient and independent.

Empowering persecuted and suffering Christian communities

Christians in northern and Middle Belt Nigeria often suffer from poverty and

marginalisation. Opportunities for education and employment are few and far between.

On top of this, they have endured for more than a decade persistent and widespread anti-Christian violence that has rendered them the most persecuted people in the world. More than 45,000 believers have been slaughtered by Islamists since 2009. Hundreds of church buildings and whole villages have been destroyed. More than 2.5 million have been displaced from their homes.

This maelstrom of violent persecution magnifies the poverty and lack of opportunity. Tens of thousands are without homes or livelihoods, having fled their villages. Some have managed to find shelter in camps, but many of our brothers and sisters are unable to care for themselves or their families because of the sheer scale of the persecution they face. Hundreds of children are going without an education, either because schools have been destroyed or because they have fled many miles from their villages.

"Nobody ever asked me what I can do ... except Barnabas Aid"

Barnabas Aid has been partnering with Christian communities in

the southern Kaduna, Plateau and Borno states of Nigeria to provide emergency food aid, school resources and building materials. But although this response is vital – and much welcomed by our grateful brothers and sisters – we aim to do more than just respond to emergencies.

Working with thousands of church leaders, we have seen the capacity and potential in Christian communities, despite their need for aid. It is to help build up Christian communities so that they can escape perpetual poverty and reliance on aid that Barnabas has set up Opportunity Africa.

Through partnering with Christian communities and families in Nigeria and across Africa, and tapping into their local skills and experience, Barnabas Aid has been able to identify critical areas of economic improvement, which will create a lasting impact.

Education and vocational training – the ultimate key to the future

Millions of young Christian men and women in northern and Middle Belt Nigeria have known nothing but violence and persecution their entire lives. While Barnabas Aid has been providing life-saving aid in response to these attacks and emergencies, we are also providing life-changing aid through education



and human capacity building.

The digital content creation course being studied by Dalyop is just one example. This kind of educational and vocational training opens up possibilities for many Christians affected by or displaced by violence who did not have access to education previously. Students are trained so that they can find work or start up their own online enterprises to earn a living. The courses also provide avenues for self-expression, which will be a therapeutic outlet amid the persecution they have faced.

“Now I have something I am excited about – photography and filmmaking,” continued Dalyop. “This is a blessing from God.”

“Now you have given me something to be happy about and live a productive life,” he added to our project partner. “I can only say, ‘Thank you.’”

In a separate project within Opportunity Africa, Barnabas Aid has also set up a skills acquisition centre in Chibok – infamous for the abduction of nearly 300 schoolgirls in April 2014.

Since the incident, Barnabas Aid has engaged with the Christian families whose daughters were kidnapped by Islamist terrorist group Boko Haram.



Hauwa praises God for the gift of a Barnabas-funded sewing machine that her daughter now uses to support their family

Emergency relief was given to the families soon after the attack on the village. However, Barnabas Aid has also begun to further support 15 of the mothers of the abducted girls, training them in tailoring and giving them sewing machines.

Hauwa, a widow whose daughter escaped from Boko Haram captivity, expressed her gratitude, saying, “I do not have the strength but what you have done has provided for me and the children. I can only say, ‘Thank you.’”

Hauwa naturally found the experience of her daughter’s kidnap very traumatic and fell ill as a result. She was unable to continue farming their land. But since her daughter’s escape, and thanks to the gift of a sewing machine from Barnabas, Hauwa’s daughter has learned to sew.

“My daughter has now become the breadwinner for the family, sewing and making money for us to feed our family,” said Hauwa.

Many of the Christian communities can no longer go to their farms because Boko Haram is still in control of a large swathe of territory around Chibok.

Our partner told us that another of the mothers used to farm groundnuts to support her family. Our partner said, “They are unable to farm, so this sewing machine has been God’s alternative provision for the family.”

Giving life and hope

“Barnabas Aid came in our time of desperate need with emergency food support. That gave us hope. Yet they came back again with help to enable us to start pig farms... they have given us life!”

These were the words of a Christian farmer who was gifted pigs from Barnabas to start her own pig farm in southern Kaduna State. She was just one of 20 farmers whom Barnabas Aid has helped in setting up pig farms as a part of Opportunity Africa’s longer-term goals.

As well as providing a vital food source, these pig farms are an economic boost to Christian communities. Jobs are created for Christian farmhands. The plan is that Christian farmers will be able to sell meat through Christian-run butcheries and meat markets in the future. As such our brothers and sisters are empowered to become self-reliant.

Another recipient, Esther Peter, thanked Barnabas Aid and shed light on the long-term difference the piglets and farms will make.

