

FRONTLINE FAITH

Lessons Of Courageous Christianity From The Persecuted Church

06 Your Global Impact / **09** 3 Ways You've Transformed The Persecuted Church



A Letter From Mike



Hello,

Welcome to one of my favourite editions of Frontline Faith. This is a chance for you to see some of the ways Open Doors has worked around the world, strengthening the global body of Christ in 2019 with your generous support.

This ‘Impact Report’ shows you how your prayerful and financial support has helped people follow Jesus all over the world, no matter the cost, in some of the hardest countries on the planet.

People To People

This is one of the core ministry values of Open Doors, a people to people focus. I was recently on a call with a local partner in South-East Asia and I was struck by his heart for his ministry.

As he shared several recent examples of persecution, I realised that in the countries he works, violent incidents aren’t isolated or unusual but they’re expected.

But what struck me even more was the way he seemed to find a sense of joy, hope and deeper trust and appreciation for Jesus despite the challenges he faces on a daily basis. More than once he was moved to tears when he spoke of the people he serves.

It made me wonder: when we think of impact, do we only ever think of numbers? Or do we pause and really think about the individuals whose lives are changed? If I’m honest with you, that can be one of the challenges when you get so caught up in juggling the “work” side of ministry, but it’s stories like this that make me pause and realise just how beautiful and effective the work of Open Doors is.

In the last year, with your help, we’ve delivered almost two million Bibles and Christian books as well as supplied hundreds of thousands of Christians in the direst of situations with emergency relief.

Open Doors has always been so much more than a social justice organisation - it’s gospel advancing, there is no other way of describing it. Driven by a belief that a well-functioning church reaches far beyond the walls of Christianity and in serving their communities will tick all the boxes of social justice but always and unmistakably with the heart of Jesus.

Subscribe To The Survival Of The Persecuted Church For \$39 A Month



2020 Vision

As we reflect on God's movement throughout the Church last year, I understand that your life in 2020 may have since changed in ways you never expected.

I've been reminded that the struggles and changes we experienced and those we still face today do not denote an absence of God, but rather a drawing nearer of God. A stripping away of the distractions in life and isolation serving as an intense focussing tool where faith and trust in God become paramount to survival. Isn't it funny how eerily similar it is for Christians living under persecution, the gospel and relationship with Jesus becomes life for them.

Thank you for your commitment to helping people follow Jesus this year.

Together, we have helped people follow Jesus all over the world, no matter the cost. I look forward to doing it all again in 2020 and beyond as never before has it been more important to strengthen and equip the global body of Christ.

Handwritten signature of Mike Gore.

Mike Gore
CEO Open Doors Australia and New Zealand



@_MikeGore | michaelg@od.org.au



Pastor Edward preaching at Alliance Church, Damascus.

The Church Remains

How You Brought Hope To The Syrian Church

When civil war devastated Syria, many people were left without hope and without any way to support their families. But because of your generous support, the Syrian church has been able to reach out with Jesus' love to those suffering the most.

With an average daily wage of less than five dollars and few employment opportunities, many Christian families in Syria felt that their only chance to survive was to leave the country.

"People see no future," Pastor Edward from Damascus said. "Yesterday a family from our church called from Iraq. They stayed in Syria during the war. Their daughter had even planned to hold her wedding next week and then, all of a sudden, they left."



Women receiving food and clothing packages, Syria.



Men rebuilding a church, Syria.



Centre Of Hope sewing factory, run by Sister Annie, Damascus.

Projects of Hope

One such project is run by Sister Annie, who supervises a sewing program. Before the program began, Annie saw her community struggling, its people searching desperately for hope after conflict and crisis.

"You could compare the people of our country with someone recovering from surgery," she said. "A person needs time to recover and to return to normal life."

"Our mission here is to give hope when there is no hope."

"Hope for me is when you lose your legs, you look for a means to get you up. Hope helps you stand again."

Now, the community is getting back on its feet, the project bringing essential skills and employment to 24 vulnerable Christian women. Because of the support of people like you, these women were able to remain in their country, support their families and shine the light of Jesus in their communities. Thank you!

By subscribing to the survival of the persecuted church, you can ensure the future of the gospel in the hardest places to follow Jesus for just \$39 a month.

United In Purpose

However, many believers stayed in Syria, ensuring the gospel remained also. As a result, the church was overwhelmed with people in need as the crashing economy took its toll. Your prayerful and financial support enabled our local partners in Syria to provide packages of food, rental assistance, and medical supplies to over 3,500 families.

To provide a longer-term solution, you also funded several income-generating projects, designed to empower Christians and give them a profession that will encourage economic stability in the region.



Open Doors Australia and New Zealand CEO Mike Gore, meeting with believers in Iraq. (2018)

The Church United

This Is Your Impact.

