


# OPEN DOORS

MAGAZINE



## Extraordinary Faith

Inside India's unstoppable persecuted church

**Be part of**  
*an extraordinary story*

4

**Counting the Cost**  
*Maria from India*

8

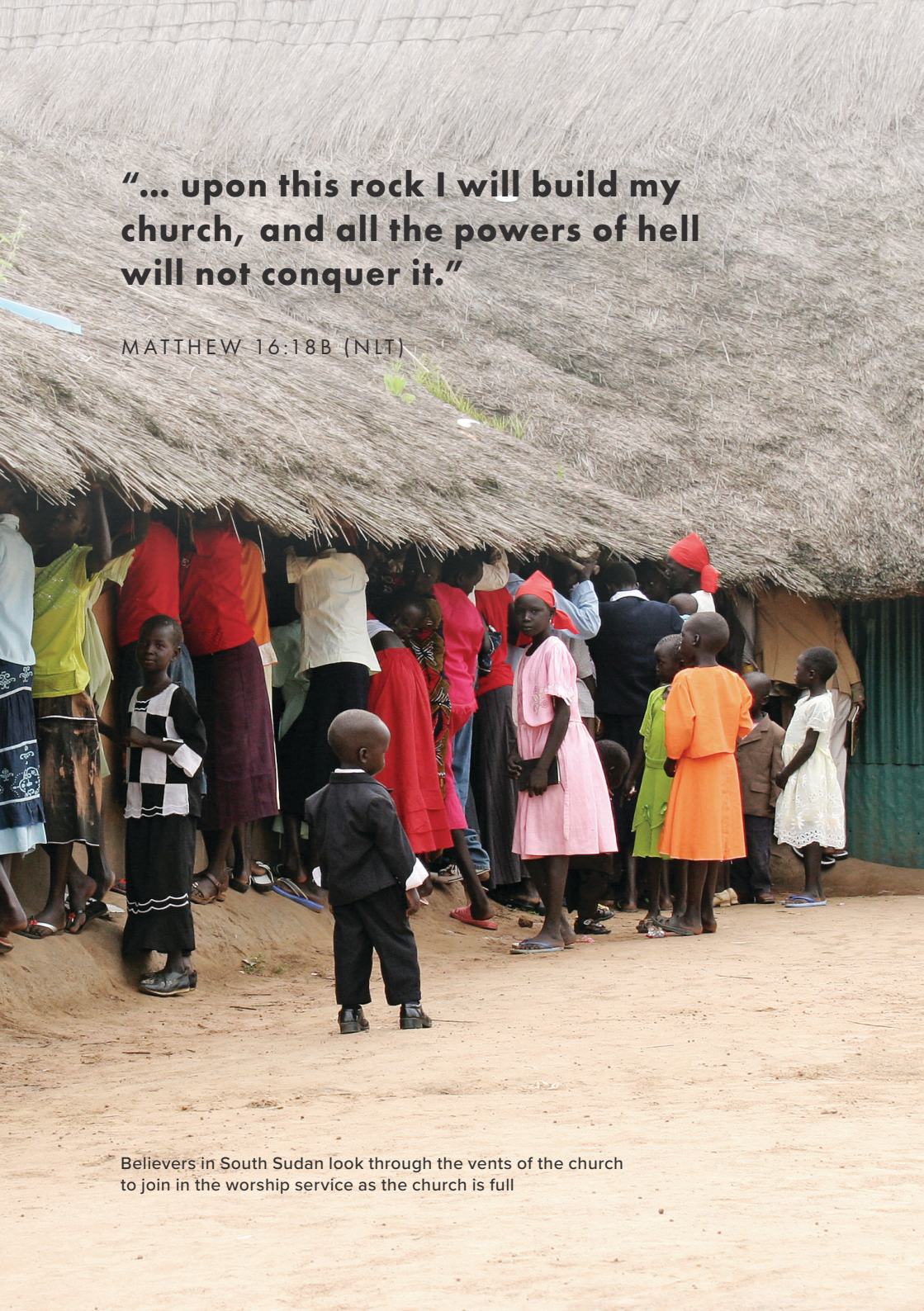
**Faith on Fire**  
*Given her life to Jesus*

