

release

ISSUE 64 NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2011

www.releaseinternational.org



BREAK DOWN THE WALLS

Download Nathan Fellingham's new song

PAGE 2

BE A LINK IN THE CHRISTMAS CHAIN



Festive fun with a difference

PAGE 7



CHINESE YOUTH

make history
Release Potential

PAGE 14



PAKISTAN: 'Peter' chose to follow Jesus - and had to flee for his life

On the run

release
international
voice of persecuted christians

A North Korean soldier stands guard on the border with South Korea. Photo: Lee Jae-Won/Reuters.



Breaking down the walls



Download Nathan Fellingham's new song, tell your friends, and support Release's One Day campaign for North Korea.

Nathan Fellingham, the songwriter best known for penning the inspirational *There is a Day*, has thrown his support behind Release's One Day campaign and written a song to inspire Christians in the UK to stand with their persecuted brothers and sisters in North Korea.

'I hope that this song will touch the hearts of Christians in the UK and help them to get on their knees in prayer. Believers in North Korea desperately need our prayers and to know that they're not forgotten.'

Andy Dipper, Release's CEO, said: 'We're absolutely thrilled that Nathan is supporting the campaign and has written *Breaking down the walls*. We hope that it will stir the church in the UK to engage with the pain of those who suffer for their faith in North Korea.'

'Please get behind our campaign, sign the petition and make your voice count.'

Breaking down the Walls is available as a CD to order (£5) or as an MP3 to download from our website at www.releaseinternational.org/audio (suggested donation £5). Money raised will go to our North Korean work. •



DAY OF PRAYER September 9

A huge thank you to everyone who took part in Release's Day of Prayer for North Korea on September 9 - the country's national day.

Among those praying for persecuted Christians in the UK and Ireland were these members of St Brendan's Church in Belfast.



Cover photo: Former Islamic cleric 'Peter' had to run for his life after he became a Christian. See page 4.

HOPE

Young artist supports One Day Campaign



It's called simply *Hope*, a 5ft by 4ft oil painting that represents not just the darkness and tyranny of North Korea but also depicts how the gospel is bringing hope (in this case through balloon leaflet drops).

The painting is the work of promising young London artist Emma Butler (pictured handing over the painting to Release CEO Andy Dipper).

After the presentation Andy said: 'Emma has done an amazing job and we're thrilled that she has responded to the One Day campaign in this way. We're enormously

grateful to Emma for putting her talents to use to produce something that will inspire many Christians in this country to engage with the issue of persecution in North Korea.'

The painting was due to go on public display in the autumn and is being auctioned in the weeks leading up to Christmas to raise funds for Release's North Korean work.

To find out how to bid for the painting, visit the Release website www.releaseinternational.org/hope

SIGN THE PETITION JOIN THE CAUSE

If you haven't yet signed our petition calling on the North Korean authorities to allow Christians and other citizens 'to worship freely without threat of persecution', it is not too late to do so.

Please sign the petition online at www.releaseinternational.org/current, where you can also download a paper form if required.

So far more than 30,000 individuals have signed the petition – a fantastic effort. Release CEO Andy Dipper made an interim presentation of names to the North Korean embassy in London in July, and the final presentation will be made in January 2012.

You can keep up to date with the latest information on Facebook, where over 1,100 people have joined our One Day Cause, and also via Twitter (@ReleaseInt). Please sign up and tell your friends!



RELEASE IN NORTH KOREA

Our ministry to North Korean Christians includes supporting:

- Christians who provide refuge and spiritual support to North Korean refugees, many of whom make their way along the hazardous underground railroad, to South Korea.
- new Christians through discipleship training.
- discipleship training and comprehensive vocational training to help North Korean Christians successfully establish a new life in South Korea.

To support projects such as these, in North Korea and around the world, please make a donation to Release using the back-page coupon.

PRAYER VIGIL

Release supporters joined defectors from North Korea to stage a prayer vigil outside the North Korean Embassy in London on September 9.

The event, which was organised by the North Korean Residents Society in the UK in conjunction with Release, featured moving testimonies from those who had experienced first hand the brutal tyranny of the Pyongyang regime. One woman spoke of the impact of seeing a Christian family, including a young child, executed.



After a time of praise and prayer, representatives from Release and the Residents Society handed in statements to the embassy calling for religious freedom in North Korea and the closing of the country's notorious concentration camps.

'Peter' had to flee for his life after he met Jesus in a dream, and turned to Christ. All photos: Release International.

ON THE RUN

When former Islamic cleric 'Peter' turned to Christ, he had to run for his life. Release's Tom Hardie reports on how converts have experienced the supernatural provision of God.

For Muslims who convert to Christianity Pakistan can be a dangerous place. Rejected as apostates by family, friends and work colleagues, they are often forced to flee into hiding in fear of their lives. But, it is also a land where God moves through dreams, healing and miraculous provision, meeting the needs of those who have given up everything in order to follow Christ.

A former Islamic cleric who had to flee his home after converting to Christianity told Release how God had provided for him supernaturally.

'Peter' had taught in the mosque for 11 years when he had a dream in which Jesus spoke to him. 'Jesus Christ said to me that

he had purchased me by giving his blood.'

A local pastor helped Peter to understand the dream – but he was forced to flee his home after word spread that he had become a Christian.

His wife filed a suit in a family court that resulted in Peter not being able to see his children again for three years.

'It was terrible because I was so hungry and suffered from many difficulties. I had no money so I asked God to help me because otherwise I was going to die.'

'It was the toughest time of my life because my colleagues were after me to kill me. They were very angry and wanted to take my life.'

Peter managed to evade them, travelling alone at night and hiding in fields during the day. 'It was terrible because I was so hungry and suffered from many difficulties. I had no money so I asked God to help me because otherwise I was going to die.'

'That night I saw a tall man who came to me and said: "Peter, I have something for you. Please take it." I was afraid [but the man] gave me 300 rupees and after a while he disappeared.'

That encounter was just the start of a three-month period of miraculous provision.

'I was terribly hungry so I went to a hotel to have a meal. I filled my stomach and paid the waiter 100 rupees. He gave me 50 back. It was amazing because the meal I had was very costly.'

'At that time I was also bare-footed so I went to a shop to buy a pair of shoes. After

I left the shop I checked my pocket and counted the money I had and it was still 300 rupees.

'This money lasted me three months. Every time I spent money it was returned to me in unseen ways which I cannot understand.

'After three months I met again with the pastor and told him that I had been buying all that I needed in this three months but that the money remained at 300 rupees in my pocket.'

The cash began to run out after Peter bought a packet of cigarettes for the pastor. 'The money was finished in three days,' he said.

Peter travelled to another area but was soon discovered by his former colleagues and taken to jail, where he was beaten for two days. 'I was asking God, where are you? If you are a living God please set me free from this prison. On the third day of my detention, I heard a voice, somebody saying that I was released. I signed some documents and I was free.'

Meanwhile, Peter's wife had heard about his release from prison and wanted to make contact with him again.