This edition of Frontline Faith is all about the difference that you made in 2019 as you helped people follow Jesus all over the world, no matter the cost.

As you read this edition, we urge you to remember that each number is more than a statistic. These are our brothers and sisters - people who, like us, are simply trying to follow Jesus as best they can.

What you'll see is evidence of the body of Christ united — supporting one another and strengthening believers now in over 70 countries.

In 2019, your support has rebuilt homes, opened medical clinics, provided trauma counselling and delivered emergency food packages.

You've assisted in creating 25 income-generating projects in the Middle East and provided education to hundreds of refugee children.

You stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the persecuted church as they faced violence, discrimination and isolation.

And you've provided Bibles, training and encouragement to those in the darkest places.

We are stronger together. And because of your support, the global Church is more connected than ever.

Thank you for ensuring the survival of the church for generations to come.

Your Global Impact

In the hardest places to follow Jesus, faith only got more difficult in 2019, with 1 in 8 Christians worldwide facing a very high or extreme level of persecution for their faith.

Following the Sri Lanka bombings and various church attacks, your support provided emergency relief immediately following the tragedy and then helped families provide for their future through job training. Your generosity rebuilt churches, provided trauma counselling and delivered aid packages to those in need.

Your support allowed us to increase the training and discipleship of vulnerable communities of faith. Together, we reached over 3 million believers, teaching them how to endure persecution and build communities of faith in some of the darkest places to follow Christ. Your support encouraged isolated believers, brought hope to communities of faith and grew the global Church.

Thank you for ensuring the survival of the persecuted church.



723,574

Received Christian discipleship training.



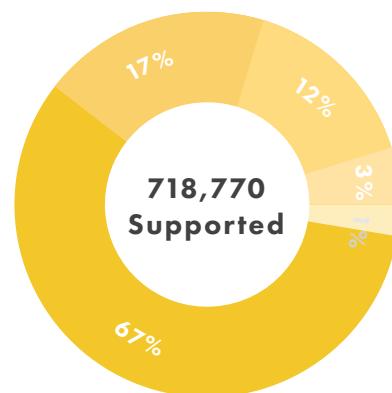
122,167

Impacted by community development projects.



479,781

Given emergency relief.



Bibles & Christian Literature

- 58% Christian Literature
- 26% Training Materials
- 15% Bibles
- 1% Other

Training

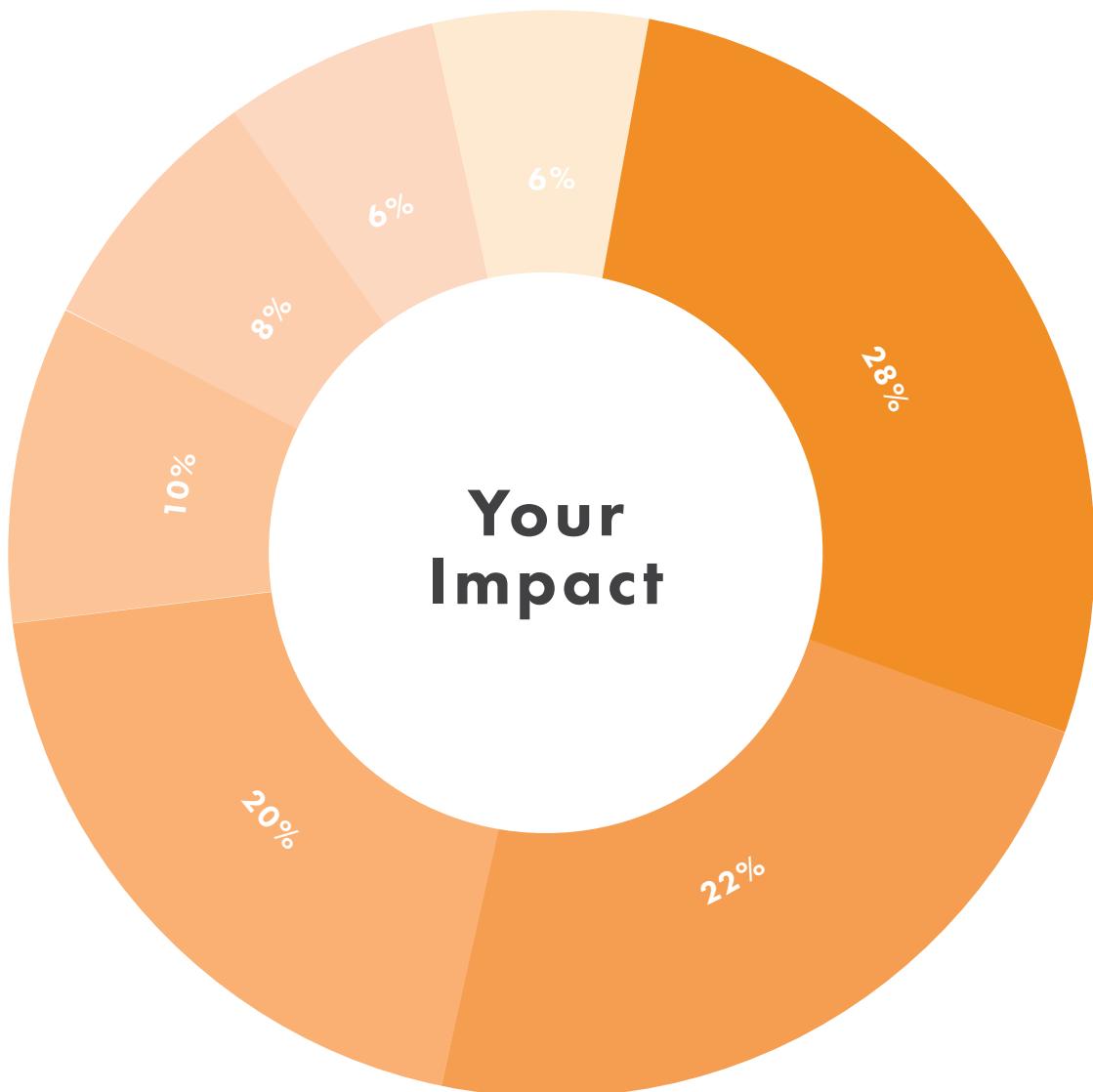
- 31% Awareness
- 26% Family Life
- 19% Discipleship
- 15% Persecution Preparedness
- 5% Other
- 4% Biblical Training