“These pigs cannot be rustled by the Islamists attacking us,” she explained.

While other animals might be stolen, Muslims will not be willing to steal pigs, which are considered unclean in Islam.

“The pigs are easier for us to grow and multiply [than other livestock],” she continued. “Look at my five piglets. Very soon they will grow, providing meat for my family and money to meet our needs,” she continued, adding, “May the Lord bless you in Jesus’ name.”

Assurance of God’s care

We are glad to say that these projects, in partnership with local Christian communities, have given beneficiaries not just a renewed sense of life but also the assurance that God cares and His Church is with them in their times of suffering.

With three decades serving the suffering Church in sub-Saharan Africa we know that African Christians have the capacity, skills, determination, and resilience to turn their tragedies and lamentations into praises. Our aim is to empower them to achieve this.

Opportunity Africa consists of 12 strands:

1. Food: innovative, long-term approaches to feeding
2. Healthcare, medical needs and disabilities
3. Economic empowerment, including for groups and churches
4. Education: schools and vocational training
5. Energy
6. Digital connectivity
7. Water
8. Agriculture
9. Houses, churches, other community buildings
10. Christians refugees and IDPs (internally displaced persons)
11. Bible training and spiritual development
12. Human capacity development

See *Barnabas Aid* May/June 2024 pp.6–10 or visit barnabasaid.org/magazine/opportunity-africa for more details.

Project reference: PR1700
(Opportunity Africa)

food.gives

Donation of lentils “life-saving” for hungry Christians in Zimbabwe

food.gives is a project of Barnabas Aid and functions as an international food bank, shipping donations of food from our supporters to suffering Christians around the world. Since its inception in June 2021, food.gives has sent 173 containers of food and medical supplies to sick and hungry believers. Since the start of 2024, we have provided 3,500,000 meal servings.

Zimbabwe declared a state of disaster on 3 April 2024, due to a drought which has caused severe levels of food insecurity.

The El Niño weather phenomenon has brought pre-existing years of drought and food insecurity to critical levels. It has meant that 80% of the country has had below-average rainfall, which in turn has caused near-total crop failure and weakened livestock. For a country where approximately 70% of the population are subsistence farmers, this has been devastating.

People have been forced to use unsafe water and are now experiencing a cholera outbreak. The cost of food is skyrocketing, heightening the existing food insecurity: 2.7 million people are experiencing food shortages this year. Thousands have already died.

This Christian-majority country has been greatly suffering, but through God’s grace we have been able to help them.

Throughout the years of drought in Zimbabwe, we have used the donations from our supporters to send nutritious porridge-mix ePap to our suffering brothers and sisters. Our most recent food aid shipment also sent lentils, which are a source of protein, to assist in this current crisis.

Our generous food.gives supporters donated enough to fill a 20ft container

with approximately 23.5 tonnes of lentils. The container was shipped from Australia to South Africa and arrived in Zimbabwe by March 2024.

The lentils were then distributed to over 11,600 hungry Christians, providing 470,000 servings. In a country where 80% of people consume protein only once per week, these donations have been life-changing.

The importance of donations such as these was highlighted at the distribution point. The labourers, who helped our project partners distribute the lentils, were struggling to work as none of them had eaten before starting their shift. Our partners, once they discovered this, gave the labourers a healthy lunch each day. This increased the labourers’ energy, so they could continue their work.

Our partners wrote to inform us that all the recipients of the lentils were “overjoyed to receive this vital source of nutrition”.

They commented that the food.gives shipment “has been nothing short of life-saving, providing much-needed nutrition, especially protein, to communities facing a devastating drought... Your generous donation of lentils has provided a critical lifeline to the people of Matabeleland, Bulawayo and Harare during this time of immense hardship.”



Want to get involved?

It is only thanks to our generous supporters that we can continue feeding hungry Christians around the world. If you would like to join the food.gives family and make a difference by providing food for suffering believers, visit www.food.gives



Training the under-shepherds of the flock across the continents

"All praise to God for this wonderful opportunity!" exclaimed "Priya", a student at The Shepherd's Academy (TSA) – the undergraduate section of Barnabas Aid's Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life (OCRPL).

Priya is one of a cohort of Tamil-speaking Christians in South Asia benefitting from following theological training courses in their own language.

These TSA courses are the first of their kind made available to Tamil speakers. Most of the church leaders and workers enrolled on the courses are first-generation believers. Many are from rural backgrounds. Few if any would be able to pursue this vital theological study without Barnabas Aid's TSA project.