Vision

'We met and she told me that the same God who had chosen me had met with her in a vision. She said: "I had a dream. God was saying that he had chosen you and that I should support you."'

The couple reunited but Peter is still living in hiding from his former colleagues. 'I am still on the run. They can attack me or make problems for me but when I feel fear I just stay indoors and don't go into public places.'

He added: 'I am very happy being a Christian. Even in the sufferings, the persecution, every problem, every difficulty makes me strong in my faith.'

Another convert from Islam to experience the supernatural power of God is 'Simon'. Simon, who comes from a very strict Muslim family, turned to Christ after his father was healed of cancer.

'My father was on his death bed in hospital suffering with cancer of the mouth. The doctors told us just to go back home because they couldn't do anything to save him. I tried to ring a Christian friend to ask him to pray but I couldn't get through. Then I realised that I should pray to the Lord Jesus Christ and I prayed: "Lord, please save my father; only You can save him."

Simon's prayers were answered and his father recovered. 'We experienced a miracle



'Simon'

and because of this I got baptised.'

Another miracle - the healing of Simon's daughter, who suffered daily nose bleeds - led to his wife's conversion, but the rest of his family have rejected him.

'We are living with our Muslim family in the same house but there is a family boycott. They have separated all our things. We cannot use their things and they do not use ours.'



'Michael'

'Michael' is a young man who turned to Christ after his mother was healed through the prayers of a Christian pastor.

But rather than embrace his new-found faith his family tied him up and beat him before locking him in a room.

'Because this was during the day, they decided they would kill me in the night-time and throw my body somewhere in the dark.

'I had read in the Bible about the way, the truth and the life so I prayed to the Lord to open the way for me and save me. Suddenly when I prayed, the lock on the door was broken and I heard: "Look, this is the way. You prayed and I am here with you. Run away!"'

Simon was even beaten by his brothers after they found him reading a Bible.

One of Release's partners, whose ministry looks after converts, says that those who turn to Christ are liable to be killed or to live a very difficult existence.

'They are isolated and live in secret, and receive death threats from their relatives and friends.'

He said that Christians in Pakistan were also suffering the knock-on effects of the war in Afghanistan and the assassination of Osama bin Laden. 'Ten years ago there was some peace but now it's getting very tense,' he said. 'Day by day the situation is getting worse in Pakistan.

'Please pray for converts in Pakistan, especially for their protection.'

Release partners in Pakistan provide pastoral care and practical support to Christians facing persecution, including those from a Muslim background. Converts from Islam especially face huge pressures, and are often rejected by their families. Some, as described here, even face violence and threats of death.

Your support shows that these courageous men and women of God have not been forgotten. •

SAVED FROM DEATH

'Michael' was recently baptised, and now has to live in hiding. 'I'm feeling scared, insecure. If my family found me they will kill me. Sometimes I start weeping when I feel that my own family members are against me and they want to kill me but when I look at the cross my tears stop and He gives me comfort.'



A Release staff member joins one of our partners in baptising 'Michael'.



'Rose'

IN DANGER

'Rose', who became a Christian after reading the Bible, lost the baby she was carrying after an intruder poured kerosene on her stomach.

'I don't know who the man was but I am sure that my mother sent him,' she said.

'Rose' had married a Christian and converted from Islam despite threats from her family.

'When my family found out, they got a First Incident Report registered against my husband. Then the police arrested my two brothers-in-law. We had to face trials for one and a half years because of this FIR,' she said.

'[The authorities] said that my parents had told the police that my husband had kidnapped me and also taken some money and other things from our home.'

Worse was to follow. An intruder entered their home one night while they

were sleeping. 'We were sleeping on the roof and suddenly a man appeared and threw kerosene on me to try to burn me.'

'I was pregnant and because of this I miscarried and lost the baby. It was very painful for me.'

'Rose' is still in hiding with her husband. 'We are still in danger from my family,' she said. 'I need prayers because I am very scared. My parents can do anything against me for their honour. They can kill me because I became a Christian.'



Muslim-background believer 'Rose' lost the baby she was carrying after an intruder threw kerosene on her.

RELEASE IN PAKISTAN

Release's ministry in Pakistan includes:

- practical and pastoral support for more than 100 Christian prisoners and their families
- backing for a group of lawyers who work to uphold the rights of religious minorities, including Christians
- supporting the production and distribution of Christian literature, videos and CDs
- support of projects to build up the repressed Christian community, such as sewing centres and schools

If you would like to support vital projects such as these, to help persecuted Christians in Pakistan and around the world, please use the back-page coupon of this magazine.



PAKISTAN

Population: **172.8 million**
 Capital: **Islamabad**
 Government: **Federal republic**
 Religion: **Muslim 96%; Christian 2.5%; Hindu 1.3%; Other 0.2%**

Pakistan was created by the partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947 following Indian Muslims' demand for a separate homeland.

The country's founder, Mohammed Ali Jinnar, promised equal rights for religious minorities. Yet Christians are among the

poorest and most marginalised in Pakistani society.

Christian women in particular are generally forced to take low-paid work, often in domestic service, and many reportedly suffer physical and sexual abuse from their employers. There have been many reports of Christian women and girls being abducted, forcibly converted to Islam and married to Muslim men against their will.

Pakistan's blasphemy laws – especially the notorious Section 295C of the Penal Code – are often used against religious minorities to settle personal scores. So the number of Christians charged is disproportionately high.

Under a 1990 ruling, a guilty verdict should mean the death penalty: in practice, there have been no official executions for blasphemy to date. Courts have tended to give a life sentence, though it is often reduced on appeal.

The Christian minority in general faces

discrimination in education, work and the legal system. The law offers little protection to Christians, given their low social status. So assaults on believers and their churches continue. Police are accused of apathy – or even complicity – in these attacks.



BE A LINK IN THE CHRISTMAS CHAIN




Chain of Witnesses

A Christian prisoner in Cuba was asked to sign a statement containing charges against fellow Christians that would lead to their arrest. ■ He said: 'The chain keeps me from signing this.' The Communist officer protested, 'But you are not in chains!' ■ 'I am,' said the Christian. 'I am bound by the chain of witnesses who throughout the centuries gave their lives for Jesus Christ. I am a link in this chain. I will not break it.'

From *Jesus Freaks Volume 1* (available from www.releaseinternational.org/estore)

Will your church, youth/student group or Christian fellowship join us this Christmas to be links in the chain of witnesses with our brothers and sisters in Christ?

We know that many of our family around the world this Christmas will not be celebrating with pretty paper chains, but will know the harsh reality of being in actual chains because of their faith in Jesus.


For others, although not physically bound, the chains will be just as real because of the lack of freedom to celebrate the birth of their Saviour at Christmas.


Take part in the Christmas Chain initiative, and demonstrate in a practical way that we are prepared to stand with, pray for and remember those in our family whose Christmases will be very different to our own.


Many of our family around the world this Christmas will not be celebrating with pretty paper chains.