12



**"... upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it."**

MATTHEW 16:18B (NLT)



Believers in South Sudan look through the vents of the church to join in the worship service as the church is full

# Alex's Corner



**"NEITHER...  
HEIGHT NOR  
DEPTH, NOR  
ANYTHING  
ELSE IN ALL  
CREATION,  
WILL BE ABLE  
TO SEPARATE  
US FROM THE  
LOVE OF GOD IN  
CHRIST JESUS  
OUR LORD."**

**Romans 8:39**

When I go to church, I can be sure that the police aren't going to try to stop me. I can be pretty confident that I'll return home safely, and my church won't be burned down. That's true for almost all of us. It's not true for Pastor Laxman\* in India (p4).

He has faced false accusations, arrest and police beatings simply for sharing his hope in Jesus. He's seen his church destroyed by extremists. And his story is just one of hundreds and hundreds from India – where, in some states, the constitutional right to freedom of religion is ruthlessly ignored. Anti-conversion laws are abused to harass and target Christians.

But Pastor Laxman is determined to defy his persecutors and persist in his calling. "The church is closed, but my ministry continues," he says. "This is God's work. No one can close it or shut it down." What inspiring words!

That same defiant faith echoes across India. Despite persecution, the Indian church is growing. The Holy Spirit is moving in extraordinary ways, and that's in response to the prayers of people like Pastor Laxman – and also the prayers of people like you and me, as the body of Christ around the world.

We need to keep praying and keep supporting the church in India, particularly as the country holds its general elections, which could have a real impact on the freedoms of Christians and other religious minorities. The church may be growing, but it's also facing unprecedented challenges. Today, let's join our Indian brothers and sisters in standing for justice, truth and hope.

*\*name changed for security reasons*



# Be part of an **extraordinary** story

**An amazing story is unfolding in India... a story of miracles and fiery faith. But as many come to Jesus, extremists attack. Persecuted Christians need your support.**

Laxman's\* wife was sick. Dying. In desperation, Laxman, a devout Hindu, took her to a church and asked someone to pray.

That was the start of an extraordinary story – and the moment Laxman's life changed forever.

“My wife received healing with just one prayer,” said Laxman. “I understood the power of this God, and I became determined to spread his message.”

Laxman studied theology and started

a church, and incredible things began to happen. “People came to our fellowship and were delivered from their addictions to alcohol and tobacco,” said Laxman. Others, including Laxman's own baby, were healed from illness.

**“I WAS TOLD I WOULD  
BE BURIED ALIVE.”**

The church grew from just three people to hundreds. But this vibrant, thriving community was being watched...

## **HINDU EXTREMISTS**

India is the largest democracy in the world, and the most populated nation on the planet. But it's the 11th most dangerous place to be a Christian, and there's a disturbing trend of worsening violence and persecution.



Across the country, Hindu extremists view Christianity as a threat. They believe Indians should be Hindu, and treat Christians and other minorities with intolerance, discrimination and violence. (The radical nationalist ideology of Hindu extremists is known as Hindutva).

In the state where Laxman lives, laws exist to stop forced conversion away from Hinduism. These anti-conversion laws are widely misused, so Christians who share their faith are often accused of criminality.

It wasn't long before Pastor Laxman became a target.

## **VIOLENCE AND ACCUSATIONS**

"The extremists accused me of luring

people to Christianity using money," said Laxman. "I was told that if I continued my ministry, I would be buried alive."

One member of Laxman's church was coerced into signing a blank sheet of paper. It was used to create a false statement, saying the believer had been lured to convert to Christianity. This 'evidence' was just what the extremists needed.

"I was conducting a prayer service and the police came," remembers Laxman, with tears in his eyes. "They beat me, took me by the collar and hit me with their batons. I thought the villagers would save me, but nobody came. The police put me in jail, tortured and mocked me. I asked the Lord, 'What will

I do now?”

After six days in prison, Laxman was released. His church building was in ruins, destroyed by the extremists. The believers were scattered, too scared to meet. With no church gatherings, Laxman lost his income. Now, he's under constant surveillance and police raid his home whenever they like.