Student programme continues to grow

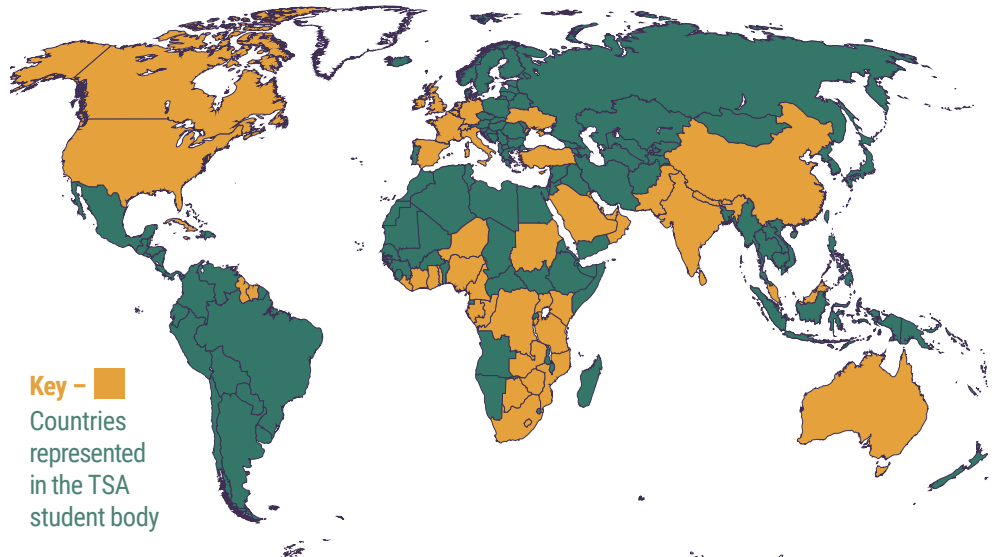
TSA has grown to provide study opportunities for more than 900 grassroots pastors, church planters, evangelists and other church leaders.

Each student is linked to one of TSA's 28 study centres around the world. At the time of writing, 55 countries and each of the continents are represented in TSA's student body.

Much of TSA's growth has come through existing contacts and word-of-mouth. Barnabas is working with around 40 theological institutions and churches to provide essential theological training.

One significant example was the establishment of a study centre with a theological seminary in Benue State, Nigeria, inducting 150 students in January 2024 to begin both on-campus and online study programmes.

Further progress is being made in translating resources into Chinese, Russian, Tamil, Arabic and



Portuguese, with other languages planned. Tamil translation is advancing particularly well, with 66 active students on Tamil-language courses.

With the establishment of key partnerships and the continuation of translation work, it is expected that, God willing, TSA student numbers will grow significantly throughout the remainder of 2024.

"I am committed to fulfil the Great Commission, for our Lord Jesus Christ has promised us His presence."

Significant improvement in understanding of Scripture

Priya recalls the first TSA course she studied, appropriately called "The Barnabas Model". This course examined how Barnabas was used by God to help and influence Paul, whose ministry resulted in the writing of at least 13 New Testament books. "This sparked my curiosity and desire to learn more," she remembers fondly.

Enrolling on TSA study has enabled many, like Priya, to fill gaps in their knowledge of the Word of God.

"Since joining TSA courses, I've noticed a significant improvement in my understanding of Scripture, bridging the gap between the Old Testament and New Testament," she says. "It has added immense value to my spiritual life, prompting me to recommend TSA courses to others."

Sharpening believers' knowledge of the Word of God

Kenyan student "Mark" concurs. He has particularly benefitted from a course studying the synoptic Gospels – Matthew, Mark and Luke – which he describes as "helpful in answering some theological questions and sharpens one's knowledge of the Word of God".

Mark ministers in a Muslim-majority area of northern Kenya, with pastoral responsibility for three churches, 20 miles from each other. Church leaders here face the challenge of Muslim efforts to gain converts from among the Christian community. They also share the desperate food shortages that affect so many in East Africa, the result of persistent drought punctuated by devastating floods.

"Despite all the challenges, the grace of God is sufficient," Mark affirms. "I am committed to fulfil the Great Commission, for our Lord Jesus Christ has promised us His presence."



Discipleship:

Holding strong to Christian principles in the face of adversity

How many times have you felt disliked or judged by those around you because of your faith? Many Christians would probably answer “a lot”. We have felt pressured to hide – or even change – our beliefs because they do not fit with the worldview held by our society.

If your beliefs and values are derived from the Bible, the chances are that you will often feel somewhat on the outskirts of society, unable to relate to the beliefs and experiences of your secular friends and family. You may have found yourself outnumbered or ridiculed. You may even have asked yourself whether your Biblical views could be wrong and the secular beliefs could be right, as they are so widely held and accepted.