The Christmas Chain pack is available now as a free download from our website www.releaseinternational.org/chain. This includes instructions for making the special Christmas paper chains that you'll need (see below). We also give you stories to share of persecuted brothers and sisters, and information about how the income raised from the initiative will be used. A printed pack is also available (for a suggested donation of £5), which includes the coloured paper you need to make 72 paper chain links. This can be ordered using the form on page 13.

During Advent, the four weeks that run up to Christmas, please encourage your church or fellowship, friends and family to each buy a link in the chain for a gift of £1 each. As each link is purchased, ask the person who has bought the link to add their name alongside the printed name, demonstrating that they too are a link in the chain. Then you can decorate your church, hall, classroom or home with the chains. You could:

 Decorate a Christmas tree in your church with the chains

 Hang the chains across the church as they lengthen with each link added

 Display the information about the stories included in the pack and use the chains to link them together with pictures of people from your fellowship

All funds raised by the Christmas Chain initiative will go towards projects supporting our persecuted brothers and sisters around the world.

The pack also includes plenty of creative ideas for prayer.

If you take part (and we hope you will!), we'd love to hear how things went in your church or fellowship. Maybe you could send us some photos of the chains decorating your church, perhaps with some of the people who contributed? Let us know the longest chain you manage to make. It would be great to be able share some of your stories as an encouragement to others!

Please do take part. Being a link in the Christmas chain will make a real difference to the lives of our persecuted family.

Download the free pack

from www.releaseinternational.org/chain. You may also request a printed copy by using the order form on p13, calling our Supporter Relations Team on 01689 823491 or by emailing chain@releaseinternational.org. A donation of £5 towards our costs would be appreciated.

Faithful God

Vietnamese Christian 'Job' endured prison, torture and ill-health – all for Jesus, writes Release's Prisoners of Faith Manager.

Saturday, September 3, 2011 was an incredibly important day for 'Deborah' in the central Highlands of Vietnam. It was the day her husband Job came home after being in prison for seven and a half years.

Job had been arrested, badly beaten and then imprisoned in 2004 after publicly asking for freedom for ethnic people in Vietnam and for the right to follow Jesus Christ.

When I first met Deborah secretly in 2008, she told us what had happened. We could see something of the pain she carried as we listened intently to her. Her gentleness and quiet serenity reflected her deep love of Christ.

'I am thankful to God,' she said then. 'The reason I am still alive today is because He has helped me go through all these difficult times.'

Here, in his own words, is Job's amazing story of God's faithfulness.

L When they arrested me they systematically tortured me. The first four days I was placed in solitary confinement and beaten. They specifically attacked my head and spine. As a result of those beatings I now have a weakness that I must live with.

The food in prison was poor and hygiene virtually non-existent. In solitary confinement I was not fed for four days and had nothing to drink. I was so thirsty that I drank liquid from the floor.

The guards used to feed a pet dog right outside my cell door. I was able to reach through my bars when they were not looking and grasp some of the food in my hand. By doing this I was able to survive. You are pushed to extremes when you are hungry.

I continually thank the Lord for keeping me alive in this harsh prison. My wife did not have a regular job, but with your faithful support I was able to get medicines to help me overcome the many sicknesses that all prisoners face in prison.



When I was released I made my way home to my family. They were overjoyed to see me safely home after being separated for seven and a half years. My daughter has grown so much, and is a fine young lady!

'In jail I kept my faith strong in the Lord and relied on Him for everything'

Partners of Release took me to a private hospital for a full medical examination. They told me that I needed treatment for gastritis, neuritis and a painful back. You paid for the medicines. Again I am truly thankful.

I am so proud of my wife who kept strong in the faith while I was in prison. She spent a lot of time bringing help and comfort to many prisoners' families by encouraging them in their faith, and supported them by travelling with them on visitation times.

In jail I kept my faith strong in the Lord and relied on Him for everything. My relationship grew strong during many difficult times.

I do not know how to express my thanks to the Lord, except by honouring Him in all that I do for myself and my family.

Thank you for your prayer support for my family during the hardest time in our life. Please continue to pray that the Lord will heal me – and that we will keep our faith strong in Him so that we can serve Him more. **7**

Support for the families of Prisoners of Faith

Release currently contributes towards the needs of 100 Christian prisoners and their families in Vietnam.

Funds from this project pay for food and medicines for those in prison, for transport to enable prisoners' wives to visit their husbands twice a year; and when a brother or sister is released, for a medical examination and any required treatment. A full medical and medication costs around £200 per person. Release Prisoners is committed to supporting these families during the period of imprisonment and after the release of the prisoner.

To support this vital ministry, in Vietnam and around the world, please use the back-page coupon.

release
PRISONERS



Celebrate Valentine's Day in 2012

Are you still looking for ideas in the New Year to stimulate engagement with our persecuted family?

Following the success of the 'Love, St Valentine' event this year we are re-launching the initiative with updated materials and ideas for you to use in 2012. So if you had a small group this year and want to aim for more then this could be your opportunity! If you weren't able to hold one this year, then why not in 2012? Invite your home group, women's group or even your whole church!

Why Valentine's day?

It is believed that around the year AD269 Valentinus, a church leader, was martyred for defying an order given by Emperor Claudius II that outlawed marriage.

Claudius realised that recruitment to the Roman army was in decline, due to the fact that men did not want to leave their loved ones for up to 25 years of armed service!




So Claudius simply banned marriage in order to increase the size of his army. Valentinus refused to obey and secretly married couples at night.

When his nocturnal activities were discovered, he was sent to Rome, and it is believed that he shared the gospel with Claudius before his death. One traditional story tells of the way Valentinus was befriended by the jailer's daughter, and on the eve of his death he wrote a last letter to her, signing it: 'From your Valentine'.

Two centuries later, the martyrdom of Valentinus was marked by the dedication of February 14th in honour of his life and sacrifice.

We would like to mark the sacrifice of Valentinus and his commitment to godly marriage as part of our 'Love, St Valentine' event – **and we'd love you to join in.**

'Love, St Valentine' 2012 will:

-  **focus on praying for those whose marriages are under strain, or who are separated**
-  **raise the issue of young single Christian women living vulnerable lives who are facing potential abuse**
-  **share with you details of specific Release Women international projects that need your ongoing prayer and support.**

Our revised 'Love, St Valentine' starter pack will help you put together a stimulating programme in which people share a meal using our suggested recipes, watch a Release DVD (such as *Break Our Hearts*, see page 12), and pray for the specific needs of persecuted Christian women. The pack is available for a suggested donation of £5, and can be ordered using the form on page 13.

YOUR FEEDBACK FROM 2011

We received excellent feedback from some of you who took part last year:

'We had a lovely evening, about 23 of us, and we stopped intermittently to watch the DVD and to pray ... The evening had a Valentine's day flavour with good food, romantic soft music and candles. We all enjoyed it very much.'

'I would like to thank you for the opportunity to have held a Valentine's evening at my home; we were moved, and blessed at the same time.'

'We had such a lovely time of fellowship and a powerful time praying for our sisters and taking communion remembering them.'