**“I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH, AND ALL THE POWERS OF HELL WILL NOT CONQUER IT.”**

**MATTHEW 16:18 (NLT)**

It's a desperate situation – but Laxman persists. He meets secretly with a handful of other Christians, and he trusts the Lord. “God has promised He will be with me.”

### **BE PART OF THE STORY**

Right across India, the church is victorious and growing, but it's also vulnerable. You have a vital part to



Your support means Pastor Laxman can keep meeting Indian believers in secret, to pray together and grow in faith. *Image is representative*

play in this extraordinary story of faith. Laxman and other Christians depend on you to provide food aid, persecution training, counselling and small business support.

Our vision is for Indian Christians to be resilient in the face of injustice, free to worship collectively and peacefully, and strengthened to be salt and light in their communities. Your gifts and prayers fuel a thriving church.

Thanks to Open Doors' support, Pastor Laxman received emergency food and help to start a small farm, so the family can provide for themselves. It gives him hope and strength for the future.



Persecuted Christians need help to survive financially. With Open Doors' support, Pastor Laxman started a chicken farm to earn money for his family.

“The church is closed but my ministry continues,” said Pastor Laxman. “This is God's work. No one can close it or shut it down. It is for the Kingdom of the Lord.”

*\*We've changed his name to protect his family*

# Be a vital part of India's extraordinary story...

## PLEASE PRAY

- For Pastor Laxman, for God's strength and protection over him and his church.
- For our Indian brothers and sisters who've been attacked, falsely accused and imprisoned. Many are struggling with their faith. Pray they will stand strong.
- For freedom of religion in India, and a safe place for the church to gather and worship.

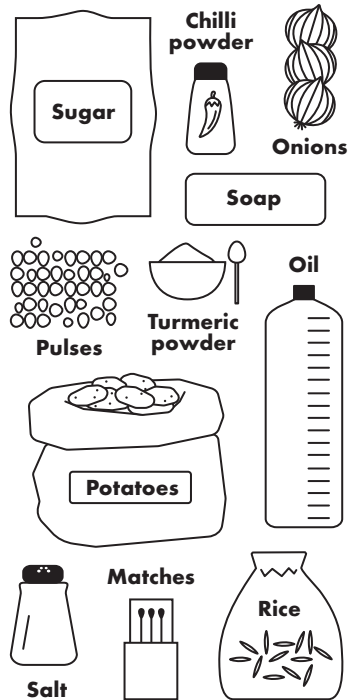
## PLEASE GIVE

Every **HK\$280** can provide emergency food to two Indian believers affected by extreme persecution.

Every **HK\$390** can train 20 believers and equip them with a biblical response to persecution.

Every **HK\$640** can help a persecuted community establish a livelihood, and give financial security.

You can provide emergency food to two Indian believers with a donation of **HK\$280**:



When Hindu extremists attack churches in India, believers scatter. As a result, pastors lose their church income. Your donation to provide an emergency food package can help Indian Christians survive extreme persecution.



# COUNTING THE COST

## Maria from India

When Maria\* became a Christian, she knew she would face opposition from her Hindu husband and in-laws – so she initially kept her faith secret. But after several months, her husband found out.

She was beaten, tortured, and made to worship Hindu idols by her in-laws. There were even times when she was denied food and water.

Maria stayed in this situation for as long as she could – but her husband made an ultimatum: “When my husband saw my ceaseless love of God, he warned me to leave Christ or leave him,” she shares.

“Seeing no way out, I chose to hang on to Christ and free myself from an abusive relationship.

“For fear of society, I endured all the suffering and torture caused by my husband and in-laws, but constantly I was threatened and told to leave Christ,” she continues. “I was constantly praying to God to protect me and show His mercy. It was only through His grace and favour that I was able to get through those tough times.”



## “GOD HAS NEVER ABANDONED ME”

Finding a job was hard – but Open Doors partners heard about Maria and helped her start a clothing business from her home! “I am so happy and thankful to God that He constantly keeps reminding of how great His love is and that His love never runs out on me,” Maria says. “All I have is Christ and His love and nothing in this world can be compared to Him.”

Her faith in God is stronger than ever. “I am self-assured and directed to Isaiah 41:10: ‘Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.’ Certainly, God has strengthened me and never abandoned me and in every critical situation He vindicated me.”