But in such times, take heart, as this is precisely what Jesus anticipated that His disciples would go through.

Hated by the world, but loved by God

In John’s Gospel, Jesus tells the apostles, “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you” (John 15:18-19).

Here, Jesus is acknowledging that it will not be easy for His disciples, as they will be living in a world that rejects the commandments that His disciples should follow. Christians will be hated by the secular world around them.

We should nevertheless be comforted in the knowledge that Jesus was

also hated and that therefore we are sharing in the experience of our Lord. The hatred of the world is one of the marks that we are “heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory” (Romans 8:17). The Lord has chosen each one of us, bringing us out of this fallen world and into His light (John 1:4-5). We are hated by the world because we are fundamentally different from it, in the same way that Jesus was.

A Christ-like response to hatred

So, how do we hold strong to our Christian principles in the face of adversity? Well, in the same way that the world’s hatred of us mirrors its hatred of Jesus, our actions and responses to that hatred should also mirror those of Jesus. If we model our lives after His, we can be sure that we are doing what is right.

Christ demonstrates the grace of God by declaring the truth

Jesus would have known that His actions and words would be inflammatory to the chief priests, who already disliked Him. Yet, in the face of hatred, He continued to act with grace and to declare the truth.

The cleansing of the temple declared the truth that worldly actions separate us from God, and a space of repentance and faith should remain unpolluted by things that do not demonstrate His glory. It was also an act of grace to those who were seeking access to God but whose efforts were hampered by those who had turned it into “a den of robbers” (Matthew 21:13).

The healing of the sick demonstrated grace to those who were suffering, while also communicating the truth that Christ has the power to heal and to cleanse.

The parables told in the temple show that the Lord did not shy away from speaking the truth, even if it was unpalatable to those such as the chief priests who had hardened their hearts towards it. Yet these parables also powerfully declare the grace of God, illustrating the Gospel message that salvation is granted to even those whom society judges to be among the worst of sinners (Matthew 21:31).

Jesus’ words and actions did not lessen the hatred of those who were determined to oppose Him. Yet there were many others who were drawn to Him throughout these events.

These include the people who made way for Him on the road to Jerusalem (Matthew 21:8-9), those who came to be healed by Him in the temple, the children who shouted praises to Him, and the people who came to hear Him teaching. In fact, so many were the people who had been inspired by Jesus that the chief priests did not dare to arrest Him because of the crowd of believers (Matthew 21:46).

This demonstrates that perseverance in the face of opposition brings the light of truth to those previously held in the darkness of this fallen world. It

should encourage us to follow Christ and speak the truth wherever we can, even when we are hated for it.

How we can follow Christ’s example

Just as others followed Jesus when they saw what He did, we too can hope to inspire others. “If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you,” taught Jesus – but immediately He added, “If they kept my word, they will also keep yours” (John 15:20, ESV). This means that if we act in the way that Jesus acted, and teach what He taught, we can by God’s grace bring people to Him.

Jesus tells His apostles to go and make disciples of the whole world (Matthew 28:19), so it is our duty as followers of Christ to do this whenever we can. We can see in each of the four Gospels that people were drawn to Jesus because of His good works and teachings in the face of hatred; if we mirror Him and speak the truth, doing what is right even when the world hates us for it, then we will show others the light of Christ, encouraging them to follow Him.

Similarly, as the example of Christ is an encouragement to us, so our Christ-like actions – God willing – can be an encouragement to other Christians. Some of our brothers and sisters may be afraid of facing opposition and persecution, but courage breeds courage, and iron sharpens iron (Proverbs 27:17): seeing us staying firm to Christ’s teachings may encourage them to do the same.

True Discipleship

This is true discipleship: mirroring Jesus’ actions with our own and holding fast to the Lord and His teaching in the face of hatred. Through this we can encourage our brothers and sisters, and inspire others also to follow Him. We can be practical demonstrations of the light of Christ, spreading that light to others in the darkness of the world:

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5).

A good example of Jesus suffering hatred for doing what is right is found in Matthew 21. Jesus sees the temple being used for improper means and restores it to a place of prayer (Matthew 21:12-13). He heals the sick and injured, which causes children to praise Him.

The chief priests of the temple, however, rather than praising or thanking Him for these good works, are angry that the children are praising Him (Matthew 21:14-15). When He teaches in the temple, they question His authority (Matthew 21:23). So Jesus tells them parables, explaining that those who repent of their sins and believe the Word of God will go to heaven ahead of the priests who do not repent, even if the repentant people are tax collectors and prostitutes. The chief priests of course do not like to be told this, and even look for a way to arrest Jesus for what He has said and done (Matthew 21:28-49).