Why not suggest that those who come to your meal contribute a sum equivalent to the amount that they may have spent on a loved one for Valentine's Day? All funds raised will be used to develop the work of Release Women both in the UK and internationally.

Let us join together to remind our persecuted family how much we love them.

If you have any questions or suggestions, please email us on valentine@releaseinternational.org.



Please take part in our Valentine's Day meal in 2012, and help support vulnerable Christian women who face discrimination and persecution.

WOMEN IN THE UK



Release Women
heart2heart
National Conference

Join us for a special time of fellowship and prayer, and hear first-hand from sisters who have faced persecution.

February 25, 2012
St Paul's Hammersmith,
Queen Caroline St, London W6 9PJ
9.30am Light breakfast
10-3.30pm Conference
Cost: £5 on the door
International speakers and seminar programme included
For women only

Organise a *heart2*conference in your church and connect deeply with your persecuted sisters around the world.

Sally, one of our supporters, attended the recent *heart2heart* conference in Bristol. She was so inspired by what she heard that she's planning to host a *heart2heart* in her church – and her challenge to you is to do the same!

Heart2heart is a powerful tool in the hands of God to awaken the church in the UK to the plight of our persecuted sisters in Christ, many of whom are imprisoned because of their faith in the Lord Jesus.

This imprisonment may literally be incarceration in a 'physical' jail such as for Agnus Bibi, or it could be a 'mental' captivity, such as total lifelong abandonment by family – a separation, perhaps, from children, enforced by a husband or parents.

A persecuted sister may suffer torture at the hands of her persecutors, or sustain insults, abuse or intimidation, resulting in her living in a constant state of fear.

Those attending *heart2heart* conferences experience a range of emotions as they meet with and listen to the testimonies from Christian women who have experienced such persecution. *Heart2heart* is interspersed with worship, and there is opportunity given to speak with these dear sisters, who show no bitterness or anger at what they have suffered. On the contrary, they carry the sweet and lasting fragrance of Jesus, and the effect is profoundly moving, encouraging and challenging.

So ... have you got a heart to host a *heart2heart* at **your** church?

If you do, we'd love to hear from you.

If you wish to respond to Sally's challenge or have been inspired by attending a *heart2heart* conference yourself and would like to host one in your church, please call the Release office on 01689 823619 or email info@releaseinternational.org.

If you have not had a chance to attend a *heart2heart* and want to host one, we strongly recommend you join us in February 2012 (see box) so that you understand the concept and then can be ready to request a pack about how to host the event in your church.

BE A LINK IN THE
CHRISTMAS
CHAIN



SEE PAGE 7



A persecuted sister may suffer torture at the hands of her persecutors, or sustain insults, abuse or intimidation, resulting in her living in a constant state of fear.



WOMEN IN THE WORD

Joanna: a glimpse behind the scenes

Luke 8:1-3 and 24:1-10

Have you noticed that some characters in the Bible get a lot of 'air time' and others seem to drift through the pages of scripture, barely catching our eye? Joanna is one character it would be easy to overlook as she is mentioned only twice – but there is a lot of meaning to be uncovered. Through her we gain a fascinating glimpse behind the scenes into the life of a follower of Jesus.

As the wife of Chuza, head of Herod's household, Joanna obviously was well to do. She joined the group of women who travelled with Jesus and his disciples and she helped to finance them. After all, the disciples had given up their livelihoods and God chose to provide for them through women!

The fact that Joanna was able to leave home and travel with Jesus seems to suggest that her husband may also have been a believer. In the first century women were expected to stay at home and keep quiet. We know that the first century historian Josephus was of the opinion that woman were inferior to men in every way. Women were not allowed an education, and prominent teachers never allowed a woman to sit at their feet.

These women demonstrated remarkable courage and did the opposite of what was



expected of them: they travelled around with Jesus.

This would have been quite risky, especially for Joanna. Herod was paranoid about anyone he perceived as a threat. His spies would have seen Joanna travelling with the disciples. She was also among the brave women who went to reclaim the body of Jesus.

Where did her courage come from? Joanna had encountered Jesus.

Along with Mary Magdalene and other women she is listed as someone who had probably received something major from Jesus. We are not told if it was healing or deliverance. Whatever it was, she was grateful and this gratitude expressed itself in giving – of herself and her resources. It could be said that this is the only way to express gratitude.

Although we do not know what happened to Joanna in the years following these accounts, it is most probable that as a follower of Jesus she would have suffered persecution for her faith, as we read about

throughout the Book of Acts.

Sadly, many of our sisters around the world also know this daily reality for themselves. Maybe Joanna heard Jesus' words, recorded in Luke 9:24: 'whoever loses his life for me will save it'.

Joanna's encounter with Jesus gave her the courage to follow Him and to go against the normal expectations of the day. We pray for our sisters, and for ourselves, that we will all know Jesus personally, be filled with courage to stand up for Him and be prepared to go against normal expectations – whatever the consequences!

We have so much to be grateful for: how do we express our gratitude for what Jesus has done for us? Are we prepared to stand up for Jesus and to go against normal expectations?

Pray for Agnus Bibi (see below) who has had the courage to serve Jesus as she serves the poor and the needy. She is now facing the reality of being a disciple who is identifying with Jesus in her suffering.

WOMEN IN OUR HEARTS

Pray for Agnus

Release Women would like to request prayer and support for one of our Pakistani sisters, Agnus Bibi, who has been detained in prison since February after being falsely accused of blasphemy.

Agnus is 59 years old and suffers from tuberculosis. Her health and well-being are of huge concern to her family.

Agnus spent much of her time serving those in her community in great need. Our Pakistan partner reports that 'she used

to do counselling and gave moral support to people who were facing many kinds of difficulties'.

Agnus had been helping a widow in a land dispute when she came under attack from the property developer who was involved in the case. In January she was attacked and beaten in the street. Although she informed the police they took no action. The property developer then presented a case against Agnus accusing her of making derogatory remarks against Mohammed, the prophet of Islam. The police were pressurised to register a case and to arrest Agnus.

Please pray for

- her family facing critical financial pressure while supporting her case.
- her children. She has older sons working with their father as labourers, two daughters in their twenties who are living at home, and another son who is 13 years old.
- the Release partner as they support Agnus and her family.
- her protection and early release.



Courageous Chinese Pastor 'Bike' has been arrested 40 times, but is still passionate about sharing the gospel. He features in our DVD *Forbidden City* (see below).

WATCH AND PRAY

Release produces a variety of DVDs, books and other resources to help you and your church to be better informed, and to encourage prayer and action for persecuted Christians. Why not order a resource today?

DVDs

FORBIDDEN CITY



For years **China** has cracked down hard on Christians who feel they cannot come under the control of the state. *Forbidden City* (11 mins) features interviews with Chinese Christian lawyers who have been seized by the authorities for speaking out about human rights abuses.

