

barnabasaid

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2012

PROCLAIM FREEDOM

IN THIS ISSUE

Suffering Church Sunday, 4 November 2012

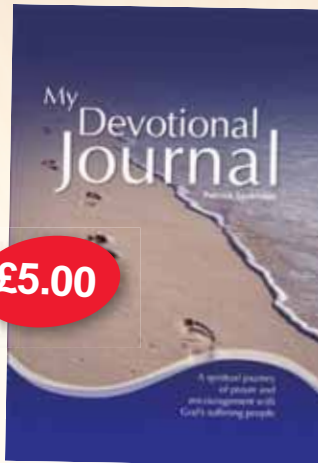
20 pages of information and resources for YOUR local church

My Devotional Journal

Patrick Sookhdeo

This is an ideal gift that has pages for you to record your thoughts and reflections throughout the months, as well as uplifting Bible verses and short testimonies, prayers and poems from Christians around the world who have drawn closer to the Lord through trials and suffering.

My Devotional Journal can encourage you in your own spiritual journey and can make an ideal gift for your Christian friends. It is available now at the special offer price of £5 (plus £2 P & P).



Is the Muslim Isa the Biblical Jesus?

Patrick Sookhdeo

Many people ask whether Isa in the Quran is the same as Jesus in the Bible.

Islam recognises the human Jesus, whom Muslims call Isa, not His divine nature. Jesus' deity, incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, redemptive mission and Lordship are foundational to the Christian faith. There are wide differences between the Christian and Muslim views on Jesus. Included are stories of Muslims coming to know Jesus, not as the Isa of Islam but as their Lord and Saviour.

28pp, £1 (includes postage)



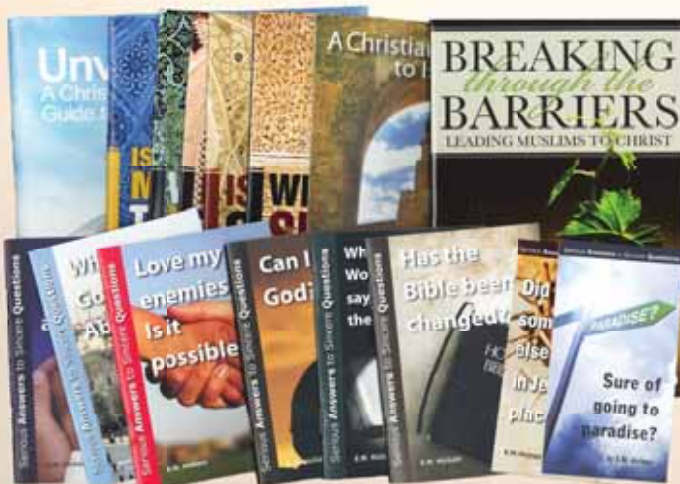
Resource Pack for Muslim Evangelism

In response to the challenge of reaching Muslims with the Gospel, Barnabas Fund has produced an Evangelism Pack with resources to equip Christians to engage with their Muslim neighbours and friends.

The pack contains:

- Unveiled: A Christian Study Guide to Islam***
- Breaking through the Barriers: Leading Muslims to Christ***
- A selection of tracts and booklets

£10 per pack (plus £3.60 P & P)



To order these books, please contact Barnabas Fund 9-10 Priory Row, Coventry, CV1 5EX or call 02476 231923. Cheques should be made payable to "Barnabas Books". Or visit barnabasfund.org/shop

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“When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?”

(Psalm 11:3)

The question David asked concerning the righteous is as pertinent for our day as it was for his. When the foundations of our societies are crumbling and collapsing, what should the righteous do? In the United Kingdom, as in many other Western countries, the moral fabric of society is collapsing. The government is threatening to redefine marriage to include same-sex unions as well as unions of one man and one woman. The daily exposure of corruption among the leaders of our society, whether in the media, politics or the world of high finance, is, as one politician has put it “of Biblical proportions”. But this moral collapse has occurred because of a spiritual collapse, as vast swathes of our populations abandon the Christian faith either for the secular humanist “god”, for some occultic entity or for another religion.

In other parts of the world, the destruction of the foundations has to do with the collapse of the civic and political institutions, the institutions of government and law. The last two years have seen whole societies in the Middle East initially crumble, only to re-make themselves. But this re-making has not rested on the firm basis of liberal democracy but rather on Islamism, a religio-political ideology. In some contexts, such as Yemen and Syria, the destruction of these foundations has produced massive instability and economic woes.

In many places the future is bleak; the societal foundations are crumbling but have not yet collapsed. A key example is Pakistan, where all the institutions are collapsing except the military, where electricity functions just a few hours a day, where prices are rising and violent religious extremism is on the increase.

In these very different contexts, what should the righteous do? Are we called to flee, whether by a physical, a mental or a spiritual running away? Or are we called to recognise that there is a battle, in which the enemy will use subterfuge to ambush us, will operate in the darkness and seek to destroy us? Yet we must be willing to face whatever comes

What should the righteous do? Not run away but trust in divine power and providence

with courage and faith in God. David recognises that God is still ruling from His palace (His throne) in the heavens. And whilst earthly societies may collapse and earthly rulers may come and go, God remains eternal and true, his omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence existing in all and over all. He is both a God of redeeming love and a God of judgment, one who pours out His fire upon erring nations and those who touch His people.

What should the righteous do? Not run away but trust in divine power and providence, living a righteous life, a life of courage and conviction, a life of justice and of true adoration as we behold the face of our God (vv.4-7).

Dr Patrick Sookhdeo
International Director

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Could you become a Barnabas prayer partner?



how barnabas

£19,825 for self-sufficiency
of 40 rural pastors
(US\$30,784; €25,020)

Sierra Leone: enabling pastors to serve in rural areas



Some of the pastors with their newly delivered goats

"I decided to become a Christian because of the love and unity I see among Christians; they show care and concern for each other – this is what even attracted me to help the pastor in his farm work," said a Muslim who converted to Christ last year after working on a pastor's farm.

The pastor is one of 120 Christian workers (40 per year over a period of three years) who are being helped by Barnabas Fund to continue living and working in desperately poor, rural, Muslim-majority areas of Sierra Leone. Each pastor receives training in farming and animal rearing and is given two goats, two bushels of rice and two of groundnut, and farming tools. They also each receive two mosquito nets and a bike for evangelism in their communities. At harvest time some of the pastors gave seed from their crops to other pastors. The project is also encouraging more pastors to move to rural areas of the country.

The latest group of 40 pastors have received help this year at a cost of £496 (US\$770; €626) per pastor, which we trust and pray will be as effective as the grants in previous years.

Project reference
46-851



£2,778 for first year of
college fees
(US\$4,314; €3,505)

Radio presenter equipped to evangelise Muslims in Kenya



Zablon at work in his studio

A young man in Kenya embarked on a three-year college training in radio production and programming and Arabic last year with help from Barnabas Fund, to sharpen his skills for evangelism to Muslims through radio. Zablon is already presenting a Christian programme to which more than ten thousand people in East and Central Africa listen every Friday evening. It is aired in Swahili, which is spoken by many Muslims living in coastal areas.

In the programme Zablon tells Muslims the Good News and gives them the opportunity to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. He also discusses objections that Muslims can raise against the Gospel and counters Islamic teachings with the truth of God found in the Bible.

Project reference 00-430
(Leadership Training Fund)



£5,000 for eight Christian
families in need
(US\$7,737; €6,338)

Holy Land: help for Christians in their hour of need



Jerusalem

Barnabas Fund provided assistance to eight Christians and their families in the Holy Land who were dealing with difficult circumstances of various kinds.

Amongst them is A.S., who was charged with illegally peddling Bibles even though he was giving them away for free. The books were taken from him and destroyed. In court he was cleared of all charges. Barnabas helped cover the legal fees.

H., an Arab Christian, also received support after he had been stabbed over 18 times and left for dead. He is now recovering, and support from Barnabas is helping him provide for his family.

Project reference 65-153
(Holy Land Fund)



is helping

Barnabas Fund is helping Christians survive in the face of persecution and be witnesses to their faith in Jesus Christ. Thank you for making this possible through your prayers and gifts. Below and on the following pages are the stories of just a few of the many Christians whom we are helping. Please pray as you read.

£10,129 for seed and fertilizer
(US\$15,647; €12,838)

£1,195 for contributing to pastor's stipend
(US\$1,856; €1,508)

£2,912 for orphanage
(US\$4,522; €3,675)

Burma: Barnabas caring for persecuted Christian orphans



New food supplies are brought back to the camp

Over thirty Christian orphans are being cared for in an orphanage inside a camp for IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) in Burma (Myanmar). Thanks to Barnabas they had enough to eat for a year and were cared for by two supervisors.

Although the military has recently introduced some reforms, it is still extremely hostile to non-Burman ethnic minorities, to which many Christians, including the orphans, belong. Late last year the army attempted to attack the camp. The scare brought back memories to the orphans of the killing and disappearance of their Christian parents and their own escapes; many were very fearful and had nightmares.

Two visiting project workers talked to the children extensively about the incident. They prayed with them for their emotional recovery and thanked God for keeping the youngsters safe.

Project reference 75-821



Reaping with joy in Pakistan



Holding up harvested wheat

"It was a wonderful feeling when we were reaping and selling the crops. I could not believe that I was able to work on my fields again," said Javaid, who lost everything, including his crops, in the catastrophic floods that afflicted Pakistan in August 2010. Christians were often last to receive help from the government in the aftermath of the disaster.

Last November Barnabas Fund provided him and 32 other Christian farming families in Rangpur, in the southern Punjab province of Pakistan, who had all lost their crops in the floods, with seed and fertilizer at a cost of £130 (US\$202; €164) per family for sowing winter crops of wheat. Four months later the families were able to reap abundant harvests. "It was a joyous time for me and my family. I felt free because I was under no debt anymore. It was the first time in a long time that I could sleep without worrying about anything."

After selling his crops, Javaid was able to pay off all the debts that his family accumulated after the floods just in order to eat. Together with a partner he also bought a tractor for preparing the land and rice to sow for the next harvest.

Project reference 00-634
(Disaster Relief Fund)



Central Asia: pastoring in the face of restrictions



"Takhir" at a village home group

"We don't have opportunity to make open evangelization but small group ministry is chance to have close friend relationship with people and talk them about Jesus," writes "Takhir", who, with support for ministry and personal costs for one year from Barnabas Fund, pastors a small congregation in Central Asia.

Despite the many restrictions on all Christian activity imposed by his country's government, Takhir has found ways to do his work as a pastor. Private religious education, for example, is severely limited, but he leads two home groups for youth every week as well as monthly regional youth meetings and an annual youth camp. After the main worship service he also leads a youth meeting.

Evangelism is also forbidden. But Takhir leads adult home groups for both believers and unbelievers in his flat. "Church members who visit this home group usually invite their unbelieving friends or relatives and we just talk with them," he writes. Takhir also visits small groups in surrounding villages with a church team. "Praise God many people come to Jesus in far 'kishlaks' [hamlets] because they see how Christians live and love each other."

Project reference 00-477
(Pastor Support Fund)



bringing hope,

Homes for Christians in South Asia

Sri Lanka: safe in their own house

"Today because of this house we are living peacefully and experiencing God's blessings. I am able to go out for my ministry without worrying about my family's safety, and we are able to have peaceful nights," said a church worker in Sri Lanka whose family recently moved into a brand-new white house with shutters after four years of homelessness (see photo). They are one of 25 Christian families in Sri Lanka now living in homes built with funds from Barnabas.

Like many Christians in northern Sri Lanka, they were caught in the crossfire of the destructive civil war that came to an end in 2009. When they returned to their village they were not allowed in because of landmines and at first had to live in the

grounds of a local school with their baby. "After a few months we were allowed to build a hut on our land, but it was very difficult without security and lockable doors. We couldn't sleep in the nights because of poisonous snakes and also military presence in the area – it was a fearful time." They found it difficult to go to church knowing that their food and belongings might not be there when they returned.

The new house is making an enormous difference to their lives. The father said, "We have been blessed with this house. We have been able to enjoy our meals and family prayer. We are opening the house for house prayer meetings and hope this house will be a blessing to others."