*\*Name changed for security reasons*

LEFT Maria now runs a clothing business thanks to support from local Open Doors partners





# HOW YOU CAN PRAY FOR INDIA

## WORLD WATCH LIST #11

### 1 PRAY FOR PROTECTION

Many Christians in India are experiencing increasing violence from Hindu extremists.

Pray that God will protect His people from attacks, and transform the hearts of those bent on doing evil.

### 2 PRAY FOR STRENGTH

Maria says, “Nothing in this world can be compared to [Jesus].”

Pray for renewed strength for the Indian church, that they will continue to hold fast to the Lord and proclaim His name throughout India.

### 3 PRAY FOR PEACE

The Supreme Court in India will investigate violence and hate speech targeting Christian in many parts of the country.

Pray that justice will be done.



## ORDER YOUR FREE 2024 WORLD WATCH LIST **Top 50 Guidebook**

Discover the top 50 countries where following Jesus costs the most with our World Watch List guidebook for you and churches. Packed with the latest information and stories of courageous faith to help you pray for and support your persecuted family around the world.

Order your FREE copies today at: [enquiryhk@od.org](mailto:enquiryhk@od.org)

## INVITE AN OPEN DOORS SPEAKER

Why not invite an Open Doors speaker to come and help your church connect with the persecuted church?

[www.opendoors.org.hk/getinvolved/invitespeaker](http://www.opendoors.org.hk/getinvolved/invitespeaker)



# WORLD WATCH NEWS

## MYANMAR

### 17 killed as air strike hits church

At least 17 people, including 11 Christians, were killed when a church was bombed by the military.

St Peter's Baptist Church was hit when a fighter jet dropped three bombs on Kanan, a village in Myanmar's north western Sagaing Division. Believers were in the middle of a worship service at the time.

Children and parents were among those killed. "I am so angry at the injustice, and I also worry for the future of the orphaned children," says Tun Maung\*, an Open Doors local partner.

It's now more than three years since the military coup that's deepened Myanmar's civil war and put its small Christian population in even greater danger.

**PRAY** For comfort, healing and strength for those affected by this tragedy.



ABOVE Open Doors local partners continue to support believers in Myanmar through food provision and other ways



Believers dance in worship on the anniversary of the attack

## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

### Onlookers 'marvel' at church's response to attack

Last year, CEPAC Church in the DRC was devastated by a bomb that killed 15 people. But amidst the awful suffering, God has been powerfully at work – including through your support.

Following the attack on the church in Kasindi by the Islamic militant group the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) in January 2023, Open Doors local partners came alongside the church to provide practical, spiritual and emotional support. For many families, collecting relief packages meant returning to the church for the first time since the attack.

Meanwhile, the gift of a Bible is having a powerful impact on Joys, a mother, whose son Muyisa (11) was amongst those killed. "Since the attack, she has not gone to church," says her husband. "When she saw the Bible, she was so happy and

comforted. She reads the Bible very often now, and I see God's Word gradually comforts her even if she is not yet fully recovered."

Amazingly, the church has increased in number since the attack. "The enemy planned to destroy God's house, but the church has grown," said Pastor Ki Abraham as the church gathered to praise God on the anniversary of the attack.

The celebratory event – which featured singing, dancing and baptisms – astonished onlookers. "They marvelled that, even though God's people were killed and wounded by the ADF, fear did not overpower them," said Pastor Kambale.

"To God be the glory," continues Pastor Ki Abraham. "We continue to thank the brothers and sisters who stayed by our side to accompany us. Thanks to them, we are still alive."

**PRAY** For continued healing for those affected by the attack, and pray that the church will continue to grow in faith and number.



## MEXICO

### 11-year-old boy excited to follow parents' example

Esteban and his parents have been threatened and had their basic services cut off, and his parents were arrested whilst celebrating their son's sixth birthday.

The three of them attended a Bible Training Centre run by Open Doors local partners. Esteban is very excited to learn about the Bible because he wants to follow the example set by his parents. It's an enthusiasm reflected in a short video clip where he signs, "There is no higher place, than to be at Your feet, than to be at your feet."