The film also features an interview with house church leader Pastor 'Bike', who has cycled more than 15,000km around China sharing the Gospel. Includes points to help you to pray for China and its Christians. Ideal for use in prayer groups, house groups or in church services. Suggested donation: £10

NO OTHER GOD



Release's most recent DVD (12 minutes) features the moving testimonies of **North Koreans** who have escaped from the 'hell' of the hermit kingdom. 'Mr Sung', who is now a church pastor,

witnessed the killing of his mother and brother by border guards, while Mr Kim spent five years inside one of North Korea's notorious concentration camps.

Includes specific prayer requests, and is ideal for use in prayer groups, house groups or in church services. Suggested donation: £10



STANDING FIRM

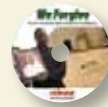
Standing Firm reports on the pressures facing the Christian minority in **India**, where both militant Hinduism and anti-Christian legislation are on the rise. This powerful 10-minute report introduces some of Release's partners, as well as church leaders and Christians who are standing firm in their faith. Includes specific requests for prayer. Suggested donation: £10

BREAK OUR HEARTS



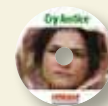
Produced by Release Women, this 10-minute DVD provides a sensitive insight into the lives of persecuted women in **Eritrea, Nigeria and Pakistan**. It includes a moving meditative sequence using

Vicky Beeching's song *Break Our Hearts*. Complete with prayer points, the video is ideal to introduce your church or group to the ministry of Release Women. Suggested donation: £10



We Forgive (10 mins)

describes how Christians in Plateau State, **Nigeria**, faced violent attacks by militants in March 2010 – yet found God's grace to forgive their attackers. Suggested donation: £10



Cry Justice (10 mins)

reports on the plight of persecuted Christians in **Pakistan**, and includes testimonies from the village of Gojra, Punjab Province, which was attacked by militants. Suggested donation: £10



Bruised: not broken

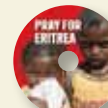
(10 mins, for youth groups)

A rapper, a dancer and musician visit some of their Christian family in **Pakistan**, and are overwhelmed by the love shown to them. Suggested donation: £3



Staying Power (10 mins)

Find out more about the secret and dangerous lives of Muslim-background believers in **Egypt**. Features Mohammed Hegazy, who has taken legal action against the Government to change his religious status. Suggested donation: £10



Pray for Eritrea

(13 mins)

Today around 1,500 Christians are being detained without trial in **Eritrea** because of their faith in Christ. *Pray for Eritrea* shows how Eritrean Christians are standing firm. Suggested donation: £10



Enemies of the State?

(25 mins) In the communist nations of **Vietnam** and **Laos**

Christians are often viewed as enemies of the government. Contains moving testimonies from Christians imprisoned for their faith. Suggested donation: £10.

PACKS

BE A LINK IN THE CHRISTMAS CHAIN

NEW

Take part in our new initiative (see page 7) and celebrate Christmas with a difference! For use during Advent (the four weeks leading up to Christmas), the pack includes creative ideas for prayer, stories of our persecuted brothers and sisters, and details of projects that you and your church can help to support. Free download from www.releaseinternational.org/chain. A printed version is available for a suggested donation of £5. Don't miss out!



'Love, St Valentine' starter pack REVISED

Following the success of the 'Love, St Valentine' event this year we are re-launching the initiative with updated materials and ideas for you to use in 2012 (see page 9). The pack includes creative ideas for holding a meal to celebrate godly marriage on Valentine's day, and to remember Christian women facing persecution. You may also wish to use our DVD *Break Our Hearts* (see left). The pack, which includes invitation cards, posters and recipes, is available for a suggested donation of £5.

back2BASICS six-week course YOUTH



This six-week course, ideal for youth and student groups, discusses what it means to be a disciple of Jesus in the UK and around the world today. Challenging, fun and interactive, back2BASICS includes a course book for each young person and additional resources including wristbands and the *bruised: not broken* DVD.

For more information, including a back2BASICS sample, go to www.releasepotential.org/back2basics/. Suggested donation of £10 plus £2 per course book.



POSTER SET FREE

These three punchy full-colour posters, in both A3 and A2 sizes, powerfully capture the needs of persecuted Christians, and are ideal for displaying in your church, or on your church notice board. **FREE** if ordered by phone or coupon here.

PLEASE SEND ME THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES:

ITEM (please tick)	QNTY	TOTAL
<input type="checkbox"/> Forbidden City (China) Suggested donation £10		£
<input type="checkbox"/> No Other God (North Korea) Suggested donation £10		£
<input type="checkbox"/> Standing Firm DVD (India) Suggested donation £10		£
<input type="checkbox"/> Break our Hearts DVD (women) Suggested donation £10		£
<input type="checkbox"/> We Forgive DVD (Nigeria) Suggested donation £10		£
<input type="checkbox"/> Cry Justice DVD (Pakistan) Suggested donation £10		£
<input type="checkbox"/> Bruised: not broken DVD (Pakistan, for youth) Suggested donation £3		£
<input type="checkbox"/> Staying Power DVD (Egypt) Suggested donation £10		£
<input type="checkbox"/> Pray for Eritrea DVD Suggested donation £10		£
<input type="checkbox"/> Enemies of the State? DVD (Vietnam and Laos) Suggested donation £10		£
<input type="checkbox"/> Be a link in the Christmas chain pack Suggested donation £5		£
<input type="checkbox"/> 'Love, St Valentine' pack Suggested donation £5		£
<input type="checkbox"/> back2BASICS six-week course (youth). Please specify number of course books needed Suggested donation: £10 plus £2 per course book.		£
<input type="checkbox"/> Set of 3 A3 posters		FREE
<input type="checkbox"/> Set of 3 A2 posters		FREE
<input type="checkbox"/> I enclose my cheque (payable to Release International).	Total	£
You may also order resources by telephoning 01689 823491.	Donation to Release	£
	Grand total	£

Title _____ Name _____
 Address _____

 _____ Postcode _____
 Daytime Tel No _____ Email _____

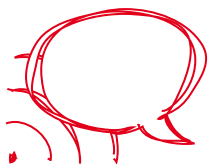


Release International, PO Box 54, Orpington BR5 9RT
 email: info@releaseinternational.org
 Registered Charity 280577



With God's help, these young Chinese Christian leaders can make history in their nation.

HISTORY MAKERS!



HEAR THE STORY

Release has just finished its first ever History Makers, an eight-day leadership conference for over 16s, in China. Some 40 young leaders made their way to the conference, which had to take place in a hidden, remote location to avoid detection. The conference itself is prohibited by the Chinese Government which forbids non state-sanctioned church leadership training.

Xin is 18 and a worship leader. She was abandoned as a young baby, but was taken in by fellow History Maker Jang Ye's mum and they were raised together in a Christian home.

They both came to History Makers to be equipped to be leaders in the church, to be leaders among their

peers, students and young people in their communities.

'Whatever God has for me, I'm willing, ready and available,' said Xin.

Some of the young people had to sneak away from home as their parents had forbidden them to attend. One guy even had to quit his job in order to go.

Growing up in China as a Christian can be really tough.

It's such a secular environment that many people find it very difficult to accept people if they profess a Christian faith. Many of them have been ostracised by their friends for their relationship with Jesus and the life choices they make as a result.