A Christian family in Sri Lanka finally feel safe again in their new house

£92,125 for houses in northern Sri Lanka
(US\$117,084; €143,181)

Orissa: praising God for His provision

"In the past three years we spent a very miserable life without a house. But after three years God has given us this beautiful house through you. We praise God for this provision," said a Christian in Orissa, India, blinking hard to keep back tears. He and his wife are one of 522 homeless Christian families in Orissa who have received a new house from Barnabas in the past year. The damaged homes of another 65 families were repaired.

The man then recounted to a visiting Barnabas staff member the circumstances of how his family lost their home in 2008. "During the violence we heard that people were coming to our village to attack our house. Seeing people from the distance we fled to the nearby forest in order to save our lives. Later we went to the relief camp."

He and his family were among almost 60,000 Christians who fled for their lives at Christmas 2007 and August 2008 after large crowds of extremist Hindus, responding to the rallying call

of a Hindu nationalist party, mobbed the churches and homes of Christians, often ordering them to convert to Hinduism or leave. When those who had survived found the courage to return to their villages, they found their homes and churches in blackened ruins.

"We are so grateful to you that all the way for there you came and helped us to get a house," the man said. "So nice a house you provided. We will maintain it carefully."

Barnabas is responding to the needs of hundreds more homeless Christian families in Sri Lanka, and also Orissa, by starting a second phase of house-building. In this next phase, the cost for a basic one-room house in India will be around £740 (US\$1,172; €954). Houses in Sri Lanka, which have two bedrooms, a living room, kitchen and toilet, will be about £3,700 (US\$5,783; €4,707); costs can vary with location, exchange rate and other factors.



This Christian couple in Orissa also received a new home from Barnabas

£391,081 for houses in Orissa, India
(US\$497,090; €607,725)



Project references 21-723 (India houses), 85-961 (Sri Lanka houses)

transforming lives

Nigeria: reaching out to victims of anti-Christian violence



A trauma counselling workshop under way for Christians in Jos

With Christians in Nigeria suffering ongoing, violent attacks from Islamists because of their faith in Christ, Barnabas has been at hand to alleviate their distress in various ways.

In Kaduna state Barnabas sent aid in June to 81 Christians who had lost their houses, personal property or businesses or sustained injury in violent attacks. Barnabas also sent aid to 80 widows and orphans and three converts from Islam. Since militant Islamist group Boko Haram declared war on Christians in March and threatened to eradicate them from parts of the country, anti-Christian violence in the North and Middle Belt has increased, with churches attacked most Sundays and tens of Christians killed each week.

In Kano state Barnabas is reconstructing ten churches destroyed on 18 April 2011, the day that the result of the last presidential elections was announced. On hearing that a Muslim candidate had been defeated and Christian President Goodluck Jonathan re-elected, Muslims responded in fury by attacking the churches.

In Jos, Plateau state, seven churches were provided with trauma workshops to help them process the devastating losses they have experienced. In the workshop the concepts of suffering and grief after loss were introduced and discussed. Questions such as, "What happens when someone is grieving?" and "How can I forgive someone who has hurt me intentionally?" were answered.

One participant commented, "It was as if the pastor had given you a report of what has been in my heart." He explained that he had become bitter because of all the violence committed by Muslims against Christians in his neighbourhood and had stopped going to church. But now the workshop had given him renewed insights into suffering and forgiveness and motivated him to start attending church again.

Many said afterwards that now they understood how the wounds of their own hearts could be healed and more about what the Bible says forgiveness truly is, they felt able to begin reaching out to their Muslim neighbours again.

£10,000 to provide aid for individual victims (US\$15,404; €12,644)

£4,036 for trauma counselling (US\$6,217; €5,103)

£24,526 to assist with reconstruction of ten churches (US\$37,784; €31,012)



Project reference 00-345
(Victims of Violence Fund)



PROCLAIM FREEDOM

**Suffering
Church Sunday
2012/13** www.barnabasfund.org


barnabasfund
hope and aid for the persecuted church

Date..... Time.....

Venue.....



Christians are one of the most persecuted groups of people in the world today. In 130 countries across huge swathes of the globe, our brothers and sisters suffer discrimination, hostility and violence because of their love for Christ. And the rising tide of Islamism in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is threatening to engulf the churches there.

PROCLAIM FREEDOM

Suffering Church Sunday 2012-13

HOW CAN WE BE SILENT?

In our current campaign, *Proclaim Freedom*, Barnabas Fund is bringing the plight of the persecuted Church to the attention of those in authority. Through a petition and other initiatives, we aim to press our governments to promote freedom of religion, human rights and justice in other countries, especially for the millions of persecuted Christians, and for those who incite or engage in anti-Christian hatred and violence to be held accountable.

In this year's Suffering Church Sunday resources we focus on *Proclaim Freedom*, with special reference to the challenges facing Christians in MENA. We invite you to set aside the first Sunday in November for a special service or meeting on this theme (though please choose another day if this fits better with your church's calendar). You may also like to join in our special day of prayer for the persecuted Church on Thursday 1 November (more details on back page).

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Proclaim Freedom for Christians



Haik Hovsepian Mehr, a senior Iranian church leader, was tortured and killed on 20 January 1994. Although it remains unclear exactly who was responsible, the Iranian authorities refused to help his family discover the truth. Haik (pictured) disappeared on 19 January, two days after Mehdi Dibaj, an Iranian evangelist and convert from Islam, had been released from prison, where he had been awaiting execution. Haik had committed himself to making public the persecution of Christians in Iran, and had campaigned for Mehdi's release.

A voice in the West

In the West, we are extremely blessed with a range of freedoms that our persecuted brothers and sisters can only dream about. We have a voice. We can petition, protest, write to our elected representative or to government ministers. We have laws that guarantee us the freedom to use our voice and protect us from retribution, and we have a choice in how we use our voice.

Silence in the "East"

Sadly, in many countries around the world, Christians are forced to suffer in silence. They may be discriminated against, beaten, imprisoned and even murdered for their faith, yet many cannot make their cries heard.

Proclaim Freedom with Barnabas Fund

Even if governments recognise the importance of religious liberty and human rights, there is rarely much concrete engagement with the issue of anti-Christian persecution, leaving Christians as the most neglected group in Western governments' foreign policy.

Approximately 200 million Christians live under the shadow of persecution, discrimination and disadvantage. Barnabas Fund's *Proclaim Freedom* campaign seeks to raise the profile of the persecuted Church around the world.

The campaign calls upon governments to:

- recognise that Christians around the world currently face unprecedented levels of persecution and are one of the most persecuted groups in the world
- put the plight of persecuted Christians, both individually and as communities, at the forefront of their relations with the countries concerned
- promote freedom of religion for all, using diplomatic relations, bi-lateral ties, aid, and agreed international obligations on core human rights
- promote justice for all and specifically to ensure that those who incite hatred or act violently against Christians are held accountable for their crimes

Silencing the Christians

Christians are silenced in a variety of ways - because of their low status within their country, officially through government laws and regulations, by the actions of the authorities or by the majority-religious community.

Silenced by low status

Many Christian families live in extreme poverty, often because of discrimination due to their faith. In Egypt or Pakistan, for example, many Christians can barely afford food, let alone a decent education. Where Christians are poor and illiterate, they may lack the confidence and skills to stand up for themselves even if they might in fact be listened to.

Other factors may also be involved. In India, some 60% of Christians are Dalits, a people group who are at the very bottom of the Hindu caste system, and they are despised for this reason as well as for being Christians. Many Muslims despise Christians because, according to sharia, Christians are worth only half as much as Muslims and should be treated as a subjugated people rather than as equal citizens.

Silenced by the law

Government restrictions on religious freedom (or specific anti-Christian laws) mean that even if Christians are well-educated and confident enough to stand up and speak out for their community, they are swiftly hushed.

In Central Asia, severe religious laws prevent Christians from practising their faith or witnessing to others freely. In Baku, Azerbaijan, Greater Grace Protestant Church was the first church to be issued a closure order by a court on 25 April under the country's harsh religion law, making all the church's activities illegal and subject to hefty fines. Greater Grace obtained registration in 1993, but the 2009 amendments to the religion law required all religious organisations to re-register. The government body responsible for this process claims that the church had failed to re-register, but the church is emphatic that it has never broken the law.

In Pakistan, separate electorates were established for non-Muslim minorities in 1979, which diminished their political participation, and although these were later abolished, the growing influence of Islamist groups has ensured that Christians remain marginalised.

The Iranian government is extremely hostile towards the Christian population. Churches are often raided, and individual Christians, particularly converts from Islam, are frequently arrested and imprisoned. For example, in February 2012, many Christians were detained in a sweep of arrests across the country. They included a 78-year-old woman in Esfahan, Giti Hakimpour, who had recently undergone knee replacement surgery. In Kermanshah, Masoud Delijani, a convert from Islam arrested at the same time, was charged with being a Christian, holding illegal house church gatherings, evangelising Muslims and action against national security and jailed for three years.

Silenced by the authorities

Many Christians find that the police, judiciary and security forces are biased against them.

In Malatya, eastern Turkey, five men were arrested at the scene of a brutal murder of three Christians at the Zirve Christian publishing house in 2007. However, despite 38 hearings, there has been no verdict against them.

In Orissa, India, very few people have been convicted following the ferocious large-scale anti-Christian violence that racked the state in 2007-8 in which some 60 Christians were killed and nearly 60,000 left homeless.

In some countries, those involved in sectarian incidents are brought together for what is called "reconciliation", a one-sided process which involves the Christian victims being forced to agree not to bring the perpetrators of the violence to justice. The Christians get nothing in return. In February 2012, eight Christian families were evicted from their village in Egypt following a "humiliating" agreement made to placate Muslims who had twice attacked Christian property there. Thankfully, the eviction order was later overturned.

Sometimes, Christians are themselves arrested following an incident where they have been victimised. This commonly happens in India; an extreme case occurred in January 2012 involving Pastor Chandrakanth Kalappa Chavan (27), who was beaten and paraded naked through a village by Hindu extremists. He was then tied to a tree, and the attackers called the police. The officers took Chandrakanth to the police station and charged *him* rather than the perpetrators.

Silenced by the wider community

In countries where Christians are in the minority, they can easily find themselves at the mercy of the majority-religious community.

On 24 December 2011, Ugandan pastor Umar Mulinde had acid thrown in his face by Muslim extremists, leaving him disfigured; his right eye later had to be removed. Pastor Umar is believed to have been targeted because of his conversion from Islam to Christianity and strong criticism of Islam. The 38-year-old father of six was also a leading figure in a campaign to block the introduction of Kadhi courts (sharia courts) in Uganda.

Another way to silence Christians is by removing them from the electoral roll, as happened in Madhya Pradesh, India, in early 2012 when the names of 20,000 Christians were deleted. The general secretary of a Christian forum suggested that the Christian community was being deliberately disenfranchised by the ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, which is notoriously anti-Christian.

Egyptian Christians became the victims of a "terror and intimidation" campaign intended to prevent them from voting for the Muslim Brotherhood's rival in the presidential run-off in May/June 2012. Islamists in the country blamed the Christians for voting for the secular former Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq in the first ballot and thereby putting him in the running for the presidency. They accused Christians of being "traitors" and "anti-revolutionary" for voting for a member of the former regime.

Poverty in Egypt – A case study

Egyptian Christians have endured centuries of discrimination and many are desperately poor.

In rural parts of Upper Egypt, many Christian families live in simple two- or three-room houses made of brick or mud, sometimes up to ten people per house. They often lack a shower or toilet, and a television is considered a great luxury.

Families often live on and work off a piece of land; some own the land, while others can only rent. Many children work the land with their parents rather than attending school. Chicken and meat are expensive, so Christians tend to eat only vegetables. Their diet is so restricted that some children do not even know what an egg is. Some villages have mains water, and families can collect water from the nearby supply or pump; others still use the River Nile to wash household items, clothes and even themselves.

If medical attention is required, Christians usually go to their church first, as some churches have a clinic offering medical care at a low price. But many families cannot afford even this.

If the Christians are the minority in their village, they are treated as second-class citizens. In Upper Egypt, older Christian women dress with traditional head coverings; however, younger people now wear modern clothes, but this identifies them as Christians and makes them easy targets.

Barnabas Fund helps thousands of Christians in Egypt by working through local churches to provide food parcels for the neediest families. We have also funded Christian schools, health projects and income-generation projects that help Christians to become self-sufficient, as well as many other needs.