**PRAY** That Esteban and his family will be safe and provided with their basic needs, Esteban will grow strong physically and spiritually.

***"There is no higher place, than to be at Your feet"***

## ERITREA

### At least 30 arrested during birthday party

At least 30 Christian adults, plus an unknown number of children, were arrested as they gathered to celebrate the first birthday of a Christian family's firstborn child.

According to an Open Doors source, whilst believers from the gathering in Asmara, the capital, were taken to a nearby police station, 'unbelievers were sent home'.

Eritrea is number four on the latest World Watch List. It's known as the 'North Korea of Africa' because of its intense authoritarian rule.

**PRAY** That God's Spirit will provide for the persecuted church in Eritrea, and give them wisdom and discernment in everything they do.

## MORE STORIES ONLINE

Head to [www.opendoors.org.hk](http://www.opendoors.org.hk)



or follow us  
@opendoorshk for more  
news and updates







## Xuan gave her life to Jesus – and nothing will make her turn back

Xuan\* lives in a remote tribal village in central Vietnam. There is a church there – not that you’d see it if you visited. “There are Christians in my area, but we worship God in secret, in our homes,” she says. “It is impossible for outsiders to visit us in the village because local authorities monitor us.”

Xuan’s love for Christ shines out in her words and actions – and it’s her mission to tell others about Jesus. But this mission comes with a high price. She is known – and begrudgingly tolerated – as a Christian in her village, but the local authorities have forbidden her from evangelising. Not that that stops her.

“I did not follow their demands,” she says. “They cannot stop the gospel from being shared. However, I only evangelise in secret. Sometimes, I visit people in their houses at night. In other cases, I set up the time to meet with those who live farther. I drive my motorbike to meet them and

gather them in a less suspicious place. I do this because I love them.”

### XUAN PERSEVERES – AND THE CHURCH GROWS

Xuan is a member of the Hmong tribe. She became a Christian after God healed her and her child from an illness through the prayers of a Christian man in the village called Tomo\*.

But not long afterwards, Tomo was expelled from the community. Xuan and another woman were the only Christians who remained. “We were downhearted, yes, but it did not stop us from sharing the gospel,” Xuan remembers. “Every day, more and more people came to know Christ.

“But the local authorities were also quick. They knew all of those who converted; they tried to punish us. They tried to kick us out of the village, but we were unyielding. We stayed in the village no matter what.”

In Xuan's patriarchal community, the authorities punish women who convert to Christianity by first targeting their husbands. "Local authorities employ many ways to persecute us, one of which is forcing our husbands to leave us. And, if the husbands refuse, all the government subsidies, like food, education and livelihood will be cut."

This is what happened to Xuan and her husband. After the authorities destroyed their source of income, Xuan's husband – though not a Christian – stepped in to stop her from being expelled from the village.

## PREPARED TO GIVE HER LIFE FOR THE GOSPEL

Despite the pressure against her, and the danger of her mission, many Christians in her village came to know Christ because of Xuan's perseverance. Her courage is phenomenal. "I will not forsake my mission, my calling," she says. "Even if the authorities catch me, I will let them do everything they can to stop me – even if they kill me. I know I am going to die for the Lord."

Thanks to your prayers and support, Xuan knows that she is not alone. Open Doors local partners in Vietnam help equip believers like Xuan through leadership and biblical training and financial aid.

Xuan will never go back to how things were before she knew Jesus: "I find that my life has already changed so much after allowing Jesus to rule my life. I know that I can directly pray to the Lord and He will answer me. I know that my Lord is alive!"

*\*Names changed for security reasons*

## PAUSE

*Read Daniel 3:8-30*

Xuan's bold confidence in God in the face of persecution echoes Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's as they face the threat of the furnace.

## PONDER

- Like Xuan, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were living in an environment hostile to their faith. Does being a Christian put you in the minority at work, at home, or in your social circles? How does your faith make you stand out?
- Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego – and Xuan – display a willingness to trust in God's goodness and power, even if they end up suffering or being killed. Where do you want your trust in God to grow?
- Through Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego's trial, Nebuchadnezzar sees that God is present with them. And Xuan's suffering has only made her more determined to tell people about Jesus. How have you – and others – experienced God during difficult times?