Practical Support

- 67% Emergency Relief
- 17% Community Development
- 12% Social Services
- 3% Livelihood Support
- 1% Other

The Australian Impact

Your Support In Action



- **28% Local Ministry**
Mobilising and encouraging the Australian church to pray and be bold in their faith
- **22% Practical Support**
Emergency support, supporting families and job creation

- **20% Training**
Bible training, discipleship and trauma counselling
- **10% Administration**
Finance and ministry costs
- **8% Fundraising**
Mobilising the Australian church to raise funds
- **6% Research And Advocacy**
International advocacy for persecuted Christians awareness and distribution
- **6% Bibles And Literature**
Strengthening the Church through the Word of God and other Christian literature

The Australian Impact

A Closer Look – 2019 Highlights

Bible Delivery

You delivered over **7,200** Bibles to Christians in rural Bangladesh, hungry for the Word of God.

Open Doors Live

Over **2,300** people gathered across Australia to worship and hear stories of the persecuted church in Central Asia at Open Doors Live.

One With Them

You stood One With Them and donated **\$170,000** for the persecuted church who face a heightened risk of attacks at Easter.

Strengthening The Syrian Church

When conflict erupted in Syria, you gave **\$48,000** to respond to those affected by the crisis.

Supporting Families

You supported widows and their families in Nigeria by giving over **\$60,000** for food, water and hygiene necessities.



We want to say thank you to the 4,700 supporters who gave on a monthly basis throughout 2019. You provided discipleship, emergency relief and community development for Christians all over the world.

This is the body of Christ, supporting one another and strengthening the global Church. You can join this movement of courageous Christians by subscribing to the survival of the persecuted church, and helping people follow Jesus, no matter the cost.

3 Ways You've Transformed The Persecuted Church

In 2019, you helped people follow Jesus all over the world, no matter the cost.

In some of the most dangerous places to follow Jesus, your support made a life-changing impact in the lives of persecuted Christians through discipleship, emergency relief and community development.

Discipleship

You have helped disciple a new generation of believers in Central Asia by providing them with Bibles and Christian books.

Pastor Fredrick* works in Central Asia and has seen the real impact of Christian literature in his community, as they have encouraged Christians and reached Muslims with the Good News.

"Thank you so much for providing our church with Bibles," he exclaimed. "Without your help we wouldn't have had the opportunity to give people the most important thing—the Word of God! Your ministry played a tremendous role in our call to reach out to Muslims for Christ."

Emergency Relief

In the wake of the Sri Lankan church bombings, you supported the global Church by providing care packages, livelihood assistance and counselling to those affected by the traumatic attack.

Pastor of Zion Church, Roshan, shared, "Dear friends, I want to thank each one of you. I don't know you personally, but the Lord knows you. In our time of lacking, we had nobody on our side. You all came by our side. Challenges and needs were overwhelming, but God used you. We have lovely brothers and sisters. We know we are not alone."

*Name changed for security purposes.



Sri Lankan woman receiving a care package.



Central Asian girls with their new children's bibles.