Jung, aged 19, has been a Christian for only a few months. He committed his life to Jesus through History Maker organiser 'Joanna' and her witness to him at university. 'I want to reach my generation for Jesus, I want them to know who Jesus is and what He has done for them. Even if I am ridiculed and rejected, it's worth it,' said Jung.

Please pray for these guys as they head back to their homes, communities, universities and work places.

PRAY

- THAT THEY WILL BE ABLE TO PUT INTO PRACTICE WHAT THEY HAVE LEARNT AND EXPERIENCED AT HISTORY MAKERS
- THAT THE AUTHORITIES WILL NOT FIND OUT WHERE THEY HAVE BEEN
- THAT THEY WILL BE BOLD IN SHARING THEIR FAITH IN JESUS WITH THEIR FAMILIES, FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES

'I WANT TO REACH MY GENERATION FOR JESUS, I WANT THEM TO KNOW WHO JESUS IS AND WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR THEM.'



MAKE THE CONNECTION SHHH ...



RELEASE POTENTIAL SUPPORTER LAPE SENT US THIS GREAT POEM:

YOU ARE NOT FORGOTTEN

Hope is not just a concept but something that you hold on to everyday, as you walk and wait.

You're pressed and persecuted yet no matter what they say – you are not abandoned.

You are not forgotten.

Mothers who have lost their husbands, fathers who have been captured, sisters in hiding, brothers on the run, children pushed aside, congregations devoured, pastors discouraged, advocates oppressed.

You are remembered because you are family.

You are not alone and your reward will be great, just hold on. Hold tight, and as you do, as you wait, as you stand, we stand with you.

Though our skin may reflect different shades, though our accents may contain different tones, though the reality of what you face every day may be foreign to us, we choose to stand.

To remember you, and act.

We choose to bring you before the Father, identify with your lives, speak out and act.

In our freedom we remember your captivity in the world, but great and immense freedom in Christ.

A faith worth dying for, a promise worth enduring for, a hope so strong.

We stand with you, you are not alone. 7

From *You are not alone* by Lape Odebode. Read the full poem at www.releasepotential.org/poetry.



BE THE CHANGE

Emma Butler, 17, was commissioned by Release to produce a piece of art as part of the One Day North Korea campaign (see page 3). Here's what she had to say at the presentation ceremony about what inspired her and what she hoped to communicate through her painting:

This painting is called Hope. It's for the One Day campaign about North Korea. Christians are reaching out to the people in North Korea, where they so desperately need to be told about God, to hear His message of hope. When I heard that one of the ways they do this is by filling these bright, white balloons with gospel messages, I was so impacted by this wonderful, beautiful image that I really wanted to share this idea of hope coming over the horizon.

The bottom half of the painting is from the position of looking out in desperation and despair. There isn't any hope. This is North Korea, where people are being brutally oppressed. The top half is about hope coming in. To see light coming in. This is what I wanted to capture and communicate.

Art is a wonderful form of expression. It is a way to release your emotions inside and to express yourself in a way that you might find difficult verbally, or to express something that you can't communicate any other way. Painting this message of hope is so much more immediate than just talking about it. It stays in the audience's mind much longer. It's much harder to forget an image than it is to forget words or facts.

I would love the painting to do well at the auction, but more importantly I would love it if lots of people get to see it and get the message of hope I wanted to share. 7

CHANGE MAKERS

Emma was inspired to use her talents and skills to help people understand and get involved in supporting our global family. Why don't you join our new initiative **Change Makers** and see what you can do on behalf of our family too. Check out www.releasepotential.org/change-makers



HAVE LAPE'S WORDS INSPIRED YOU? WHY NOT WRITE YOUR OWN POEM, PRODUCE YOUR OWN PIECE OF ART, MAKE YOUR OWN FILM AND SEND IT TO [POTENTIAL@RELEASEINTERNATIONAL.ORG](mailto:potential@releaseinternational.org). YOU MIGHT FIND YOURSELF IN THE RELEASE MAGAZINE OR ONLINE TOO!



Bob Fu speaking at Memorial Baptist Church in Handsworth, Birmingham, where he shared how he came to faith in Christ following the massacre in Tiananmen Square in 1989.

CHINA

Proposed criminal law likely to be used against Christians, says partner Bob Fu

China is planning to legalise the secret detention of suspects it regards as a possible threat to national security. Our partner Bob Fu, Director of China Aid, fears that these are likely to include Christians.

'This new proposed criminal law amendment is definitely a setback of the rule of law in China,' said Bob during a recent visit to the UK organised by Release. 'It's essentially legalising all the illegal procedures that the Chinese government and security forces have taken against dissidents and human rights defenders, as well as the leaders of unregistered house churches.'

During his visit in September he discussed the plight of Christian human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng, who was brutally tortured by the authorities, and who has ominously 'disappeared' since April 2010.

'We don't know where he is, we don't know what his condition is, and the Chinese Government so far refuses to disclose any details,' said Bob. 'We all fear for the worst.'

'If you visit China in some official capacity you would never find anything bad. But ... this is the reality on the ground. You have Christians being sentenced to 15

Read news about persecuted Christians on our website

www.releaseinternational.org/news

Follow us on [@ReleaseInt](https://twitter.com/ReleaseInt)

www.twitter.com/releaseint

years' imprisonment ... you have many of the human rights lawyers since April kidnapped and tortured.'

Bob added: 'Pray for me and my team. The brothers and sisters that choose to work with us are literally risking their lives and their families' lives, because of course the Chinese Government is not friendly towards us.'

During his visit Bob spoke at a prayer breakfast at the Labour Party conference in Liverpool, and was also interviewed by the press and TV.

• **Please keep praying for missing lawyer Gao Zhisheng and his family; also for Bob Fu and his co-workers inside China.**

Watch a short video interview with Bob Fu at www.releaseinternational.org/video

INDIA

Hindu extremists continue attacks against Christians

Christians in India are reeling after suffering a number of attacks by Hindu militants in recent weeks.

Andhra Pradesh: Members of the Brethren Church in Kerala were surrounded by a mob of Hindu extremists when proclaiming the gospel in Karimnagar district. Accused of 'forceful conversion', they were then charged by police with 'promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion'. The church had previously obtained permission for their activities from the Karimnagar superintendent of police.

Karnataka: Two Pentecostal churches in the districts of Hassan and Bangalore were closed by police on September 25 following complaints by radical Hindu groups. 'Hindu extremists, with the complicity of the authorities, continue their reign of terror against a defenceless Christian community', said Sajan K. George, President of the Global Council of Indian Christians (GCIC).

On September 28 Pastor Santosh was in the process of baptising eight people in Athani Taluk of Belgaum district when he was arrested by police and taken into custody, according to our partner the

All India Christian Council. He was released after questioning. A pastor and a Christian missionary were stopped by assailants in Nagnure, Belgaum district, on September 27, when they were tied to a tree and beaten.