## PRAY

- "We do not know what the local authorities will do to us in the future, but I really desire that we can worship the Lord out in the open," says Xuan. Pray with her that believers in her village can build a church.
- Xuan's husband and children are not yet Christians. She asks: "Please pray for my husband and two children to become followers of Jesus."
- Violence against Christians in Vietnam has increased this year. Ask God to protect believers and change the hearts of their persecutors.



God has strengthened Xuan to remain in her village – and she's drawing more people to Christ

# 'HE SENT YOU'

**Hari, a pastor in India, lost his income and freedom when Hindu extremists attacked. But your support means his faith is as strong as ever.**



When an Easter day attack closed his church, Hari depended on you to survive. Your gifts and prayers means he's still serving the Lord.



It was Easter Sunday when everything changed...

Hari\* has known difficulty ever since following Jesus. After all, faith in Christ meant turning his back on the traditional religion of his tribe, in rural India. He was kicked out of home and rejected by his family.

But nothing could prepare Hari, a church leader, for the persecution which burst through the doors as his congregation celebrated the risen Jesus.

“Religious extremists barged into our Easter service, along with the police,” said Hari. “They threatened believers and drove them away from church. The police banned me from conducting church services and the extremists threatened to kill me.”

Hari added: “The Indian Constitution gives me the right to preach. I told the police, I do not force people. They hear my preaching and, if they like it, they come to my church.”

But the police didn’t listen. They closed Hari’s church and sealed it shut.

## CRUSHING LOSS

The unprompted attack was devastating not only spiritually, but financially. “As a pastor of a small church, offerings from believers are my only source of income,” said Hari. “When the church shut, I could not manage the expenses of my family.”

But thanks to you, Hari received vital support. Your generous gifts and prayers put Open Doors partners alongside the family with food, help to create a sustainable livelihood, and spiritual and prayer support.

Today, with you by his side, Hari’s faith is as strong and defiant as ever.

## ‘NOTHING CAN STOP US’

“I prayed to the Lord for help, and He sent you,” said Hari. “I now gather in secret with other believers, in small numbers in houses. Nothing can stop us from loving Christ and serving him.

“I want to continue to serve the Lord even if they threaten to kill me for my faith. Christ has protected me, and there is much work yet to complete for God’s Kingdom.”

## “I PRAYED TO THE LORD FOR HELP, AND HE SENT YOU.”

A verse which inspires Hari is 1 Chronicles 28:20: “Be strong and courageous, and do the work. Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord God, my God, is with you.”

Your support helps Hari to know the truth of God’s presence. He said, “It is so joyful to see God’s family standing with me in the midst of persecution. Our God has indeed not forsaken or failed us.”

*\*We’ve changed his name to protect him and his family*



## PLEASE PRAY

- For Hari and his family, that their faith will remain strong, defiant and unshaken.
- For the Christians who meet in secret with Hari. Pray for permission to worship freely.
- For a change of heart among Hindu extremists in India, and an end to religious intolerance.

# Something **extraordinary** is happening in India.



**Be part of it.**

When Pastor Laxman\* started a church, it grew from a handful of people – to hundreds.

The sick were healed. Lives changed. And not only in Pastor Laxman's church...

*An extraordinary story is unfolding in India. A story of miracles, defiant faith, and an unstoppable church.*

But Hindu extremists are targeting Christians for intense persecution. Leaders like Pastor Laxman are being violently assaulted, falsely accused and unlawfully arrested.

When believers come under attack, the church is scattered, and pastors like Laxman lose their income. India's Christians need your help to survive.

**Be a vital part of an extraordinary story by sending a gift today.**

**Every HK\$280** can provide emergency food aid to two Indian believers affected by extreme persecution.

*Thank you.*

*\*name changed for security reasons and image is representative*

We are a tax-exempt charity (under Section 88 of the Inland Revenue).

Open Doors Hong Kong Limited  
P.O. Box 78516, Mongkok Post Office, Kowloon, Hong Kong  
enquiryhk@od.org • (Tel) +852 3525 0820 • (WA) +852 5608 8729  
[www.opendoors.org.hk](http://www.opendoors.org.hk)



@opendoorshk

 敞開的門

Website