Lifeline for impoverished Christians in Pakistan

Barnabas-funded medical facilities provide free, easily accessible health care to believers

“This health clinic is more than just a medical facility – it is a lifeline that reaches into the heart of the community.” These are the words of Sajid, a Pakistani Christian brick kiln worker, thanking God and Barnabas Aid for making free medical care accessible to him and thousands of other poor believers.

The first Barnabas-funded medical centre opened in late 2020, around the same time as the first Barnabas-funded mobile health clinic took to the road, both serving Christians in impoverished areas of Pakistan.

The response from our brothers and sisters was so overwhelmingly thankful, the need so great, that we have continued to open other medical facilities for Christians in the poorest parts of Sindh and Punjab provinces.

Today Barnabas supports three medical centres and three mobile health clinics, each operated by teams of Christian medical professionals. Together they provide free expert medical care and free medicines, where needed, for more than 40,000 Christians a year.

As well as providing relief for physical ailments, medical staff pray with their patients and encourage them with Bible verses.

“Through this initiative, individuals not only experience physical healing but also witness a demonstration of Christian love that helps cultivate and

deepen their own faith journey,” said one of our Christian project partners.

Health an unaffordable luxury for most Christians

Health is a luxury most impoverished Christians can't afford. It is secondary to their struggle to earn enough to provide a daily meal.

Believers, marginalised and discriminated against by the majority Muslim society, often work the lowest-paid, dirtiest and most dangerous jobs, such as in brick kilns, sewers or factories. Others are daily labourers, dependent on irregular earnings. Poverty and poor working conditions impact their health. Hereditary malnourishment also makes them vulnerable to medical problems.

Most Christians cannot access medical care because of the cost of medicines and some treatments. They often cannot afford to take time off work to make the long and costly journey to reach a hospital, and some are too unwell or infirm to travel.

Barnabas health centres are based in the heart of Christian slum communities of Hyderabad and Islamabad, and our well-equipped mobile health vans travel to where believers need them most, primarily in rural brick kiln and slum areas.

The most common ailments reported are diarrhoea, vomiting, fever, high blood pressure, skin diseases, coughs and stomach



Rani's heart is filled with gratitude to God and Barnabas for providing her community with the mobile health clinic



The Barnabas-funded mobile health clinic is a “beacon of hope” for Yousaf and his community, bringing health care to their doorstep

problems. Many had breathing problems caused by pollution.

Poor sanitation and limited access to clean water contribute to these problems, as do poor diet and poverty. High summer temperatures and freezing winters exacerbate medical conditions.

If a case is beyond the scope of the Barnabas mobile clinic or health centre, the team arrange for patients to see specialists for further care.

Each of the teams provides health awareness advice as well. They run community health camps, visit schools and run mother and child clinics to teach the importance of regular check-ups and good nutrition.

Clinics a “bright spot” amid brick kiln grind

News that a Barnabas mobile health clinic was to start making regular visits to Rani’s rural community came as a “bright spot that has brought happiness to our lives”, she said.

She sought its help after experiencing dizzy spells and pain while labouring in a brick kiln alongside her husband. Because of poverty, their three school-age sons work with them as well to bolster the family’s meagre income.

The medical team diagnosed a nutritional deficiency and gave Rani multivitamins and pain killers as well as dietary advice. As a result, she felt better and more energised.

“Our hearts are filled with gratitude to God and Barnabas Aid for providing us with the mobile health clinic,” she said.

“This support goes beyond just medical assistance; it is a reminder that, as Christians, we are not alone.

“The challenges we face in society are met with kindness and understanding, making our journey a bit brighter.”

Yousaf, his wife and their two daughters all suffered regular stomach upsets. The mobile clinic team said the problem was caused by

contaminated water and unhygienic conditions in the brick kiln where they work as a family.

Medication cured the symptoms, and the family now follow the hygiene practices taught by the team, including drinking water only that has been boiled.

Yousaf says the clinic has brought great benefits to his community. “It’s a beacon of hope. A reminder that even in the toughest times there are those who care.”

“They gave us hope that our lives and our health would get better”

Widow Razia hadn’t been able to get treatment for a skin condition since the death of her husband some years ago because without him, she had no means to get to a hospital.

“We don’t have enough money to go to hospitals for check-ups, treatments or to get the medications we need,” she said, thanking a Barnabas medical centre for its help.