Community Development

When believers lose everything for their faith in Jesus, your generosity enables them to support themselves and bless their whole community. In Nigeria, Daniel and his wife opened a clinic thanks to your support.

"We opened it because we witnessed how women and many others were suffering," Daniel said. "It all started with a single room. Within three months, the Lord blessed our work, so we had to move to a larger place. Now people from our village, nearby villages, even from neighbouring countries, attend our clinic!"

You can impact the next generation of faith by delivering Bibles to children in India for just \$6 per Bible. Find out more at opendoors.org.au

Letter Writing Campaign

Encourage Marta From Ethiopia



Do:

- Print clearly in English.
- Be brief and encouraging.
- Provide your name and country only.
- Show sensitivity.
- Be encouraging and include 1-2 Bible verses.
- Send greeting cards, artwork and postcards.
- On the back of the envelope, please include your full name and address.

Do not:

- Mention Open Doors.
- Send money.
- Criticise a country.
- Make proposals to help.

Please send your letters by:

31 October, 2020

Australia:

11/10 Gladstone Road,
Castle Hill NSW 2154

Two years ago, we asked you to write letters of encouragement to Marta, a teenager whose family gave her to the local witchdoctor as a servant and wife.

In the midst of her suffering, Marta's aunt shared the gospel with her, and she came to faith, following Christ in secret.

When Marta was in her mid-teens, she left the house of the witchdoctor and declared to her family that she was a Christian. She continued sharing the gospel with them, and through her testimony, her mother and siblings all came to know Jesus.

When our local partners delivered the first batch of letters that you wrote, Marta said, "Thank you for thinking of me... I love you very much! May God bless you and give you grace."

Since then, Marta has moved back to live with her family.

Together, they remain vulnerable to social exclusion and hostility, and still need support and encouragement.

"If God were not with me, I would not have gotten this far," Marta shared. "I dream to serve the Lord. He is good to me and in return, I want to work for him."

Please pray for Marta, and write to encourage her to continue following Jesus, no matter the cost.



Central Asian man.



Indian man.

Sixty Second Stories

Short Stories You Can Share

“God will take care of things in His own time.”

– Ilmur* (Central Asia)

As a former addict and criminal, Ilmur believed his path was set.

“I struggled with God. I always fought with Him. I knew He was there, but I always had an image of an old, weak man with a beard.

“But God reached me although I was very stubborn. I suddenly realised how strong and powerful He is. I will always remember that.”

After Ilmur’s transformation, his once-broken home became a place of renewal. As he worked to restore his relationship with his children, Ilmur delved into the Bible as he received discipleship training that was made possible by your support.

Ilmur said, “God showed us Matthew 6:33 which says, ‘But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.’ My wife and I read it again and decided to root ourselves in this Word.

“After a while we started seeing change happen in the lives of our sons. It’s a miracle to us. We believe God will take care of things in His own time.”

Your incredible generosity means that our local partners can continue to run discipleship training in Ilmur’s region and support him as he shares Jesus with others.

“We want to say thank you,” said Ilmur. “We are very grateful for the support you give us... We pray for you and we bless you.”

“The Christian life is a life of risk.”

– Rajesh* (India)

Rajesh is a local church partner of Open Doors living in India.

“The kind of persecution that Christians face in India is often physical assault,” he said.

“I saw this once when I went to meet a pastor in a remote village. He was badly beaten but still smiling.”

Rajesh sat with the pastor and listened to his story. But when he stood up to leave, Rajesh noticed the eyes of the whole village following him as the pastor hurried him into his car.

As he drove away, Rajesh saw a group of motorbikes blocking the road ahead. Stepping on the accelerator, he manoeuvred around the blockade before the men began chasing him.

“They wanted to stop and beat us,” Rajesh recalled. “The entire time our prayer was, ‘Lord be with us.’”

Rajesh was able to get to safety. Despite the harrowing experience, he continues to provide help to those facing some of the most extreme forms of persecution.

“The Christian life is a life of risk. If you love the Lord and live your life, the risk is there. But God is always there to support us. God is always there to encourage us.”

Your support provides emergency relief and medical aid for Christians facing assault and violence for their faith.

*Names changed for security purposes.



"There will be difficulties and tribulation, but I will strive to live as a courageous disciple who believes in Jesus' authority."

– Nari,* North Korean refugee,
supported in a safehouse in China.



"I bless God for this teaching that strengthens my life as a disciple, so that I may be able to make other disciples like me."

– Yanelle,* Cameroon.
Attended discipleship training.



"When we were attacked, we fled and left with nothing. This support has brought peace to our hearts and food to our tables."

– Daniel,* Burkina Faso.
Received emergency relief food packages.

"Thanks to your care and love, I'm still alive and a follower of Jesus today."

– Kirti,* India.
Received food, clothing, blankets, financial support and spiritual care.