Our brothers and sisters in Egypt are extremely poor and endure harassment, discrimination and violence for their faith at the hands of the government and the Muslim majority. Barnabas Fund provides food parcels for needy families

A God of justice

The Bible tells us that the ruling authorities are in place to represent God and punish evil, that those in authority have been placed there by God, and that everyone should be subject to them (Romans 13:1-5). Sometimes, however, the authorities can be agents of injustice, and can persecute Christians harshly (e.g. Matthew 27:24-26; Acts 5:17-18; 16:22-24, 37; Revelation 13).

Our God loves justice (Psalm 99:4), and He can be angry towards those who deny justice, particularly to the poor and defenceless. Isaiah 1:16-17 says, "Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow." He detests those who acquit the guilty and condemn the innocent (Proverbs 17:15; see also Isaiah 5:23).

The New Testament is equally severe on those who grind the faces of the needy. For example, James denounces those who withhold wages from labourers and who condemn and murder

the innocent (James 5:4, 6). The Lord Jesus calls the religious leaders of His day to pursue justice (Matthew 23:23), and promises His disciples that God will bring about justice for them (Luke 18:7-8).

Barnabas Fund helps Christians stand up for their rights. We have held conferences to bring together Christian leaders, lawyers and human rights activists in a region, such as Africa or the Former Soviet Union, to provide them with training on how to be pro-active in defending the rights of Christians. In Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Central Asia we have supported Christian organisations that provide legal representation for Christian victims. We also assist with lawyers' fees, for example for the Christians of Horale village in Indonesia, who were forced into a four-year legal battle by the neighbouring Muslim village who claimed ownership of the Christian land. Thankfully the case was decided in favour of the Christians earlier this year.

Call to action

The Barnabas Fund *Proclaim Freedom* campaign provides us all with an opportunity to call on our own governments to pursue decisive policies aimed at putting pressure on states that persecute or condone the persecution of Christians. It also aims to press governments to be active in promoting human rights in other countries for all minorities, and also work to ensure that other countries hold accountable those citizens who either incite anti-Christian hatred or engage in anti-Christian violence.

WILL YOU SPEAK OUT FOR YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTERS? WILL YOU BE A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS? ■



Middle East and North Africa

the infolding tragedy

The Middle East is the birthplace of Christianity. It is the place where Jesus Christ lived, died and rose again, and where His disciples first proclaimed Him as Saviour and Lord. From there the Gospel was taken out to many other areas, and it quickly put down strong roots in North Africa. This region was home to some of the strongest churches and greatest theologians of the first Christian centuries.

So the Church in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) has a long and distinguished history, and the region is still the home of strong and healthy churches. Some of these, for example in Egypt and Syria, trace their origins to the early years of Christianity and long predate the dominance of Islam in these countries. Others, for instance in

Iran and Algeria, have grown and flourished in modern times as many Muslims have turned to Christ.

Yet even before the tumultuous events of the so-called “Arab Spring”, which began in December 2010, Christians in MENA were facing an insecure and uncertain future. The area had been plagued by civil unrest, uprisings and wars for decades. Extreme forms of Islam were enthroned in Saudi Arabia and Iran and extending their influence into other countries, in MENA and beyond. Repressive regimes, both secular and Islamist, were severely restricting political and social freedoms. And Western interventions, both diplomatic and military, had further destabilised the volatile region.

The churches were sometimes caught in the midst of quarrels that were not their own, as in Iraq and the Holy Land. As a religious minority – often a very small one – facing a large and confident Muslim majority, they were acutely vulnerable to discrimination, violence and state-sponsored persecution. In contexts where human rights and democratic institutions were minimal at best, they had no effective redress against injustice. And as perceived allies of the West, they were suspect on political as well as religious grounds.

None of these pressures has been relieved in the last two years. On the contrary, the Arab Spring has greatly intensified the crisis confronting MENA's beleaguered Christians.

Arab Spring, Islamist summer or Christian winter?

In December 2010 a young Tunisian man set himself on fire in protest against the unjust ill-treatment that he had suffered from the authorities. This incident quickly sparked a raging inferno of demonstrations and violence in Tunisia and across much of the MENA region, expressing long-held and deep grievances about corruption, unemployment, restrictions and oppression. Many sectors of society took part, including many Christians, calling for freedom and democracy.

Four dictators have already been toppled: Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia, Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, Muammar Gaddafi in Libya and Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen. Other leaders, such as Bashar al-Assad in Syria, remain vulnerable at the time of writing, while still others have declared their intention not to seek re-election, such as Nouri al-Maliki in Iraq. The kings of Jordan and Morocco have survived, but they have had to concede reforms and appoint new governments.

The Arab Spring was initially heralded in the West as a movement for positive change, which

would liberalise societies across MENA, bring self-determination for its peoples and secure human rights for all. Democracy has indeed been established in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya; Yemen is also scheduled to hold elections this year; and some modest political reforms have been made or promised elsewhere.

However, the results of these changes have not served to advance a liberal agenda, as Islamist parties have emerged victorious from the electoral processes or gained the political ascendancy. Moreover, some countries, such as Libya and Syria, have been convulsed by brutal violence for months or years, and others have seen at least a partial breakdown of law and order. Widespread human rights abuses have been reliably reported, and minority religious groups have seen their property desecrated and destroyed. Radical Islam is on the march through MENA, using both the ballot and the bullet to achieve its goal of an Islamist political order.

The prospects for Christians in the region are

looking increasingly bleak. Their political freedom and social status are likely to be still further restricted by Islamist governments. At times of revolutionary upheaval and anarchy they are especially vulnerable both to persecution by the authorities and to anti-Christian violence by the opposition. And their churches and institutions are easy prey for deliberate attack or "collateral damage". Hundreds of thousands of Christians have fled their countries to escape the Islamist tide, and as this tragedy unfolds the very survival of Christianity in the region is being seriously questioned.

Some of the sufferings and persecutions being endured by Christians in MENA are common to all or most Christians in the region. But many churches are grappling with problems that are specific to their own country or wider area. In the following sections we will look at the individual countries in the region, grouped into larger geographical blocs. (This arrangement is only for convenience and does not imply that the countries in each group face identical challenges.)

Country	Population	Muslims	Total Christians
Algeria	35,406,000	99.4% - 35,194,000	0.2% - 80,000
Bahrain	1,200,000	93.4% - 1,121,000	6.6% - 79,000
Egypt	83,688,000	90.1% - 75,413,000	9.6% - 8,000,000 +
Iran	74,800,000	98.2% - 73,439,000	1.3% - 1,000,000?
Iraq	31,129,000	95.9% - 29,853,000	1.3% - 400,000?
Israel	7,552,000 Jews: 75.5% - 5,703,000	17.0% - 1,286,000	2.0% - 152,000
Jordan	6,509,000	96.0% - 6,244,000	2.2% - 145,000
Kuwait	2,818,000	81.6% - 2,300,000	15.3% - 430,000
Lebanon	4,259,000	59.4% - 2,532,000	39.3% - 1,674,000
Libya	6,423,000	97.0% - 6,230,000	2.7% - 172,000?
Morocco	32,310,000	99.9% - 32,279,000	0.1% - 31,000
Oman	2,846,000	88.7% - 2,524,000	2.8% - 80,000
Palestinian Territories	4,019,000	87.7% - 3,525,000	1.7% - 68,000
Qatar	1,870,000	88.4% - 1,653,000	8.0% - 150,000
Saudi Arabia	26,535,000	92.4% - 24,518,000	5.4% - 1,432,000
Syria	22,530,000	87.0% - 19,601,000	10.2% - 2,300,000
Tunisia	10,733,000	99.7% - 10,701,000	0.2% - 25,000
Turkey	74,724,000	97.9% - 73,160,000	0.1% - 89,000
United Arab Emirates	5,314,000	67.6% - 3,592,000	8.8% - 465,000
Yemen	24,772,000	99.9% - 24,747,000	0.1% - 12,000

This table shows the populations of the various countries of MENA, with the numbers and percentages of Muslims and Christians. These figures are based on the best available sources, but reliable and precise statistics are not readily available for every country. In particular, in some countries there may be a number of secret converts from Islam, and while many Christians have emigrated from various countries in the region, especially Libya and Egypt, since the Arab Spring, their exact numbers are unknown. The figures for Christians include both indigenous believers and expatriates

Eastern Mediterranean

(Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, Holy Land)



Christians in the Syrian city of Homs have been very badly affected by the fighting between government and opposition forces. Almost the entire Christian population of 50,000-60,000 have fled for safety, and Christian buildings such as this orphanage have been damaged or destroyed. A Syrian church leader said, "The tragedy in Homs is very huge, it bleeds the heart." Barnabas has sent aid to the displaced Christians

It used to be easier to be a Christian in **Syria** than anywhere else in the Arab world. The churches were large (about 10% of the population), and they were shown unusual respect by the Muslim majority. The Assad regime allowed them to worship and practise their faith largely without interference and granted them various benefits. The country had a reputation for opening its borders to Christian refugees, most recently those fleeing from violence in Iraq.

The churches were not immune from restrictions: they were subject to close surveillance by the authorities, and evangelism among Muslims was strongly discouraged. But their conditions have deteriorated rapidly since anti-government protests broke out in March 2011. Tens of thousands of Christians have been displaced from their cities by threats and violence; many have had their homes invaded and ransacked; and some have been kidnapped for ransom or gruesomely murdered. Bombs have exploded in the Christian areas of Damascus and Aleppo, and Christian buildings have been badly damaged.

The opposition Free Syrian Army (FSA), and the militant Islamist groups that support it, are largely hostile to Christians, perceiving them to be supporters of Assad. The churches are concerned that if the regime falls, an Islamist takeover will generate further hostility and violence against them. The worse-case scenario is that Syria goes the way of Iraq (see below), with the majority of its Christian population fleeing abroad to avoid assault and possible death. Some have already left.

Until recently the neighbouring country of **Lebanon** would have been a reasonably safe haven for Syrian Christian refugees. The proportion of Christians there is higher than anywhere else in MENA, at some 32%, and the nation has rarely made headlines during the Arab Spring. But behind this benign façade, forces are at work that threaten the long-term security of the Lebanese churches.

The Christian population has been in a state of steady decline for many decades, from nearly 54% in 1932. The position of president is reserved for a Christian, but the churches' standing and influence are weakening as Islam gains strength. In particular, the militant Shia Islamist group

Hezbollah has strengthened its base in the country, and in 2011 it engineered a constitutional coup that secured the role of prime minister for its preferred candidate. Its increased influence is likely to further the Islamisation of Lebanese politics and society. Christians are divided between supporters and opponents of Hezbollah, and in the event of a civil war between Sunni and Shia Muslims, the Christian community could be torn apart.

Although not strictly part of the MENA region, and with only a small Arab minority, **Turkey** is playing an important role in the current Syrian insurgency, both as Syria's neighbour and as an opponent of the Assad regime. It provides a secure base for the opposition FSA's operations inside Syria and is threatening military action on their behalf. But in any case it is not a hospitable place for Christians, whether refugees from Syria, the small remnant of its historic non-Turkish minorities, or recent Turkish converts from Islam.

Christians in Turkey suffer much discrimination and occasional violence. They must also endure stifling bureaucratic restrictions that greatly impede their ministry and mission. They are portrayed very negatively in the media, and pastors and converts from Islam are especially vulnerable to harassment. The government has recently professed a greater commitment to minority rights, perhaps with an eye on its international reputation, but the growing power of Islamism is pulling it in the opposite direction. In the US Commission on International Religious Freedom's annual report for 2012 Turkey was named as one of the world's worst violators.

Although Christians in the **Holy Land** have been relatively unaffected by the Arab Spring, those in the Gaza Strip have been under an Islamist yoke since 2007, when the militant group Hamas came to power. Several of their shops and schools have been vandalised, and they are regularly harassed and intimidated. Conditions in the West Bank, including Bethlehem, continue to be difficult too, mainly owing to long-term economic decline following the second Palestinian uprising and to discrimination against Christians. Messianic Jews in Israel can also experience violence, harassment and discrimination from Orthodox Jewish groups.