“The health team of Barnabas Aid is always nice and made us laugh,” she added. “Most of all, they gave us hope that our lives and our health would get better.”

Mrs Bilqees sought help from our health clinic in Hyderabad because she had a fever. While there, it was discovered that she had high blood pressure and needed urgent medication.

“She said that this clinic was a model of the love of Christ because it made it possible for her to receive the right treatment at the right time,” said our project partner. “She is thankful as she is able to receive care at her doorstep.”



Work in the brick kilns goes on as a patient receives treatment from our mobile health team



Our Christian medical teams provide advice to pregnant women and mothers on nutrition, hygiene and child health issues



Barnabas mobile health vans go to where the patients need them most, here in the middle of a brick kiln field



The Barnabas-funded medical teams are known for their kindness and compassion. Here one of the team from the Hyderabad health clinic treats a young Christian girl

Christian convert given two-year jail term by revolutionary court

IRAN

Laleh Saati, an Iranian Christian convert from Islam, has been sentenced to two years' imprisonment for "acting against national security by connecting with 'Zionist' Christian organisations".

On 13 February, Laleh, 45, was arrested at her father's home in Ekbatan, Tehran, and interrogated for three weeks at Evin Prison. Intelligence agents confiscated her mobile phone, laptop and several Christian books. During her detention photographs and videos of her baptism in Malaysia and other Christian activities were identified as evidence of her "crime".

On 16 March, Laleh was sentenced to two years' imprisonment by Branch 26 of the Tehran Revolutionary Court with a further two-year ban

on leaving the country effective upon her release. She had lived for some time in Malaysia before returning to Iran in 2017 because of the length of time her asylum process was taking, and to care for her elderly parents.

Evidence of her alleged actions against national security included involvement in "house churches" since returning to Iran and Christian activities in Malaysia, including her baptism.

Farsi (Persian)-speaking Christians are converts from Islam and therefore punishable as apostates according to Islamic law. Unlike the historic Armenian- and Assyrian-speaking Christian communities they are not permitted to hold church services or worship freely.



Laleh Saati faces two years in prison, followed by a two-year travel ban on completion of her sentence [Image credit: Facebook]

Two Christian sanitation workers die through lack of safety equipment

PAKISTAN

Two Pakistani Christian sanitation workers died after being sent into a sewer in Punjab province without any protective equipment.

Cousins Shan Masih, 28, and Asif Masih, 25, suffocated on 17 March after inhaling poisonous gases while attempting to clear a blockage in the sewer in Faisalabad. The cousins each leave a wife and three children.

The deaths were described as "murders through duty" by Human Rights Focus Pakistan (HRFP). It stated the men were "forced" to enter the sewer without being given protective gear, such as masks.

This is despite a 2015 court order requiring local authorities to ensure protective gear was provided, said HRFP President Naveed Walter.

"Sanitary workers are one of the most marginalised segments of society," affirmed Walter, who pointed out that Christians currently make up 90% of sanitation workers in Faisalabad.

"Such incidents involving sanitary workers are not new, they have been happening for years," Walter added. In 2021 two Christian sanitation workers died saving a Christian colleague tasked with clearing a sewer in Punjab province. None of the men were supplied with any protective equipment.

Twenty-five Christians in Plateau State killed by Islamists

NIGERIA

Twenty-five Christians were killed and more than 3,000 displaced during attacks by Fulani Islamist extremists on four communities in Plateau State in Nigeria's Middle Belt between 12 and 19 April.

More than 50 armed terrorists attacked the villages of Mandung-Mushu and Kopnanle in Bokkos Local Government Area (LGA) at night on 12 April, targeting the unarmed residents as they slept.

Twelve people were killed in the assault when the terrorists set fire to homes and a church.

Another 12 Christians were killed on 19 April during an attack in Pushit, Mangu LGA. On the same night a student of Plateau State University in Bokkos was killed when Fulani Islamists attacked Chikam community.

In a separate development, Islamist terrorist group Boko Haram posted online on 5 May 2024 a video of Nigerian pastor Paul Musa and his wife Ruth who they kidnapped in March 2023 from their home in northern Borno State.

In the video, Pastor Paul calls on the government and the Christian Association of Nigeria for help in securing their release.

He says that Muslims kidnapped at around the same time have been freed. "Yet we have been forgotten," he says. "Why does the government not care for us? Is it because we are Christians?"

The 59-year-old pastor and his 50-year-old wife have served the church for 29 years. "Today we are not physically healthy," Pastor Paul says in the video. "I and my wife, we are here. We need assistance from you."