Chhattisgarh: Hindu extremists in the village of Khandari Kona attacked pastor Vishwanath Tirkey and another church member on September 18 as they were returning home from a prayer meeting. Pastor Mukti Lakra told the news agency Compass Direct that at about 6 pm the Hindu extremists stopped and suddenly attacked the two Christians, and ordered them not to visit the area again.

Odisha (formerly Orissa): In Banapur town extremists attacked a Christian couple on September 2 after having beaten them in July for converting to Christ. The couple were dragged to the village square and ordered to give up Christianity. When they refused to deny Christ, they were pushed, kicked and beaten. During the hour-long ordeal, according to GCIC, the Christian couple continued to pray loudly, calling upon Christ to forgive their attackers.

• **Pray for Christians in India who are suffering violent attacks and growing discrimination. Pray that God gives them grace to forgive their assailants.**

WHAT KIND OF LEGACY WILL YOU LEAVE?



If you have been thinking about making or updating your Will, and have been considering leaving a gift to the charities you support, please do contact us for a copy of our legacy brochure.

Gifts left in supporters' Wills form an important part of the help we deliver to persecuted Christians every year. If you are sympathetic to their needs, or are already helping them through Release, and would like to know more about leaving a gift, please use the coupon on the back page, or call our Legacy Officer, Paul, on 01689 823491 to ask for a brochure.

TAKE ACTION FOR IRANIAN PASTOR YOUSEF NADARKHANI



As *Release* went to press, the life of Iranian Pastor Yousef Nadarkhani was in the balance.

Pastor Yousef, who was given the death sentence for 'leaving Islam' in September 2010, appeared in court in Rasht at the end of this September – and four times refused to renounce his faith. He can be executed at any point, in accordance with Iran's interpretation of Islamic law.

Since then he has been falsely accused of rape, of being a threat to national security, and of being a 'Zionist' – all of which are fabrications in response to international pressure.

Pastor Yousef was arrested in Rasht on October 13, 2009, while he was trying to register his church. Initially, he was charged with 'protesting', reportedly against Islam's monopoly over children's religious education in Iran. Later, charges against him were changed to 'apostasy' and 'evangelising'.

Middle East Concern reports that the last known judicial execution of an Iranian church leader was in December 1990 when Rev Hossein Soodman was hanged.

• **Pray that all charges are dropped against Pastor Yousef.**

Please send an email expressing your concern to the Iranian Embassy in London, but please check for an update on his situation first at: www.releaseinternational.org/yousef

DON'T FORGET TO SPEND AND GIVE



Have you bought all your Christmas presents yet? Probably not is the answer for most of us!

Did you know that if you purchase your gifts online, you could help to raise funds for persecuted Christians at **no extra cost to yourself?**

By shopping online via

www.spendandgive.com/release you can raise funds as you purchase from a great range of retailers including Amazon, Dell, Marks & Spencer, PC World, New Look, The Body Shop, Screwfix, Play.com, ELC, Mothercare, Halfords, and many more.

So far the site has raised more than £1,300 for Release.

This Christmas you can help us by raising even more.

By shopping online via www.spendandgive.com/release you can raise funds as you purchase from a great range of retailers

EGYPT: The church of St George in the village of Merinab, Aswan province, was destroyed on September 30 by a mob estimated to number 1,000 local Muslims, reports Middle East Concern. The mob also damaged other property belonging to Christians. Security and fire services failed to intervene. The church was being renovated, and had all necessary building permits.

IRAQ: Two Christian men were shot dead in Kirkuk. The body of Hanna Polos Emmanuel, 60, was found on the city's outskirts on October 1; Bassam Isho, 30, was killed in the Muthana district on October 2. Earlier three Assyrian Christians were kidnapped near Kirkuk on September 21, and later released, reportedly after a ransom was paid.

KAZAKHSTAN: Two new laws seriously restricting freedom of religion were passed by Parliament at the end of September. Both now only need President Nursultan Nazarbaev's signature to become law. One of these would make illegal the activities of any group refusing to submit to a proposed tough new registration system.

MEXICO: Religious leaders and local government officials have agreed to work together to promote religious tolerance in the central Mexican town of San Rafael Tlanalapan, from which about 70 evangelicals were expelled in September. Hardline traditionalists threatened to 'crucify or lynch' the evangelicals, forcing them to flee or seek refuge in a local church.

PAKISTAN: A Christian mother of five was allegedly raped by two Muslim men, and her family has been threatened if charges against the suspects are not dropped. The 32-year-old woman was allegedly abducted at gunpoint, before being taken to an abandoned house.

PHILIPPINES: A Christian man, Clarito dela Cruz, has been murdered in Mindanao. He was tortured and strangled with an electrical wire, then shot twice. Voice of the Martyrs Canada reports that Muslims in the area had earlier asked members of the church to convert to Islam, where Clarito's parents oversee the evangelism programme.

release
international
voice of persecuted christians

Our ministry involves:

Showing God's compassion

providing for the needs of the families of martyrs and prisoners

Serving God's church

enabling them to survive persecution and its effects

Sharing God's love

helping the persecuted church bring to Christ those who are opposed to the gospel

Spreading God's Word

supplying Bibles and literature to meet the need for growth and evangelism

Speaking as God's advocates

being the voice of the martyrs and the oppressed

RELEASE SPEAKERS

Why not invite one of Release's team of development managers to speak in your church or small group?

North and Central England, Wales
Tel 01234 271855

South of England Tel 01689 823491

Ireland Tel 028 9334 0014

Scotland Tel 01382 553879

Release Potential (teens/20s)
Tel 01689 823491

Chief Executive:

Andy Dipper

Council of Reference:

Rt Rev Michael Nazir-Ali

Rt Rev Wallace Benn

Lyndon Bowring

David Coffey

Martin Goldsmith

Frog and Amy Orr-Ewing

Board of Trustees:

Peter C. Ewins ACA (Chairman)

Geoffrey L. Alexander (Vice-Chairman)

Geoffrey A. Seaton FCCA (Treasurer)

David Adeney, Robert Ashurst,

Ian R. Frith, William J. Hanna,

Susan V. Rand

Release International,

PO Box 54, Orpington BR5 9RT

Telephone 01689 823491

email info@releaseinternational.org

website www.releaseinternational.org

RELEASE MAGAZINE

Design: Mike Thorpe

Copyright

© 2011 Release International

Registered Charity 280577. The ministry of Christian Mission to the Communist World, a company limited by guarantee in England, No. 1506576. Registered office: Times House, Throwley Way, Sutton SM1 4JQ.

Your prayers and gifts enable us to make a real difference in the lives of persecuted Christians around the world – such as 'Amira' and 'Samia' in Algeria.



Algerian convert 'Samia' found refuge at the safe house supported by Release.

ALGERIA

Safe house

£6,000

This project, funded by Release, provides a vital refuge for Christians who are facing difficulties and persecution from their families, society or the authorities.

The house provides a safe environment for both Christians who have had to flee their homes because of their faith, and pastors and

workers who need a break to renew their strength. During their stay Christians are helped to develop their faith and relationship with God.