North Africa

(Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Morocco, Algeria)



The political turmoil in Egypt has increased the economic pressure on the country's Christians, who mostly live in extreme poverty. Barnabas Fund is helping them in various practical ways, including feeding needy families, enabling Christians to set up small businesses to support themselves, and covering medical expenses. For Christian families such as this, at the end of their own resources, this support has proved a lifeline

Life for **Egypt's** Christians was very hard even before the Arab Spring. Despite their large numbers, they had suffered centuries of discrimination, and most of them already lived in extreme poverty. (There used to be many prosperous Egyptian Christians, but most of them have emigrated to the US.) They faced frequent violence, including attacks on entire Christian communities in revenge for (alleged) offences by single individuals. Many Christian girls were abducted and raped by Muslim men, forcibly converted to Islam and married to their captors. The police did very little to protect the victims of anti-Christian attacks. Crippling restrictions made the construction or repair of church buildings extremely difficult. Converts from Islam were unable to change the religion listed on their identity cards and suffered the usual harassments meted out to apostates.

Islamists have emerged from the revolution as the dominant political force: their parties won a majority of seats in the first parliamentary election, and the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohammed Morsi was elected to the presidency. But the military has continued to shape events, and in June it dissolved parliament and issued a decree giving itself sweeping powers. At the time of writing it is unclear which of these powerful players will emerge the stronger, or whether they will strike a power-sharing deal.

None of Egypt's possible futures looks attractive to the churches. There has been a breakdown of law and order since the uprising, and the military have offered little protection to Christians in the face of increased violence against them. In one infamous incident in October 2011 the authorities even sent armoured vehicles against a peaceful protest by Christians, leaving 27 dead. But an Islamist regime, operating unchecked, would be likely further to Islamise society, increasing intolerance and hostility towards Christians and imposing even stricter limitations on their activities. The new president has promised them protection, but his claims are being treated with suspicion. While the political drama is being played out, the country's economy languishes, increasing the economic pressure on impoverished Christians.

Tunisia, birthplace of the Arab Spring, was previously one of the most secular and progressive of the Arab nations. Many aspects of sharia were not in force, and the government strongly resisted attempts to make society more Islamic. There were only a few hundred indigenous Christians, however, and they were widely scattered with few opportunities for fellowship. As converts from Islam they faced the usual problems of harassment and discrimination, and many were secret believers.

Their prospects are even less promising in the aftermath of the revolution, as Tunisia moves in an increasingly Islamist direction. In October 2011 the Ennahda party emerged from parliamentary

elections as the largest party. It promised that Tunisia would remain a secular state, but when the draft constitution was issued in 2012, sharia was described as "the principal source of legislation". A self-appointed Islamic religious police has also been given legal status; its leader has declared, "Women without a veil deserve to burn in hell." Hopes for the establishing of a secular democracy that will enhance the rights and freedoms of Christians seem unlikely to be fulfilled.

Much the same story can be told about neighbouring **Libya**, although here the process of political reform is at an earlier stage. Only the Lord knows how many indigenous Christians there are in the country, but their numbers are very small. Before the revolution they endured the same pressures as those in Tunisia. Now the draft constitution has made Islam the religion of the state and sharia the principal source of legislation, threatening their freedom and security even further. Libya is also acutely unstable, with some regions seeking autonomy, numerous militias still in the field, and countless human rights abuses. Many expatriate Christians fled when violence erupted, and the country is becoming even less hospitable for those who remain. However, in an unexpected development, early results in the July elections saw Islamist parties trailing behind an alliance of more liberal and secular groups.

In **Morocco** the unrest of the Arab Spring was quietened by promises of reform by King Mohammed VI and the issuing of a new constitution. But the monarchy retained most of its powers, and no concessions were made to Christians or other minorities. In elections held in November 2011 an Islamist group won the most seats in parliament and secured the post of prime minister. Unrest has continued, with protestors claiming that the reforms have not gone far enough. The freedom experienced by Morocco's indigenous believers, who number a few thousand, is already limited and insecure, and now they too face the unpalatable prospect of increased Islamist influence. Expatriate Christians remain very vulnerable to expulsion if they share their faith with local Muslims.

Algeria has witnessed astonishing church growth in recent years, and the church is composed almost entirely of converts from Islam and their children. In 2006 the government introduced new restrictions on their activities, under pressure from radical Islamists, and threats and attacks against them have increased. Early 2011 saw strikes, protests and riots in Algeria, but these were mainly related to the country's economic problems, and the political changes that followed were less significant than in other North African countries. But although the status of Algeria's Christians has so far been largely unchanged by the Arab Spring, a recent campaign of bombings by the militant Islamist group Al-Qaeda in the Land of Islamic Maghreb may foreshadow more dangerous times ahead for them.

Arabian Peninsula

(Saudi Arabia, Gulf States, Yemen)



Church buildings are banned in Saudi Arabia, but some are found in other Arabian countries (like this one in Kuwait), though they are subject to severe restrictions. But in March 2012 the Grand Mufti of Saudi Arabia declared that it was "necessary to destroy all the churches of the region". A Kuwaiti MP conceded that existing churches could remain, but said that the construction of new ones should be banned (Source: Wikipedia.org, Irvin Calicut)

Saudi Arabia, one of the most rigid, hardline and authoritarian states in the world, has scarcely experienced the Arab Spring, having cracked down hard on Saudi Shia protestors. Nevertheless it has played a key role in the development of the Arab Spring in other countries. The government follows a strict and puritanical version of Sunni Islam known as Wahhabism, and for many years it has propagated this vigorously using its vast oil revenues. The uprisings across MENA have presented it with an unprecedented opportunity to increase its influence in the region and resist the spread of Iranian Shiism. But it has also been concerned to shore up its own authority and forestall any outbreak of unrest within its borders.

Saudi Arabia sent troops into neighbouring Bahrain to prevent the toppling of a Sunni regime and restrain Iranian influence there. In Syria it has sided with the opposition movement, as representative of the Sunni majority, against the Shia Alawite government, and it has pressed for action on its behalf from the Arab League. At the same time the government has clamped down hard on prominent reformists and potential activists in its own country, taken steps to strengthen the religious establishment, and announced a number of economic reforms.

Anti-Christian repression is more severe in Saudi Arabia than anywhere else in MENA. All its citizens must be Muslim, and all non-Muslim places of worship are forbidden. Conversion to Islam is punishable by death, so the small number of indigenous Christians practise their faith in extreme secrecy. Although the sizeable expatriate Christian community is supposedly allowed to worship in private, they too are subject to raids and arrests. The pre-emptive suppression of dissent in the country following the Arab Spring will serve only to increase the pressure on its Christians.

The experience of the **Gulf States** during this period of change has been varied. The small nation of Qatar has used the developing crisis to assume a significant role in the region. It has provided leadership for both the Libyan opposition's ground assault against Gaddafi and its work of reconstruction, and the international effort for regime change in Syria. It also maintains close relations with the main Islamist groups in the area, including the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. These military, political and religious initiatives, supported by Qatar's enormous oil wealth, are

forcefully promoting its Wahhabi Islamist ideology in MENA.

Bahrain's Sunni government presides over a Shia majority, and anti-government protests broke out in early 2011. The king accused Iran of orchestrating events, and with Saudi assistance the government crushed the protests ruthlessly. Hundreds of people have been arrested, and security restrictions remain in place.

Oman saw some protests, mainly concerned with economic issues, and some modest political reform has been promised. Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have been largely unaffected by the unrest, although the UAE has moved to stifle any potential dissent.

The indigenous Christian communities in these states are very small and have to operate mainly in secret. Expatriates are mainly allowed to practise their faith with few restrictions, though not to evangelise among Muslims. Some regimes are stricter than others: although Qatar permits Christian worship in a designated area, apostasy is technically a capital offence, and in Bahrain all citizens are defined as Muslim, while Kuwait is rather more tolerant of non-Muslim religions. But tougher controls on any activity that the governments deem subversive are likely to prevent any progress towards greater religious freedom.

Most Christians in **Yemen** are expatriates. The few Yemeni believers are at risk of severe reprisals for practising their faith, including arrest, torture and extra-judicial killing. Apostasy is legally punishable by death. Expatriates are generally free to worship but not to evangelise Muslims, and some Christians suspected of sharing their faith have been murdered.

Protests in 2011 against the rule of President Saleh saw the deaths of hundreds of people in clashes between the security services and demonstrators. Saleh was eventually ousted in favour of his deputy, but hopes for prosperity and stability are little more than a mirage in this deeply impoverished and insecure country. Recent events appear to have emboldened Islamist militants, who are taking advantage of the chaos to wreak further havoc. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is mounting an insurgency in the south of Yemen, and the position of Christians throughout the country is even more precarious than before.

Western Asia

(Jordan, Iraq, Iran)



Attacks on Christians continue in Iraq. They may be subject to murder, assault or kidnap; three Christians kidnapped with a companion near Kirkuk were released only on payment of a large ransom. Their churches are readily targeted by bombers. Even in previously safe havens in the north of the country they are now under threat; Christian-owned shops in Dohuk were torched by Islamists in December 2011. Barnabas continues to support Iraqi Christian refugees in Syria and elsewhere

Jordan is sometimes seen as a place of peace and tolerance for Christians, at least when compared to many other MENA countries. Seats are reserved for them in parliament, and they have a strong presence in the business community. But this superficial freedom masks a darker reality, especially for Christian converts from Islam. As in many Muslim-majority contexts, leaving Islam can lead to a loss of civil rights, property and family, and to social ostracism, threats and violence. Those Christian denominations that are not officially recognised by the government have to obtain official approval for their meetings, which is sometimes withheld.

Large-scale protests broke out in Jordan in February 2011, with the goal of political and economic reform. As in other countries, Islamists have taken advantage of the unrest to seek greater political influence. But although King Abdullah established an independent election body and constitutional court, and hinted at an increased role for parliament, the pace of change has now slowed. And in April 2012 the parliament voted to ban the establishment of any political party on a religious basis, thus denying Islamist groups the right to contest future elections.

So for the time being the Islamist tide is being held back in Jordan, albeit at the cost of entrenching the current authoritarian regime. This is generally good news for the country's Christians, but a large influx of refugees from Syria, straining Jordan's resources, might further destabilise the government.

The plight of **Iraq's** suffering Christians continues to be desperate. Since the Gulf War of 1990-1, they have increasingly been targeted by Muslim extremists, and when the country was plunged into chaos after the US-led invasion in 2003, there was a massive surge in anti-Christian threats, kidnappings and murders. Although the anti-government insurgency that fuelled the violence has been brought under some sort of control, attacks on Christians have continued. In the most

serious incident, a siege at a Baghdad church in October 2010 left more than 50 people dead.

Hundreds of thousands of Christians have been forced to flee their homes, and the Christian population has diminished to little more than a quarter of its size in 1990. Most of them have fled to Syria, Lebanon or Jordan. So although Iraq itself has been largely untouched by the Arab Spring, its refugee Christians are now facing the prospect of their former havens falling into Islamist hands, and of having nowhere safe to escape.

Iran is geographically on the fringes of MENA, and its people are (mainly) non-Arab, but the enormous influence it wields in the region justifies its inclusion in this article. Traditionally an ally of the Shia Alawite government of Syria, Iran has been accused of providing support for the Assad regime in the latter's efforts to hold on to power. Its stance has increased tensions with the West, which were already severe as a result of the Iranian government's barely concealed nuclear ambitions. The prospect of Western military intervention in Iran is growing.

The Islamic Republic is already no friend to the country's Christians. They are subject to serious discrimination, and their churches are closely watched and strictly regulated. Church leaders are particularly at risk of arrest and detention without trial. Evangelism among Muslims attracts harsh reprisals, and converts from Islam face severe persecution from the authorities: intense interrogation, verbal and physical abuse, prosecution and imprisonment.

These draconian measures against converts seem designed to stop the remarkable growth of the Iranian house churches (made up of Muslim converts). The regime sees Christians as a threat to its religious and political authority. If the West takes military action against Iran, a backlash against the churches is virtually certain, perhaps amounting to a "cleansing" of the country's Christians similar to that in Iraq.

Conclusion

MENA is an immensely complex and varied region; indeed, it is really several regions in one. The unrest and revolutions of the last two years were largely unexpected, and their unfolding story has included many surprises. For these reasons the future course of events is extremely difficult to predict. Further political, social and economic changes are inevitable, but how the various factions – reactionary, Islamist, liberal and militant – will resolve their struggle for supremacy will remain unclear for some time.

But it is virtually certain that for the foreseeable future the impact of the Arab Spring and its aftermath will be negative for most Christians in MENA. Their position in society was already so bad and their freedoms so minimal that a political convulsion on this scale was always likely to put them at even greater disadvantage. Among all the countries discussed above, there is not a single one in which the recent changes have been good for the churches: in some places their conditions are largely unchanged, but in many others they are suffering more severely than before, and no remotely likely scenario offers them any prospect of relief.