Algerian pastor's "illegal worship" jail sentence upheld by appeal court

ALGERIA

Algerian senior church leader Pastor Youssef Ourahmane's one-year sentence for "illegal worship" was upheld by the Court of Appeal in Tizi Ouzo in a verdict released at the end of April.

Pastor Youssef, Vice President of the Protestant Church of Algeria (EPA), was scheduled to have his second appeal against a prison sentence and a fine heard in court on 26 March. He oversees several congregations in his role for the EPA, an association of more than 45 churches.

Pastor Youssef was charged with allegedly holding an unauthorised religious meeting in a building not permitted to be used for religious worship. The charge relates to Pastor Youssef's supervision in March 2023 of several Christian families who stayed at a church compound that includes a chapel that has been sealed by the authorities.

At his first appeal hearing on 19 November 2023, Pastor Youssef's original two-year imprisonment was reduced to one year (see *In Brief*, March/April 2024), but the accompanying fine of \$1,210 remained the same.

In rejecting his second appeal, the Court of Appeal added a further six months' suspended sentence on top of the one-year prison term. An appeal to Algeria's Supreme Court is being prepared.



Pastor Youssef Ourahmane is preparing to appeal to Algeria's Supreme Court [Image Credit: CNE/Pastor Youssef Ourahmane]

Four Christians facing trial over forced conversion allegations

NEPAL

Four Christians in Madhesh province, eastern Nepal, face trial, accused of trying to secure forced conversions to Christianity.

On 3 April the four believers were required to submit bail of 150,000 Nepali rupees (\$1,790) at the district court in Bara.

The allegations stem from a visit the Christians were reported to have made to a non-Christian family on Sunday 10 March in the town of Kolhabi. Several local residents confronted the Christians at the house and summoned the police, alleging that they were attempting to convert locals by force.

The four Christians spent 24 days in custody before being bailed.

"This is an outrageous case of injustice against all Christians," said BP Khanal, spokesman for the Nepal Christian Society (NCS).

On 7 April the Ministry of Home Affairs sent out a circular to all 77 district administration offices in Nepal asking officials to warn them about individuals and organisations holding religious conferences and gatherings seeking to promote religion and religious conversions.

In a joint statement, the NCS and National Churches Fellowship of Nepal responded by saying the circular infringed on Christians' constitutional right to freedom of religion.

"It is systematic targeting of Christians who are among the most persecuted for their beliefs, mostly on charges of forced religious conversion, which is completely baseless," commented Pastor Dilli Ram Paudel, the NCS secretary general.

Pastor killed, church leader injured in two shootings in Kachin State

MYANMAR

A pastor in Kachin State, northern Myanmar was killed by gunmen on 18 March. Three armed men entered 47-year-old Nammye Hkun Jaw Li's computer shop in Nam Ma Tee village, Mogaung township around 2pm.

"Three men came and said they wanted to print on vinyl and shot him dead. They shot him in his stomach twice, and when he did not die, they also shot him in the head," a Nam Ma Tee resident said.



Nammye Hkun Jaw Li (pictured) is survived by his wife and three children.

Also in Kachin State, church minister Paul Khwi Shane Aung was wounded after being shot while conducting a worship service in Mohnyin town on 12 April.

The 40-year-old minister was officiating at an early-morning service when two masked gunmen entered the church at 6.30am and shot him three times.

The motive for the attack is unknown.

Fifteen killed in attack on church

BURKINA FASO

At least 15 worshippers were killed during an attack on a church in north-eastern Burkina Faso on Sunday 26 February.

Suspected Islamist militants opened fire during a service in Essakane village in Oudalan province.

Twelve people were killed instantly while three others died in hospital.

Islamists have been waging a nine-year campaign of violence in Burkina Faso, much of it targeted against Christians and churches.

More than two million people have been driven from their homes and thousands have been killed during the insurgency, which began when Muslim extremists in neighbouring Mali and Niger began moving into the north of Burkina Faso in 2015.

Jihadists now control more than 40% of the nation.

Leave a legacy to Barnabas Aid

Can you bring hope and a future to the next generations of believers?

Passing on God's blessing to our Christian family all over the world

It has always been God's heart, not just to bless His people but to enable them to pass on His blessing to future generations. God blessed Abraham (Genesis 12:2-3) so that he could also bless others – not just members of his own family, tribe, city or nation, but all the peoples of the earth.

After you have taken care of your loved ones in your will, may we invite you to consider extending your care to those who belong to your wider family – that is, your Christian brothers and sisters worldwide?

“We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the LORD, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.”— Psalm 78:4 (ESV)

What kind of blessing can you pass on to others?