We have recently received reports of two women, 'Amira' and 'Samia' (not their real names) who have been truly blessed by the house.

When Amira converted to Christianity, her family despised and rejected her. Her brothers seized her share in the family inheritance, leaving her

'I never knew that such kind people existed'

with virtually nothing. Amira, who is single, was also looked down on by her family and friends because her culture expects women of a certain age to be married. She felt unhappy and totally alone. The pastor at the church she attended spoke to the organisers of the safe house, who gladly welcomed her.

Not only has she been able to live in safety with other believers, she has also found a place to develop her faith and exercise her skills as a seamstress. Along with other women, Amira is now developing a small business to sell dresses at the local market.

Death threat

Samia left her home for the safe house when her brother, angered by her conversion to Christ, threatened to kill her.

About a year and a half later she received a surprising phone call from him – he now wanted her to come home. What's more, he agreed to respect Samia's faith and to allow her to read the Bible and to attend church. She accepted these terms and went back to live with her family.

When she shared her experiences of the safe house with her family, they were amazed by the love shown to her. 'I never knew that such kind people existed,' her brother said.

Please keep these precious women, and their families, in your prayers. Pray that they will remain strong in their faith – and that their example will bring others to Jesus.

To support this project helping persecuted Christians, and many others around the world, please use the back-page coupon.

The cross is central



Many times I've heard it said: 'I can't believe in God when there is so much persecution and injustice in the world?'

But Jesus the Son of God knows exactly what it is like to be a victim of persecution and injustice, to stand up to the powers of the day, to face a corrupt legal and political system, to be falsely accused and then tortured and executed as an innocent man.

In John's Gospel, chapters 18 and 19, the treatment of Jesus before both the Jewish Sanhedrin and Pilate, the Roman colonial governor, was a miscarriage of justice.

Jesus had no defence representation; he was questioned before the Sanhedrin at night, during which he was struck in the face. Before Pilate the Jewish leaders changed their allegations from blasphemy to treason, without evidence.

Jesus identifies with the millions of persecuted believers throughout history and even today who have been imprisoned, tortured and killed for their faith in God.

The distinguished author and Bible teacher John Stott said: 'I could never myself believe in God if it were not for the cross... In the real world of pain, how could one worship a God who was immune to it?'¹

The cross of Christ is central to all we do.

It is 'foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God' (1 Corinthians 1:18).

What an honour it has been in recent

weeks to speak out on behalf of our persecuted brothers and sisters in China, North Korea, Iran and Algeria especially. I and others have met with church leaders and politicians to share these stories, and their eyes have been opened in new ways. The ongoing challenges are to continue finding influential people who will listen, and to create opportunities to communicate more widely through the media.

We really need your prayers, your company with us on this journey and even your financial support to enable us to follow through in practical ways.

Please pray for us

I and others in our team travel regularly to support persecuted Christians practically and pastorally, as well as to listen to the reports of our partners. Your ongoing support enables us to reach out on your behalf with love, practical concern and encouragement, and to be a voice for persecuted believers.

Please join us in prayer, remembering our teams as they travel and our brothers and sisters around the world who value so much the practical love we offer on your behalf.

I also want to personally thank all of you who have given financially so generously and sacrificially since we last wrote to you.

Thank you so much,

Andy Dipper CEO

GOD IS WITH US

I should have guessed that it was not going to be an ordinary day when a security guard with a shotgun and another armed bodyguard got into our van to travel with us to one of our partner's projects in Pakistan.

'Expecting trouble?' I asked the bodyguard. 'No,' he replied calmly, 'it's just for protection, in case. We'll be fine; God is with us.'

A couple of hours later we were praying for a group of women at the project centre. There were many needs and no shortage of people seeking prayer. After 20 minutes or so I felt we should carry on ministering to a particular woman who, despite receiving prayer, had continued to stand next to us and not move away like the others.

I have to admit that I had absolutely no idea what to pray for her. But as I began to ask God I was suddenly overwhelmed by what I can only describe as a wave of emotion that literally drove me to my knees. For the next 20 minutes I was unaware of anything else going on around me and when I finally was able to stand up two others had to lead me back to our van, where I collapsed on a seat, exhausted.

It was only a while afterward that I heard what else had happened. 'Tom, did you see all the people who had turned up?' somebody asked.

'No.'

'When they heard that visitors were praying for people the whole village came out to be prayed for!'

Wow! Our bodyguard was certainly right - God was with us. But, just as importantly, God was also with them.

Tom Hardie

See page 4 for Tom's report on his recent visit to Pakistan

FOUNDATIONS



'Who can separate us from the love of God in Christ? Nobody and nothing. Neither prison nor suffering. The sufferings that God sends us only strengthen us more and more in the faith in Him.'

Pastor Richard Wurmbbrand was imprisoned for 14 years in communist Romania in the 1950s and 1960s. He founded Release International in 1968 to serve persecuted Christians and to make the church in the West aware of their suffering.

¹ *The Cross of Christ*, IVP, 2006.

'After my marriage they [my family] knew that I had become a Christian, they became very aggressive and they wanted to kill us'

'Nida', a young woman in Pakistan who converted from Islam.

Christians in Pakistan – especially those who convert from a Muslim background – today face huge pressures.

When 'Nida', a Muslim girl, became a Christian and chose to marry a Christian man, her family threatened them both, forcing them into hiding. They even sent private detectives to track them down.

'If my family finds us, they will definitely kill us,' she said.

Now she has a baby daughter: 'I just want her to be safe and to have a bright future.'

We provide pastoral care and practical help to persecuted Christians such as Nida, in Pakistan and around the world – but we need your continuing support.

Please consider making a gift today.

Through our international network of missions, Release International serves persecuted Christians in 30 countries around the world by supporting pastors and Christian prisoners, and their families; supplying Christian literature and Bibles; and working for justice.



YES I want to support persecuted Christians around the world. Please send me regular information.

Here is my gift of £_____ to be used where most needed (please make cheques payable to Release International)

I am a UK tax payer and would like you to recover tax on my giving

Please send me a standing order form so that I can give regularly

giftaid it

I want to receive your regular email Prayer Alert (please give email address below)

A fortnightly postal summary is available for supporters without access to email at a suggested annual donation of £10 – please call our office

Please arrange for a speaker to visit my church

Please send me information about working as a church representative for Release

Title _____ Name _____ Date of birth (if under 18) _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Tel no _____ Email (please write clearly) _____

Please tick if you are already on our mailing list. If not, please indicate how you received this magazine:

from a friend a church (please specify) _____ a meeting (please specify) _____

You may also give by debit or credit card by completing the details below, though our **preference** is for cheques or standing orders due to higher bank charges for card transactions.

Name on card _____ Signature _____

Name of card (please tick) Visa Mastercard Electron CAF charity card Maestro

Card No.

Start date / Expiry date / Issue No. (Maestro only)

www.releaseinternational.org

Release International, PO Box 54, Orpington BR5 9RT

Tel: 01689 823491 Email: info@releaseinternational.org

Registered Charity 280577