Please pray for Christians in MENA, that they may know God's peace and strength at this difficult and challenging time. Pray that they may stand firm in their faith and have wisdom in responding to developing events. Pray for their protection against those who want to harm them or drive them out of the region. And pray too that there may eventually be positive political changes in every country that will allow them to worship and serve the Lord without the danger of reprisals. ■

Barnabas Fund is helping in the Middle East and North Africa

Barnabas Fund has been actively helping Christians continue to live out their faith in these tumultuous regions since 1995. One of our first projects in the region was feeding needy Christians in Egypt. Since then we have supported Christians there through numerous projects and in many different ways, including the provision of free medical care, and water and electricity for their homes. We have also extended our help to persecuted believers in many other countries of the Middle East and North Africa.

Below are some of the ways we have been helping Christians in recent years. Some projects, however, cannot be mentioned because of the risk to those we help.

Emergency aid after Arab Spring

With unprecedented, and often violent, change taking place in many of the regions' countries in the past two years, Barnabas has responded by providing emergency aid and expanded feeding programmes. In Syria, where Christians have been increasingly under attack, believers received medicine, money for rent and other essentials. Thousands of Syrian Christians also started receiving food packages after they

had fled their homes and lost their jobs as a consequence; spiralling food prices put them in an even more critical financial position. Last year, 3,000 Christian families in Egypt, living in areas that have been particularly affected by the 2011 revolution and its aftermath, received food packages through their local church.

Violent attacks on Christians, especially converts from Islam, have been ongoing for decades in

these regions, but in Egypt and Syria these have intensified since the Arab Spring. Over the years Barnabas has frequently helped Christian victims of violence, for example by funding surgery for a Christian man who was shot in the mouth in March 2012 when protesting against the burning of a church in Egypt. Barnabas also helps converts from Islam and victims of violence in Iran.



Needy Christians in Egypt have received food from Barnabas for many years

Feeding the despised and rejected

"This food help is a real assistance in fulfilling the needs of the people and it is really important for them," one of the organisers of a food aid programme for Iraqi refugees said. After the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, hundreds of thousands of Iraqi Christians were ousted from their jobs and homes through intimidation and violence from Islamists. Some fled to the safer, more peaceful north of Iraq, others to neighbouring countries. Ever since, Barnabas Fund has been supporting thousands of Iraqi

Christian refugees through sustained feeding programmes in northern Iraq and Syria, and periodically in Lebanon and Jordan.

Feeding programmes for impoverished Christians in the Holy Land and Egypt have also been ongoing for many years. Persistent discrimination against Christians creates much need in both countries. Also, many Christians in the Holy Land lost their livelihoods after the second Palestinian *intifada* damaged the tourist industry.

Making resources available

Many impoverished Christian children growing up in remote villages and in the city slums of Egypt do not have access to any Christian resources. But a Christian children's magazine teaches them about their faith using colourful cartoons and contemporary stories. Barnabas has contributed to the production and distribution costs for many years.

In Turkey an informative film in the Kurdish language about the apostle Paul's journey through Asia Minor (Turkey) was produced last year with support from Barnabas. It is showing Kurdish Christians, many of whom are converts from Islam, that Christianity is not a recent Western import but was introduced to their country in the first century. Five thousand DVDs were distributed throughout Turkey. In one of the Gulf States Barnabas helped

equip a Bible centre with Bibles and other Christian literature, and we also make Christian resources available in Iran. And we helped the Bible Society of Egypt renovate a large warehouse in Cairo, which functions as a hub for distributing Scriptures and modern media in the country.



Christian schools

“What you’re doing saves our kids from many major problems with the Islamic teaching,” writes a coordinator of a Christian nursery in Algeria, which has received support from Barnabas for two years. At the nursery 18 Christian children are learning to write, draw and count using Biblical stories. The children pray before meals and for their parents and friends, and the teachers pray with them and teach them how to pray.

A Christian school can provide a safe environment for Christian children in Middle Eastern and North African countries, who otherwise will experience belittlement, teasing and discrimination in other schools because of their faith. In Egypt, Barnabas

paid the school fees of Christian children whose parents were working in the Christian media. In Bethlehem, Barnabas has supported a Christian nursery and primary school for many years, making it possible for even the neediest children to attend by paying only a nominal school fee. The school is so popular that the building is accommodating the children at its fullest capacity, even after a major building extension in 2010, which was funded by Barnabas. This year 340 children are attending the school. Also, in Syria we have built a Christian nursery, two primary schools and a secondary school. And in a garbage city in Cairo a newly built school for disabled Christian children is now in use.



Celebrations at a Christian school in Bethlehem supported by Barnabas



Combatting poverty

Over the years Barnabas has supported many income-generating projects in Egypt that enable Christians to start up their own businesses. Through one ministry alone 324 young people were able to establish businesses after receiving training in areas such as

picture framing, translation, video recording for weddings and soap manufacturing. Fifty-four Christian families living in a garbage village on the outskirts of Cairo were helped to start up various businesses, including motorcycle repair and trading mobile telephones. Another 25 families received buffaloes, and six were given

goats and sheep for animal rearing. And three families received a garbage-recycling machine for their own recycling businesses. In Iraq we have provided 250 families with 40 chicks each and another 40 with four sheep each.



Recording a Christian programme in Turkish



Christian message through media

Christian satellite television is proving to be a very effective way to reach hundreds of thousands of Christians and strengthen them in their faith. Over the years Barnabas has supported several of these channels. One Syrian viewer recently commented about a programme in Arabic, “I wait for you every week so I can pray with you.”

Barnabas has also supported the creation of Christian programmes that counteract the negative portrayal of the Christian faith in the national media. Recently, seven programmes in the Turkish language were created thanks to Barnabas, which defended Christianity against objections.



Building homes, churches and more

This summer 24 Christian Iraqi refugee families moved into a new apartment complex in northern Iraq, which was built with funds from Barnabas. The families pay only nominal rent of \$30 (£19; €25) per month each. Another eight Christian families have been living in apartments in northern Iraq built by Barnabas since April 2010. Many other kinds of buildings have been provided thanks to Barnabas: for example, apartments for newly-wed Christian couples in Syria, churches in Syria, Algeria and Turkey, and several schools. And in Lebanon Barnabas assisted towards the costs of building/refurbishing two care homes for elderly Christians.



Leadership training

“I now realize that it is up to us as believers to invest ourselves in [our country] and to work towards making it a place ... where we can demonstrate the transforming, renewing power of the Gospel,” wrote a church leader in a North African country after receiving theological training through Barnabas. Strengthening the persecuted Church by equipping and supporting their leaders is a vital way that Barnabas aims to help Christians in the Middle East and North Africa. This is why Barnabas has funded many Biblical and theological training courses in the MENA region, including in Lebanon and Turkey.



Pastors and evangelists

Another way we support full-time Christian workers is through contributing to their daily living costs, thus setting them free to serve as church-planters, evangelists or pastors. We have supported workers in many Middle Eastern and North African countries, including Algeria, Iraq, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Syria. One pastor commented, “So much more can now be done and there is capacity for church planting and outreach.”

20-246 (Iraq – Feeding Christian Families)
11-220 (Egypt – Feeding Christian Families)
65-377 (Holy Land – Food and Basic Needs)

65-420 (Holy Land – Sponsoring Christian School Children in Bethlehem)
00-1032 (Middle East Fund to help Christians in Syria)
20-207 (Egypt– Christian Magazine for Children)

Freedom for the oppressed

Luke 4:16-21

This study looks at the same passage as the sermon outline (pp. 22-23). It can be used before or after hearing the sermon, or separately. If it is used without the sermon, it may be helpful for the leader to read through the sermon outline beforehand. The section at the end entitled “Digging deeper” is intended for those who would like to explore the passage in more depth and in its wider context.

Introduction

1. How much do you know about anti-Christian persecution? How do you react to the fact that one in ten Christians lives with some form of persecution because of their faith?

2. What do you think the response of Western governments should be to the persecution of Christians in other countries? What should the authorities in those countries be doing?

READ LUKE 4:16-21, ISAIAH 61:1-9 AND ISAIAH 58:6.

What is freedom?

3. According to Luke 4:18-19, what are the main elements in Jesus’ proclamation of “good news”?

4. In light of Isaiah 61, what kind of freedom does Jesus promise here? To what extent should we expect to experience this freedom now? (See Matthew 10:16-23; 1 Corinthians 15:24; 2 Corinthians 1:10.)

5. In what other ways does Christ set us free? (See Luke 5:12-16; 6:17-19; 24:7.) What kinds of human need are met by these different kinds of freedom?

Who receives freedom?

6. For whom is the freedom that Christ brings intended? Who are “the poor” to whom he

preaches good news? (See also question 14 below.)

7. How is God’s concern for “the poor” an encouragement to our suffering brothers and sisters? In what different ways can Christ set them free?

8. How can people who are quite secure and comfortable also receive Christ’s gift of freedom? (See Luke 19:1-10.) How can we identify more closely with “poor” and persecuted Christians?

Who brings freedom?

9. In what two ways does God make Jesus His agent to bring freedom to others? How does His coming fulfil Isaiah’s promise?

10. What role do we as Jesus’ disciples play in His mission of liberation? (See Luke 10:1-12; 24:44-49; Acts 1:1.) How does He equip us for this task? (See Acts 1:1-5; 2:1-4.)

11. In what ways can we help our Lord’s suffering family to experience the freedom that He offers?

Conclusion

12. Try to sum up what you have learned from this passage. Identify one concrete action that you can take, individually or as a group, to “proclaim freedom” for persecuted Christians.

Digging deeper



13. Study some or all of the main passage relating to the Old Testament Year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:8-54). How does this shed light on the freedom that Jesus came to bring?

14. Look up some of the passages in the Old and New Testaments that refer to the poor and needy (e.g. 1 Samuel 2:6-9; Psalm 86:1-7; Isaiah 11:1-5; Matthew 5:3/Luke 6:20; Luke 14:15-24; 1 Corinthians 1:26-31). What do they tell us about “the poor” to whom Jesus preaches good news?

15. Consider some of the ways in which Jesus lives out His proclamation in Luke 4:31-44. What different kinds of freedom does He bring to those in need?

Further reading

For further explanation of this passage, please see the following:

Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (New International Commentary on the New Testament). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (New International Greek Testament Commentary). Grand Rapids and Exeter: Eerdmans and Paternoster, 1978.

“TO PROCLAIM FREEDOM TO THE PRISONERS...”

Luke 4:16-21

The following sermon outline can be used at a **Suffering Church Sunday** service or meeting. It can be read out as it stands, though you may want to add some illustrations of your own. Alternatively it can be used as a framework for your own ideas and applications. Some helpful commentaries are recommended on page 21.

Did you know that around one in ten Christians lives with discrimination, violence or some other form of persecution because of their faith? Across huge swathes of Asia, Africa and the Middle East, the basic human rights of our brothers and sisters are cruelly violated, and those who attack them are rarely held to account.

This year Barnabas Fund is seeking to raise the profile of the persecuted Church around the world with its campaign, *Proclaim Freedom*. This initiative aims to press governments to promote human rights in other countries, especially for the roughly 200 million Christians who suffer pressure and persecution because of their love for the Lord Jesus. It also calls on those in authority to make sure that those who stir up anti-Christian hatred and engage in anti-Christian violence are held accountable. (You can read more about the campaign on pages 10-12 of this issue of *Barnabas Aid*.)

Barnabas has taken the title of the campaign from the statement of Jesus in Luke's Gospel that God has sent Him to "proclaim freedom" or release (Luke 4:18). This is in turn a quotation from the prophecy of Isaiah (61:1-2; 58:6), which describes God's liberation of His people.

Luke 4:16-21 is often called the "Nazareth Manifesto", because it summarises the basic content of Jesus' ministry. That ministry includes the proclaiming of freedom, and so the passage provides a Biblical basis for speaking up on behalf of those who are burdened or enslaved by injustice and tyranny – especially our suffering brothers and sisters in Christ. Because Jesus calls

His disciples to share in His ministry, the passage also invites us to take part in that vital task.

What is freedom?

The word for freedom in Luke 4:18 is used many times in the Greek Old Testament to refer to Israel's Year of Jubilee.¹ At this special time, every 50 years, land was to be released back to its original owners, debts cancelled, and Israelite slaves set at liberty. The word is also used elsewhere in the Old Testament for the release of prisoners or slaves. In Isaiah 61, which Jesus quotes in Luke, the prophet declares that the Lord has anointed him with His Spirit to proclaim good news. This includes freedom for God's people from their harsh oppression by other nations.

So the freedom that Isaiah predicts involves release from social and political repression. His hope is that God will release His people from all the human forces – individuals, communities and states – that enslave them and stop them from worshipping and serving Him freely. By quoting Isaiah in the Nazareth synagogue, our Lord makes this freedom a part of our Christian hope too.

Such freedom is always limited in this age. We are warned to expect various kinds of persecution at the hands of others,² and we will be set perfectly free from human oppression only when Christ returns.³ But like all the blessings that Christ gives us, this freedom can be enjoyed in part here and now.⁴ So it is right for us earnestly to seek it for ourselves and for others, and most of all for our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

¹ See Leviticus 25 and 27. ² Matthew 10:16-23; 24:9. ³ 1 Corinthians 15:24. ⁴ 2 Corinthians 1:10; 2 Thessalonians 3:2.

We should note too that the freedom Christ offers is not *only* social and political. In Isaiah, God's people are also estranged from Him because of their sins; so they need His forgiveness too. And Luke generally uses the Greek word for freedom to refer to God's forgiveness of His people's sins through Jesus and His cancelling of the penalty that they deserve.⁵ He also describes how Jesus sets people free from the crippling effects of disease and demonic power⁶ as well as from social restrictions and exclusion.⁷

It follows that Christians are called to follow our Lord in proclaiming freedom in the fullest possible sense. Release from human oppression is only one part of this; it also includes forgiveness, healing, and deliverance from spiritual forces of evil. So the *Proclaim Freedom* campaign for human rights and justice is not just a social and political programme. It is fully integrated with Barnabas Fund's wider work of providing practical and spiritual support to the persecuted Church.

Who receives freedom?

Jesus declares in Nazareth that God has sent Him to proclaim release to captives and to free the oppressed. These people include those who suffer injustice and persecution at the hands of other people, but also those who are enslaved to sin, sickness and spiritual powers. The freedom Christ brings is intended for people who are trapped by any or all of these evils: in other words, for everyone.

But Jesus' task of proclaiming freedom is part of His wider work of preaching good news, and this news is directed specifically to "the poor". In Isaiah this phrase refers to God's people in their need and helplessness before their enemies. In Luke's Gospel it refers to those who are insecure and suffering, who cannot rely on anything of their own and who therefore seek and depend on God. They may be vulnerable because they are physically poor, but also for other reasons, perhaps because they are excluded from society or repressed by the authorities.

So the freedom that Christ brings is given to those (among others) who suffer discrimination and persecution because of their faith in Him. Deprived of human and material support, these brothers and sisters live in humble dependence on the Lord, and so they are open to receive His gracious gift of freedom. Sometimes they are set free from fear or anger and find themselves able to love and forgive their enemies. Sometimes they are set free from the destructive effects of their ill-treatment and receive healing and peace. And sometimes they are physically set free from injustice or imprisonment.

Munir Masih and Ruqqiya Bibi, a Christian couple from Pakistan, were sentenced to life imprisonment on a false charge of blasphemy. But earlier this year they were cleared on appeal and set free with help from a Christian legal organisation supported by Barnabas Fund. A tearful Munir thanked God and quoted Psalm 94, saying, "The Lord has become my fortress, and my God the rock in whom I take refuge."

It is not only "poor" people like Munir and Ruqqiya who can receive Christ's gift of freedom. The "rich",⁸ who are relatively secure and comfortable, can obtain it too. But they do so by identifying themselves with the poor: generously sharing what they have, giving up their own security, and trusting in God alone.

Barnabas Fund's *Proclaim Freedom* campaign offers "rich" Christians in the security and comfort of the West an opportunity to stand with our "poor" brothers and sisters in Christ in other parts of the world. By playing our part in it, we can share something of what we have with these Christians and promote the freedom that is God's will for them and us.

Who brings freedom?

In the Nazareth synagogue Jesus declares that the Spirit of the Lord is upon Him, because the Lord has anointed Him. The Lord has also sent Him for the task of preaching good news to the poor. It is Jesus whom God has commissioned and equipped to fulfil Isaiah's promise of freedom for the captives and the oppressed; as He Himself says, that very day this scripture is being fulfilled as He proclaims His message to the people. The era of salvation and release has dawned, in the coming of Jesus.

But as we read on in Luke's Gospel and into the Acts of the Apostles, we see that Jesus does not bring in this new age of freedom by Himself. He sends out groups of disciples to share in His ministry;⁹ He commissions His followers to continue it after His ascension;¹⁰ and He pours out His Holy Spirit upon them for the task.¹¹ The ministry remains His,¹² but He now carries it out by the Spirit and through His people.

This means that if our Lord's suffering family are to enter into the freedom that He brings, we need both to pray and to take action on their behalf. Barnabas Fund's *Proclaim Freedom* campaign will succeed only if it is carried out in prayerful dependence on the Lord, who alone can give release to His people. This Suffering Church Sunday, please pray that He will set persecuted Christians free from their oppressors.

But because we are Christ's disciples, He calls us also to share in His work of proclaiming freedom. As you reflect on the persecution and distress of our brothers and sisters, please consider in what other ways you can support the campaign, whether by signing the petition, writing to your elected representative or providing a financial gift.

Jesus ends His reading from Isaiah by announcing that He has been sent to declare the year of the Lord's favour. This is the time that God has appointed to bring deliverance and freedom, through Christ and those who follow Him. Jesus' message requires a response from us: to join Him in proclaiming freedom for His enslaved people throughout the world.

⁵ For example, Luke 1:77; 24:7; Acts 2:38. ⁶ For example, Luke 6:17-19. ⁷ For example, Luke 5:12-16. ⁸ Such as Zacchaeus; Luke 19:1-10. ⁹ Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-12. ¹⁰ Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:1-5. ¹¹ Acts 2:1-4. ¹² Acts 1:1.

"It couldn't happen here"

This dramatised reading can be performed by people of various age groups, and no previous drama experience is required!

If your church or group is too small to provide two choruses, these parts can be said by single voices. Alternatively you could encourage the whole congregation to participate by projecting the words on a screen and inviting one side or group to play Chorus 1 and the other Chorus 2. Individuals can also play more than one part if necessary.

Different examples of persecution from around the world can be used instead of those given. The stories can be read out of *Barnabas Aid* to highlight the publication and to save the reader from having to memorise them. Or they can be read from an email, sheet or newspaper.

Accompanying PowerPoint slides are available to download from our website, www.barnabasfund.org/SCS, or on a DVD that can be ordered from your national office (addresses on back cover).

NARRATOR 1:

(Slide 1)

Right at the crest, where the Mount of Olives begins its descent, the whole crowd of disciples burst into enthusiastic praise over all the mighty works they had witnessed.

(Slide 2)

CHORUS 1:

God bless the king who comes in the name of the Lord!

CHORUS 2:

Peace in heaven and glory to God!

PHARISEE (ONE PERSON FROM CHORUS):

Teacher, get your disciples under control!

JESUS (ANOTHER PERSON FROM CHORUS):

If they kept quiet, the stones would do it for them, shouting praise.

CHORUS 1:

If they kept quiet, the stones would do it for them, shouting praise.

CHORUS 2:

Shouting praise.

CHORUS 1:

Get your disciples under control!

CHORUS 2:

Get your disciples under control!

JESUS:

If they kept quiet, the stones would do it for them, shouting praise.

PERSON FROM CHORUS:

Thank God that couldn't happen today.

CHORUS 1 AND 2:

Yes, thank God!

READER:

Mali, Africa 2012: One Islamist movement has specifically targeted Christians, chasing them from their homes, occupying a Bible school and destroying all churches in the cities of Gao and Timbuktu, and now it has started to impose sharia law on the region.

CHORUS 1:

Get your disciples under control!

CHORUS 2:

Get your disciples under control!

PERSON FROM CHORUS:

Thank God it couldn't happen today.

CHORUS 1 AND 2:

Yes, thank God!

READER:

Uganda, Africa: Many Muslims are particularly aggressive towards Christian converts. Their Muslim families and friends disown them.

CHORUS 1:

God bless the king who comes in the name of the Lord!

CHORUS 2:

Peace in heaven and glory to God!

CHORUS 1

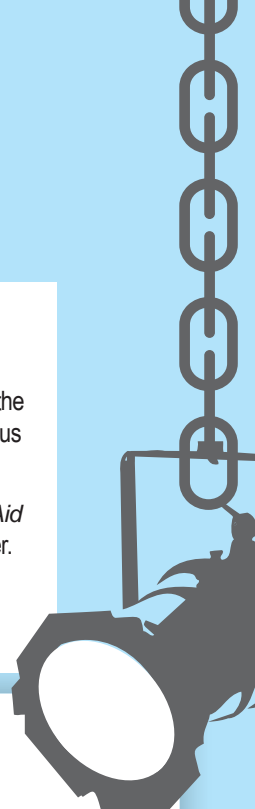
(more aggressively): Get your disciples under control!



1



2



CHORUS 2:

Get your disciples under control!

PERSON FROM CHORUS:

Thank God it couldn't happen today.

READER:

Anti-Christian violence continues unabated in Nigeria leaving hundreds dead. At a church service in Bayo University on 29 April 2012 a gun and bomb attack left 22 worshippers and their pastor dead after gunmen fired indiscriminately at them.

PERSON FROM CHORUS:

Thank God it couldn't happen today.

READER:

Mali: Boko Haram, the Islamist group, is also waging war against Christians here.

PERSON FROM CHORUS:

Thank God it couldn't happen today.

READER:

Kenya: Seventeen people died and many other worshippers were injured when two churches were attacked in Garissa, Kenya on Sunday 1 July 2012.

PERSON FROM CHORUS:

Thank God it couldn't happen today.

READER:

Syria 2012: A group of militants seized control of a village near Hama and ordered the Christians to leave empty-handed. The militants also occupied the village church.

PERSON FROM CHORUS:

Thank God it couldn't happen today.

READER:

Burma: Two children from the predominantly Christian Kachin people group were shot dead by the Burmese military on 5 May 2012.

PERSON FROM CHORUS:

(CHANTING BY ROTE AND THEN THINKING HESITANTLY, VISIBLY CONCERNED)
Thank God it couldn't happen ... it

couldn't happen to... Well, does it happen today? Maybe it happens today? (Rethinking and visibly brightening up.) At least ... at least...

Thank God it couldn't happen to us.

Yes, thank God it couldn't happen to us.

READER 1

(can be read from Birmingham Mail; slide 3) February 2008: Two evangelists handing out Christian pamphlets in Birmingham are told it might be wiser if they did not come back.

READER 2

(as a policeman/PCSO): You can't preach here, this is a Muslim area. You have been warned. If you come back here and get beat up ... well, you have been warned!

PHARISEE:

Teacher, get your disciples under control!

NARRATOR 1:

(Slide 1)
Right at the crest, where the Mount of Olives begins its descent, the whole crowd of disciples burst into enthusiastic praise over all the mighty works they had witnessed.

CHORUS 1:

God bless the king who comes in the name of the Lord!

CHORUS 2:

Peace in heaven and glory to God!

PHARISEE:

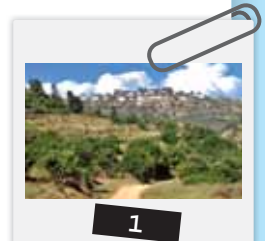
(Very emphatically) Teacher, get your disciples under control!

JESUS:

If they kept quiet, the stones would do it for them, shouting praise.

BOTH CHORUSES:

If they kept quiet, the stones would do it for them, shouting praise.



Suffering Church Sunday Resources

Suggested songs for your service

- Before the throne of God above
(Charitie L. Bancroft, *Songs of Fellowship* 1187)
- 10,000 reasons (Bless the Lord)
(Matt Redman, *10,000 Reasons*, www.mattredman.com)
- Great is Thy faithfulness
(Thomas O Chisholm, *Songs of Fellowship* 147)
- Hear the call of the Kingdom
(Keith and Kristyn Getty and Stuart Townend, *Songs of Fellowship* 1819)
- O love that wilt not let me go
(George Matheson, *Songs of Fellowship* 434)
- I, the Lord of sea and sky
(Daniel L. Schutte, *Songs of Fellowship* 830)
- We rest on Thee, our Shield and our Defender!
(Edith Cherry, *Songs of Fellowship* 587)
- A safe stronghold our God is still
(Martin Luther, *Songs of Fellowship* 25)

NEW original song: Stand for the Justice of God

This unpublished new song, by Barnabas UK staff member Andrew Fleet, is based on Galatians 6:10, the Bible verse that guides our work at Barnabas Fund and tells us that we should "...do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers". The song also reminds us of Jesus' command to deny ourselves, take up the cross and follow Him (Matthew 16:24), and to remember our brothers and sisters who are suffering for their faith in Christ.

Andrew has written music to accompany his words; this can be downloaded from our website (www.barnabasfund.org/scs). In addition, he has recorded versions of the song, with and without accompanying vocals, which are also available from the website or on our Suffering Church Sunday DVD.

Where the God-given freedoms are
challenged
And the people of Jesus attacked;
Where the love of the Lord meets with
hatred
And the enemy's causes are backed;
It is here we will uphold our brothers,
Give our sisters the love they need,
Serve God's people in their persecution,
Fight for rights and the cause that they
plead.

*We will walk in the footsteps of Jesus,
Pray for those who are bearing His cross.
We will give of ourselves for His kingdom.
We will stand for the justice of God.*

We will do good to all in our mission,
Seeking Christ-like to be in our ways;
But especially serving God's people
Who suffer and hurt in these days.
May they know of the prayers that we
bring You.

May our giving bring them relief.
In the face of those faiths that revile them,
Give them comfort and justice and peace.

Father God we now praise and extol You,
For You are our strength in the fight!
Through Your power alone do we prosper.
Give us wisdom and spirit and sight.
Where there's prejudice may we act fairly,
Defending the poor and weak.
To injustice, subversion and violence
May we translate your words as we speak.

Lord, we pray for the growth of Your
kingdom,
Not found in the power lust of man.
But aspiring to heavenly glory
Through the death of the Lamb who was
slain.

May the blood of the martyrs inspire us;
Those imprisoned for Christ spur us on;
That Your love be the heart of our service,
We pray: Your will not ours may be done.

©asfleet, 2012

A Prayer for Suffering Church Sunday

O Triune God, Creator of all that exists, bringer of salvation and the hope of Your people, we come before You to pray for our suffering brothers and sisters who today experience discrimination, marginalisation, alienation, injustice, hatred and persecution, just as Jesus Himself suffered on earth.

Father of your suffering people, we **adore** you and bless you for your power, greatness and covenant love. We **confess** that we have neither remembered nor cared for Your suffering children as we should. We **thank** You that Your Name is written on their forehead, that they are held in the palm of Your hand, and carried in your arms. We **supplicate** You to bring them aid, and gather them to Yourself when their time on earth is over, and pray that you would give to us true compassion for them.

Son of our loving Father God, Brother and Kinsman of Your suffering people, we recognise that Your Body is again being broken, as Your people suffer at the hands of their tormentors. Fill them with Your love and forgiveness, as You extended Your love and forgiveness on the cross to those who persecuted You.

Holy Spirit, the Strengtheners of Your suffering people, give them Your grace to sustain them in their trials, Your wisdom to know how to respond, and Your perseverance to endure faithfully to the end.

O Triune God, we pray for the persecutors of Your people that they will experience Your compelling love that casts out all fear and hatred and will turn their hearts to You.

We pray these things in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

Amen

© Patrick Sookhdeo, 2012

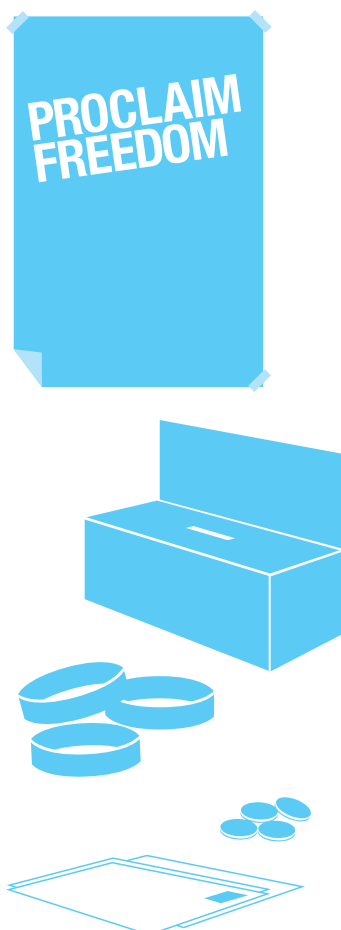
Suggested offering for your SCS service

With all the turmoil that has befallen the Middle East and North Africa in the last twelve months, Barnabas Fund has been working with local churches to help our Christian family in Syria who are under much pressure due to the crisis in their country, which has now developed into a civil war.

We are providing food parcels, medical assistance and other basic needs to our brothers and sisters in Syria. Please consider taking up a Suffering Church Sunday offering to help meet this need or for any other project you may choose. Alternatively give your offering to our General Fund, which allows us to provide help quickly in urgent or sensitive situations.



This year, we have prepared a *Proclaim Freedom* Pack for supporters to use in their Suffering Church Sunday service.



The pack contains:

- A3 version (approx. 300 x 420mm) of the poster (see page 6), to advertise your Suffering Church Sunday service.
- Persecuted Church postcard with response form (see below for more details); additional copies for your congregation are available on request
- Prayer bookmark (see page 26); additional copies are available on request
- Ideas for your SCS Sunday school session, including a talk and a children's song
- SCS 2012-2013 DVD containing the following:
 - Short video about the work of Barnabas Fund
 - PowerPoint presentation to accompany the sermon on Luke 4:16-21 (see page 22-23)
 - Recording of Andrew Fleet's original song "Stand for the Justice of God", including the piano score and words
 - PowerPoint slides to accompany the drama "It couldn't happen here"
 - Song for all-age worship, "We are the children"
- Additional copies of *Barnabas Aid* September/October 2012
- One free *Proclaim Freedom* wristband
- One free *Proclaim Freedom* lapel pin
- *Proclaim Freedom* money box (could be used to receive donations for the wristband and lapel pin)

Further wristbands and lapel pins can be purchased for £1 each or 10 for £9 by contacting your nearest Barnabas Fund office.

Persecuted Church postcards

Our postcards each show a picture of a church in a context of anti-Christian discrimination or persecution. They are a prayer aid to encourage Christians in contexts of freedom to pray for one particular congregation facing pressure. Please pray for this church and the believers who worship there, that the Lord will grant them peace and security and that they may come to a deeper and stronger faith in the Lord Jesus.

The card, which includes a response form, is available to order free of charge from your national Barnabas Fund office. These are a great resource for distribution to your congregation on Suffering Church Sunday. **Please order as many FREE cards as you need, one for every member of your congregation!**



Order your *Proclaim Freedom* Pack free of charge from our website (www.barnabasfund.org/scs) or please send the order form below to your national Barnabas Fund office (addresses on back cover).

Tell us about your SCS event, by posting it on our online map
www.barnabasfund.org/share-my-event

Name _____

Address: _____

Email _____

Name of church: _____

- Please send me _____ extra copies of the Persecuted Church postcard
- Please send me _____ extra copies of the prayer bookmark

CHRISTIANS KILLED IN DEADLY CHURCH ATTACKS

KENYA: A coordinated attack on two churches in Kenya by suspected al-Shabaab militants has left at least 17 people dead and around 65 injured. The churches in Garissa were targeted during services on Sunday 1 July at around 10.15am.

The first attack took place at the African Inland Church (AIC), where the gunmen shot dead two policemen who were guarding the building before throwing grenades inside. As the congregation tried to escape, the assailants opened fire, killing 15 church members. One of the elders at AIC received two bullets to the chest, but thanks to a lengthy operation, he is now recovering.

A Barnabas Fund contact in Kenya said, "The gun shots in the compound made worshippers run out in panic only to the waiting killers. Using police



Christians have come under attack in recent months in Kenya

guns, they rained bullets on fleeing worshippers and many who could not

run. Blood could be seen everywhere, furniture strewn all over..."

Two grenades were also thrown inside a second church; one failed to detonate, but three people were injured by the other.

Barnabas Fund sent an emergency grant to help meet the needs of Christians affected by the attacks. At a funeral on 10 July for some of the victims, the Vice-President of Kenya, Stephen Kalonzo Mosyoka, thanked those organisations who were able to respond so quickly by providing money and medical attention to those affected by the violence.

This is not the first assault on churches in Kenya (see *Barnabas Aid* July/August 2012). Muslim leaders have vowed that they will arrange for Muslim youth to provide protection at churches in Garissa and other places where Christians request it.

WELCOME DEVELOPMENTS FOR THE CHRISTIAN MINORITY

INDONESIA: A survey by the National Survey Institute (LSN) has revealed a sharp drop in support for Islamic political parties in Indonesia. The results, which were announced on 26 June, found that only 15% of respondents backed the four main Islamic parties.

This is a dramatic decline from the 2009 elections, where the same parties gained 29% of the total vote and 1998, when they enjoyed as much as 38% of the vote.

The drop in support for Islamic political parties is a welcome development for Christians in Indonesia, who have suffered extensive violence and harassment at the hands of Islamists, who want to eliminate Christianity and bring the entire country under sharia law. Since 2003 at least half of Indonesia's 32 provinces have enacted their own

variations of sharia in response to Islamist pressure.

Another positive development for Indonesia's Christians is the jailing of a former "most wanted" terrorist who made the explosives used to blow up several Indonesian churches as part of a major anti-Christian attack in 2000.

Umar Patek was jailed on 21 June for 20 years, having been found guilty of six charges including murder, bomb-making and terrorism offences in relation to the coordinated attacks on several churches in Jakarta on Christmas Eve in 2000 and also the Bali bombings that killed 202 people, mostly foreigners, in 2002. The church attack was part of a major assault on 25 churches in eleven cities by militants from Islamist group Jemaah Islamiyah; around 19 people, mostly Christians attending services, were killed.

ZANZIBAR CHURCHES TORCHED BY ISLAMIST SEPARATISTS

TANZANIA: At least two churches and a Christian centre were torched following protests in Zanzibar on Saturday 26 May.

Hundreds of members of the Association for Islamic Mobilisation and Propagation (UAMSHO), a separatist Islamist movement in Zanzibar, clashed with police during the protests, which started in the capital, Stone Town, and spread to other areas over the ensuing days.

One minister reported that rioters invaded his church building, poured

petrol over it and set it ablaze, reinforcing the fire with burning tyres. The Islamists, who were armed with clubs, machetes and iron bars, also torched homes and bars, destroyed transport and communication systems and blocked roads.

Mainland Tanzania is 44% Christian while the semi-autonomous island of Zanzibar is 99% Muslim. UAMSHO is strongly opposed to the government, calling for a referendum on Zanzibar's independence from mainland Tanzania.

Rioters invaded [the] church building, poured petrol over it and set it ablaze, reinforcing the fire with burning tyres

THOUSANDS OF CHRISTIANS FLEE AMID “ULTIMATUM” REPORTS

SYRIA: Most of the 10,000 Christian residents of Qusayr, Syria, have left the city, after reportedly being given an ultimatum to leave, a threat that was also echoed by the mosques. Two Christian leaders among those fleeing the city said that they heard the following message from the minarets: “Christians must leave Qusayr within six days, ending Friday (8 June).”

Whether or not they were ordered out, the city is an extremely dangerous place for those who remain, and it is clear that Christians no longer feel safe in their homes. A church minister, Atallah Ibrahim Bitar, was shot dead while reportedly taking food to people forced into hiding by a week-long bombardment.

Barnabas Fund has also been sent a photograph by a Christian in Syria showing a member of the Free Syrian Army in Homs mocking Christians by posing in a stolen clerical garment, holding a looted cross in one hand and a gun in the other; the fighter is stood in front of a church funeral car in a scene suggestive of a visual death threat. Barnabas Fund has received numerous reports of Christians being wounded and killed, and of churches being ransacked and destroyed. We are providing food, medicine and other essentials to the neediest Christian families affected by the unrest.

LAOS: Two members of the security force in Alowmai village, Phin district, Savannakhet province, Laos, were discharged from their posts on 14 June by the Phin district military commander after they became Christians.

Khamsorn and Tonglai made the decision to accept Christ at the end of May 2012. Their family members subsequently became Christians also.

KHARTOUM CHURCH BUILDING FLATTENED BY AUTHORITIES

SUDAN: The Episcopal Parish Church of St John in the capital of Sudan was bulldozed without warning by the local authority, flanked by police, on the morning of 18 June.

The authorities stated that the church had no legal documents

or status and that it belonged to Southerners, who they said should no longer be in the country following the independence of South Sudan.

The Bishop of Khartoum, the Rt Revd Ezekiel Kondo, challenged both of these reasons, saying that the government had refused to grant

whose bishop is Sudanese, belong to Southerners. “The authorities do not respect the right of non-Muslims in Sudan,” he added.

The World Council of Churches (WCC) and All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) said in a joint statement that

the church demolition was the latest in a series of “calculated attacks” on minority communities and Christians in particular.

“The authorities do not respect the right of non-Muslims in Sudan”

St John’s legal status for the last 25 years – despite several requests from the church – and that it does not, as part of the Episcopal Church of Sudan,

TURBULENT FUTURE FOR CHRISTIANS AFTER ISLAMIST VICTORY

EGYPT: The electoral commission announced on Sunday 24 June that the Muslim Brotherhood’s Mohammed Morsi had won the presidential election with 51.73% of the vote.

In his victory address, Mr Morsi declared himself a “president for all Egyptians” and called for a strengthening of “our national unity”. He has also promised that the prime minister will be a non-Islamist and that his ministers will represent a cross-section of society, but these comments contradict pledges he made on the campaign trail to apply sharia uncompromisingly if elected. He had said, “We will not accept any alternative to sharia... The Quran is

our constitution and it will always be so.”

Fearful that a Muslim Brotherhood victory would lead to the establishment of an Islamist state in Egypt, many

Egyptian Christians had voted for the former Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq, for which they have faced harassment and hostility.



Barnabas Fund is feeding needy Christian families in Egypt

SECURITY FORCE MEMBERS DISMISSED FOR ACCEPTING CHRIST

The chief of Alowmai village reported the matter to the sub-district police chief, who said that Khamsorn

and Tonglai’s acceptance of the Christian faith did not disqualify them from serving in the country’s security

force. But the village chief was not satisfied with this, and he reported it to the Phin district military commander, who is in charge of all the village security forces in the district.

Laos’ Communist authorities are deeply suspicious of Christianity, which they regard as a Western import and a threat to national unity, and therefore seek to suppress it.

Will you become a Prayer Partner with Barnabas?

Prayer is a priority at Barnabas Fund. We are so grateful that many supporters pray faithfully for the persecuted Church using resources such as the *Barnabas Prayer* booklet, the Barnabas website, and other prayer requests we send out by email, Facebook and Twitter. In this way you are partnering with us in prayer as you intercede for our suffering brothers and sisters, and we are very thankful.



Barnabas Fund Prayer Partners lead or belong to groups that are dedicated to praying for the persecuted Church. These groups can consist of Christians in a particular area or within a church fellowship; they meet weekly or monthly or as often as they choose and they can be of any size. We have a Prayer Group Starter Pack to support Prayer Partners in this role. The pack contains:

- Handy Hints for Prayer Group Leaders
- Bible references to assist your prayers for persecuted Christians
- "How to pray for persecuted Christians" bookmarks
- A set of A3 maps of persecution around the world
- Latest *Barnabas Prayer* booklet with daily prayer requests
- Latest monthly *Prayer Focus Update* (you will be sent future issues if you are not receiving this already)
- Barnabas booklet *A Call to Compassion*
- Free copy of *My Devotional Journal* (while stocks last)

If you wish to know more about becoming a Prayer Partner, we invite you to contact our Partnership office on 01672 564 938 ext. 257, or 024 7623 1923, email partnership@barnabasfund.org, or visit our website www.barnabasfund.org/partnership.



Many Christians around the world are already planning to participate in our Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, on Thursday 1 November. Please see the back of this magazine for more details.

Epic journey for Barnabas Fund

Barnabas Fund supporter Anthony Crawley and his wife Deborah cycled the length of Britain from Land's End to John O'Groats and raised over £300 for Barnabas Fund in May/June 2012.

Anthony says, "The ride itself was quite epic. We did 1067 miles in 18 days, an average of about 60 miles per day. We found the West Country to be the toughest part, though this may have been at least partly because we were not toughened up by then! The minor roads simply seem to go over the hills instead of around them, though that gave great views. One of the best features



Anthony and his wife Deborah raised money for Barnabas Fund by cycling 1067 miles from Land's End to John O'Groats

of the long ride was seeing the British landscape unfolding and changing from day to day. Most days we cycled for 8-9 hours, but we quickly established an essential routine of stopping for lunch around 12 noon and again for tea after 3pm. The sign I had on my bike ['Cycling from Land's End to John O'Groats in aid of Barnabas Fund'] generated a certain amount of spontaneous donation, not least by the Christian owners of the Mercury Motel west of Bolton. There were times when I really felt I could not complete the day except with a miracle, and I consider it such that I did finish the ride at all. Remembering the trials of our brothers and sisters in Christ who are helped by Barnabas Fund really helped me up many a hill in the early days!"

If you would like to share with us how you have helped to raise money for Barnabas Fund, please send an email or write to your national office (contact details are on the back of this magazine).

Harvest offering for hungry Christians

HARVEST is a great opportunity to remember our brothers and sisters around the world who suffer for their faith in Jesus Christ.

Would you consider taking up a thanksgiving offering to support our Feeding Fund to share the blessings that God has poured out on us with our persecuted Christian family?

00-636 Feeding Fund



"Sleepless night" in Australia for the youth

A group of 15 young people from Douglas Park Evangelical Church, Macarthur, New South Wales, Australia, held a "sleepless night" on Saturday 2 June 2012. The objective of the night was to increase awareness of the persecuted Church through workshops and also to raise funds. The group and their five leaders spent time praying together and baking cupcakes, which they sold to raise money to help Syrian Christians through Barnabas Fund.



A group of young people from Douglas Park Evangelical Church, Australia, raised AU\$1,000 (£65; €83) for Christians in Syria by holding a "sleepless night" in their church

In addition to selling the cakes, the group had to get sponsors for their effort, and some of the young people contributed their pocket money, including one who gave his coin collection, which came to over AU\$100 (£65; €83). In total, the group raised AU\$1,000 (£65; €83) to support Christians in Syria.

Yes, I would like to help the persecuted Church

Here is my gift of _____

Please use my gift for

Wherever the need is greatest (General Fund)

Other _____

I enclose a cheque/voucher payable to "Barnabas Fund".

Please debit my



Visa Mastercard American Express

Maestro CAF card /other charity card

Number

Maestro issue number or issue date

Expiry date Signature _____

I do not require an acknowledgement of this gift.

I would like to give regularly through my bank. Please send me the appropriate form. (UK supporters may use the Direct Debit form below.)

Please send the following free resources (indicate quantity required):

- Proclaim Freedom SCS pack _____
- Persecuted Church postcard _____
- Prayer bookmark _____

Alternative Gift Card To make an alternative gift for a loved one, please contact your national Barnabas office.

Registered Charity number 1092935 Company registered in England number 4029536

*If the project chosen is sufficiently funded, we reserve the right to use designated gifts either for another project of a similar type or for another project in the same country.

Supporters in Germany: please turn to back cover for how to send gifts to Barnabas Fund.

Name

(Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, Rev, Dr)

Address

Postcode

Telephone

Email

Gift Aid Declaration (Applicable to UK tax payers only)

Name of charity: **Barnabas Fund**

Please treat as Gift Aid donations all qualifying gifts of money made: (Please tick all boxes you wish to apply)

today in the past 4 years in the future

I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give.

Signature _____

Date _____

Please inform us if you want to cancel this declaration, change your name or home address or no longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains. If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self-Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.

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Please return this form to Barnabas Fund at your national office or to the UK office. Addresses are on the back cover. Barnabas Fund will not give your address or email to anyone else.

Phone **0800 587 4006** or visit our website at www.barnabasdfund.org to make a credit card donation. From outside UK phone **+44 1672 565031**.

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DIRECT DEBIT for UK supporters who would like to give regularly

I/We want to bring hope and aid to the persecuted Church by a regular gift, to be used

where it is most needed (General Fund) or for _____ *(give reference number of project to be supported)

Name (Mr, Mrs, Miss, Ms, Rev, Dr)

Address

Postcode

I would like to give a regular gift of £ _____ (amount in words) _____

Starting on 1st / 11th / 21st _____ and then every month/quarter/year (delete as applicable) until further notice.

This Direct Debit is a new one / in addition to / replaces an earlier Standing Order / Direct Debit in favour of Barnabas Fund. (delete as applicable).



Instruction to your bank or building society to pay by Direct Debit



Please fill in the whole form including official use box using a ball point pen and send it to: Barnabas Fund, 9 Priory Row, Coventry CV1 5EX

Name and full postal address of your bank or building society

Name(s) of account holder(s)

Bank/building society account number

Branch sort code

Service User Number

Reference (Barnabas Fund to complete)

Instruction to your bank or building society: Please pay Barnabas Fund Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured to by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Barnabas Fund and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my bank/building society. DD18

Signature(s)

Date

*If the project chosen is sufficiently funded, we reserve the right to use designated gifts either for another project of a similar type or for another project in the same country.

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THE DIRECT DEBIT GUARANTEE

This Guarantee is offered by all Banks and Building Societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits.

If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit Barnabas Fund will notify you 14 days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed.

If you request Barnabas Fund to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request.

If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit by Barnabas Fund or your bank or building society, you are guaranteed a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from from your bank or building society.

If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when Barnabas Fund asks you to. You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.



Barnabas Fund Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church

Thursday 1 November 2012



Prayer makes a difference

In many parts of the world, Christians live around the clock with the threat of discrimination, violence and other forms of persecution. As part of our *Proclaim Freedom* campaign, Barnabas Fund invites you to join us on Thursday 1 November for 24 hours dedicated to interceding for our suffering brothers and sisters. Christians in five continents will be marking this day, from Malawi to Malaysia, from Romania to Bangladesh, and from the Caribbean to the Philippines.

How to get involved

- Make time during your day to pray either individually or organise a group. This can be at any time that is suitable for you.
- Tell us about your prayer event, by posting it on our online map (www.barnabasfund.org/share-my-event)
- Order the Guide for the Barnabas Fund **Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church***, which focuses on a different country every 30 minutes. You may like to use this personally or as part of a group to pray at different times during the day.
- Follow the Day of Prayer on our Facebook page on 1 November, which will be updated with prayer requests throughout the day. Share posts with your friends and post your comments and prayers on our Persecution Prayer Wall.
- Join us at our Prayer Summit in London (venue to be confirmed).

*The Guide for the Barnabas Fund **Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church** provides further information on a number of countries where Christians experience persecution and provides suggestions for prayer on behalf of our brothers and sisters.

It is available free of charge from your national Barnabas Fund office (addresses below) or to download from our website (www.barnabasfund.org/scs).

How to Find Us

You may contact Barnabas Fund at the following addresses:

UK

9 Priory Row, Coventry CV1 5EX
Telephone 024 7623 1923 **Fax** 024 7683 4718

From outside the UK

Telephone +44 24 7623 1923 **Fax** +44 24 7683 4718

Email info@barnabasfund.org

Registered charity number 1092935

Company registered in England number 4029536

For a list of all trustees, please contact Barnabas Fund UK at the Coventry address above.

Australia

PO BOX 3527, LOGANHOLME, QLD 4128

Telephone (07) 3806 1076 or 1300 365 799

Fax (07) 3806 4076 **Email** bfaustralia@barnabasfund.org

Germany

German supporters may send gifts for Barnabas Fund via Hilfe für Brüder who will provide you with a tax-deductible receipt. Please mention that the donation is for "SPC 20 Barnabas Fund". If you would like your donation to go to a specific project of Barnabas Fund, please inform the Barnabas Fund office in Pewsey, UK.

Account holder: Hilfe für Brüder e.V.

Account number: 415 600 **Bank:** Evang. Kreditgenossenschaft Stuttgart

Bankcode (BLZ): 520 604 10


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barnabasaid the magazine of Barnabas Fund

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Published by Barnabas Fund The Old Rectory, River Street, Pewsey, Wiltshire SN9

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www.barnabasfund.org

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