Having a will is important – and we're here to help

Many find writing a will such a daunting task that they delay, sometimes until it's too late to choose who will benefit from their estate*. If you die intestate, that is, without leaving a will, the intestacy rules of Australian States will apply and your estate will pass to defined family members (which can include cousins), or, if none are alive, to the government. If you want to choose who will benefit from your estate, it is important to make a will, and our office is happy to help you make that happen.

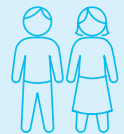
Please do remember to help your Christian family when you come to plan for your future.

If you would like more information about how to leave a gift to Barnabas Aid through your will, or wish to discuss your will requirements with us, you can contact our Australian Office by email on australia@barnabasaid.org or by phoning (08) 8117 8079 (or toll-free on 1300 365 799). Alternatively, write to us at **GPO Box 612 Adelaide SA 5001.**

A legacy gift (that is, a gift included in your will) can:



feed Christians facing hunger and deprivation, disadvantaged for belonging to the family of God;



train young children up in their faith through Christian schooling;



strengthen Christian brothers and sisters with Bibles in their own language;



support an evangelist or pastor facing daily danger in their ministry in regions where Christians are a persecuted minority;



help believers who have suffered violence for their faith;



give shelter to displaced Christian families fleeing persecution in their homeland.

* Estate – all the money and property that a person owns, especially everything that is left when they die

In Touch

Children given insight into lives of their counterparts in Pakistan

Children attending the Mt Tambourine Easter Convention in Queensland were given an insight into the lives of Christian children in Pakistan whose families experience poverty and discrimination because of their faith.

A member of the Barnabas Aid team explained how many children are unable to go to school because they have to help their dads labouring in the brick kilns, or that their widowed mothers may have to sweep the streets in order to earn enough from their meagre wages to provide at least one basic meal a day.

Each of the 12 groups of children was encouraged to adopt a country and think about how God is working to help His people enduring persecution.

Organisers of the convention's Children's Ministry pray that, even at this early age, God will start the call on some of the children's hearts both to be prayer and financial supporters of overseas missions and to go themselves.

If you would like a Barnabas speaker to talk to your church children's group, contact the office on **(08) 8117 8079** or email australia@barnabasaid.org



Children listen to a talk with rapt attention at the Mt Tambourine convention

Come over and say G'day

Our Barnabas team will be attending the OneLove women's convention in Katoomba, New South Wales on 24 August.

If you are attending the event at the Hillsong Convention Centre, please go along to our stand to hear more about our work helping suffering and persecuted Christians around the world.

Thank you to the busy bees

Our thanks go to beekeeper and Barnabas supporter Beth Lee. Industrious bees from two of her hives in Western Australia have produced enough honey to fill 80 jars.

These have been sold and the \$750 proceeds have been put towards Barnabas Aid projects helping to feed hungry Christians in Zimbabwe.

Motocross riders combine passion with purpose for food.gives



Motocross riders in New Zealand combined their passion for dirt bikes with the purpose of helping suffering Christians across the world through food.gives.

They took part in "Bikes for a Bite", a weekend of thrilling adventures on two wheels, organised in collaboration with the Christian organisation Youth Encounter.

Riders took along donations of packets of rice, lentils, sugar and salt to the camp to pack into food.gives boxes ready for sending to Christian families in need in Pakistan.

Later, after hearing a presentation about the work of the mission and Barnabas Aid, members of the group made a trip to the supermarket to buy even more food.

Collectively, they donated an amazing 63kg of supplies. Thank you to Youth Encounter and to all the riders who took part!

Youth Encounter works with young people aged between 9 and 24 to enable them to discover their God-given talents through activity-based programmes. For more information about Youth Encounter go to youthencounter.co.nz



Motocross riders display their food.gives boxes and food.gives bags

LISTEN TO OUR NEW SONG



“Soldier of Faith” is a heartfelt anthem that contrasts the freedoms enjoyed by Christians in the West with the severe persecution faced by believers in other parts of the world. Rooted in personal experience and scriptural inspiration from 2 Timothy 2, this song calls for solidarity, awareness and action among all Christians.

What is the message of “Soldier of Faith”?

“Soldier of Faith” serves as a poignant call to awareness, urging listeners to acknowledge their fellow believers’ struggles and to actively support and empathise with them.

Why was “Soldier of Faith” created?

“Soldier of Faith” was created as a response to personal reflections while serving Christians who are persecuted for their faith in Jesus. The song sheds light on the challenges faced by Christians around the world, inspiring listeners to take action and support those enduring persecution.

Watch the video and access resources at:
www.barnabasaid.org/soldier-of-faith



Available on all music streaming platforms, including:

