A young boy with dark hair, wearing a dark blue or black jacket, is leaning against a stone wall. He has a serious expression. The background is a blurred stone wall and some greenery.

Open *Doors*

MAGAZINE

JANUARY | FEBRUARY 2020

FAITH IN THE PRISON STATE OF NORTH KOREA

SERVING PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS WORLDWIDE

www.opendoorsca.org

GARY'S TAKE

Dear Partner,

Happy New Year! The beginning of a new year brings with it joy and the anticipation of the new things God will bring to life through His people in this world. The past year may have been difficult for many, especially for our persecuted family around the world. However, God reminds us in Isaiah 43:19, "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland."

God raises up people like Kim Sang-Hwa*, whom you'll read about in the following pages, even in the darkest of places to bring hope and healing to the hurting world. In North Korea, as we know, there is a complete lack of freedom to worship God. The faith of our brothers and sisters persevering in the midst of so much opposition is inspiring. Let us continue to pray for our persecuted family and to speak up for them.

On January 15th, the 2020 World Watch List will be released. We have several events and initiatives that you can get involved in with this year's World Watch list. As you read through the magazine, I encourage you to prayerfully consider how you can get involved and speak up for our persecuted family.

As we head into this new year, I want to thank you for your prayers and support for our persecuted family. It is helping them to stand strong. May we see God do a new thing in the lives of our persecuted family this year!

Grace & Peace,



Pastor Gary Stagg
Executive Director



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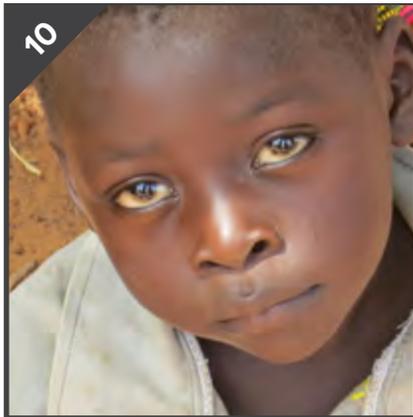
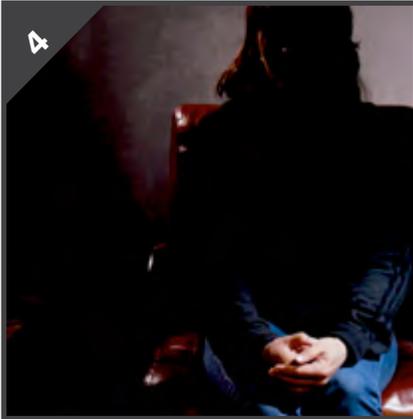
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Cover image: Despite generations of harsh oppression, God is at work inside North Korea. Though secret, the Church is growing. Your prayers and support make all the difference in keeping faith alive.

THE FAMILY SECRET THAT COULD GET EVERYONE KILLED

Sang-Hwa had been trained to betray her family. But when she discovered her parents' secret Bible, she chose to begin her own dangerous journey of faith. And she discovered the secret church. An underground network that only survives thanks to the support of her Christian family outside North Korea.

"Wow. We're all dead now." Kim Sang-Hwa dropped the strange book to the floor. She'd found it by accident, while her parents were out. It wasn't like anything the 12-year-old had seen before. She found the language intriguing. Until she realized what it meant.

She says, "I only read the first line. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.' I had shivers throughout my body. I was so very afraid."

ANTI-REVOLUTIONARY BOOK

Sang-Hwa had reason to fear. She'd been trained for this unthinkable moment since she first started school. As part of a state education designed to detect and punish anyone who diverts from the state religion, she'd learnt reading, writing and spying on your family.

Having lived her whole life in North Korea's prison state, Sang-Hwa knew immediately that her parents' strange book was illegal. She knew that the people of her country were only permitted to worship their leader and his family. If her family worshipped Jesus, they'd be sent to a labour camp or even killed.

Sang-Hwa knew that it was her duty to report her parents. Never mind the appalling consequences: love meant nothing. Loyalty to the state must come first.

BETRAY YOUR PARENTS OR KEEP CURIOUS?

She explains, "It was a total shock to see the Bible. I knew it was an anti-revolutionary book. If someone found out a Bible, it would 100% mean that we would be sent to a political prison."

What would you do in Sang Hwa's shoes? Betray your parents and see them sent to a labour camp? Or keep curious, asking them more about the faith they are risking their lives for?

Sang-Hwa says, "I had to return the book where it had been hiding. But because I was so

afraid, I was barely able to put it back while turning my head away from it. I wondered if I should tell the authorities, the police, or perhaps my teacher at school."

For weeks, Sang-Hwa lived with her secret. "But in the end, I chose to confront my father," she says. "That's when he explained the Bible and the Gospel to me."

Sang-Hwa didn't know that her father had been praying for five years that he'd have an opportunity to share the gospel with his daughter. Throughout her childhood, there'd been no Sunday School, no grace at mealtimes, no prayers before bedtime. Sang-Hwa grew up in a Christian family without knowing it.

She says, "My parents couldn't share any Christian stories with my siblings and me. It's too dangerous."

SECRET UNDERGROUND CHURCH

But as she learned the truth about the secret Bible from her father, she learned of God's deep and everlasting love for her. She began a new life following Jesus, living by faith, risking everything. As well as danger, she found love, light and hope.

Suddenly Sang Hwa gained access to a hidden world: the



Sang-Hwa grew up in a Christian family without knowing it.

underground church. The Western news tells stories of North Korea's secret labour camps, of crippling punishments for dissenters and of the country's increasing ambitions on the world stage. Yet behind the headlines, a massive underground church of 200-400,000 Christians is growing in North Korea. And tens of thousands of these secret believers are held in concentration camps.

It is a miracle that this underground church is able to exist. But more than that, it is thriving and growing. That is in part thanks to the prayers and practical support of the worldwide family of God, year in, year out. It's in part thanks to you.

Your support for Open Doors is keeping the underground church alive – literally. Since the 1990s, an estimated 2-3 million people have starved to death in North Korea, or died of illnesses related to hunger.

Your gifts, prayers and actions help to keep 60,000 people alive with food, medical help and clothing through our secret networks.

SPIRITUALLY STARVING

Yet the people are starving spiritually, too. Sang-Hwa's family Bible is rare. Most people have no access to the Word of God, no freedom to worship, no ability to meet for fellowship. There isn't even freedom to think your own thoughts.

Sang-Hwa says, "North Korean Christians totally rely on God and each other. Everything is up to Him. Only He can keep us strong. If a secret believer is afraid, he cannot be a secret believer. We have a saying in North Korea: 'When three of us are meeting, one of us is a spy and will report to the government'. It means you can never speak freely in North Korea."

That's why your support for Open Doors is so vital. You're stopping the church from starving – both spiritually and physically.

Your courageous brothers and sisters in North Korea know that Christians outside their nation are praying for them and supporting them. You are not only giving them the essential resources they need to survive, but you're building their faith.

You are helping to give secret believers proof that God's love is far more powerful than the persecution they are facing. You are giving them courage not only to believe, but to risk everything to witness and share the gospel when they can. Thanks to you, and thanks to the grace of God, the underground church is growing.

Sang-Hwa says, "Believers usually start their day with prayer, under their blankets. So many secret believers don't pray for their physical needs, but spiritual matters. They like to see the underground church grow."

FIVE REASONS WHY NORTH KOREA IS THE MOST REPRESSIVE REGIME IN THE WORLD FOR CHRISTIANS (AND ANYONE ELSE FOR THAT MATTER)

1. The State controls everything – even what you're allowed to think.
2. If you don't agree with the State, you'll be sent to a horrifying labour camp.
3. Everyone is registered into three classes: the core, the wavering and the hostile classes. Christians are automatically classed as 'hostile'.
4. People are taught to spy on their closest family and friends. North Korean Christians say, "When three people are gathered, one is a spy."
5. Spies have been sent outside the country to kidnap or kill anyone working with refugees, particularly Christians.



Photo: Sinuiju concentration camp
© Google Maps

“NO DOOR CLOSED TO GOD.”

Every year, Open Doors releases the World Watch List to track persecution across the world. With its total war on Christianity, North Korea has been at number one since 2002.

It’s incredible to know that, even as the World Watch List shows persecution getting worse around the world, your prayers, gifts and love for your Christian family are helping ordinary Christians to grow in faith and courage.

Sang-Hwa eventually escaped, and now lives as a refugee outside North Korea. But she knows that Christian families in North Korea have what they need to survive – thanks to your support through Open Doors. This includes her own relatives. And Sang-Hwa believes that these families in her home country feel the impact of that support every day.

She says, “It’s really significant. The love of God flows through believers to others. Thanks to your support, the secret believers experience that God loves them and provides in everything they need. For a North Korean it’s difficult to say ‘thank you’. Even for a Christian. It’s because of the way they are raised. However, even if someone doesn’t express their gratitude, I know they are grateful deep down. What you do is so important for their survival.”

Strengthen and give courage to secret believers like Sang-Hwa who are facing extreme persecution.

PLEASE GIVE

Your support is vital to help grow the faith of ordinary Christians who live in the most dangerous places on Earth: North Korea and the World Watch List Top Ten.

Every \$19 could provide a secret believer with a Bible.

Every \$95 helps provide a winter relief pack to help two North Korean families survive for three months. This could include food, medicines, winter clothes, boots and blankets.

\$124 could provide access to a safe house for a North Korean believer fleeing extreme persecution.

Please act today:

- Use the response form,
- phone (905) 636-0944 or
- visit www.opendoorsca.org

PLEASE PRAY

That parents who are secret believers can live out the Gospel, even when they can’t openly share their faith with their children.

That believers will have access to teaching, resources, fellowship, spiritual food to keep faith alive.

For the protection of Christian families, that children will not be used to lure their parents into a trap.



“What you do is so important for their survival,” says Sang-Hwa.

THE COURAGE AND THE COST

The World Watch List is Open Doors’ annual ranking of the 50 countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution. It’s a unique, in-depth record of the places where faith in Jesus costs the most, demonstrating the enormous scale of persecution being faced by Christians, not only in North Korea, but around the world.

Visit our website on January 15 for the latest news, prayer and action points:

- Find out if North Korea is still the most dangerous place to follow Jesus
- [Get a free digital copy of the 2020 World Watch List guide](#)
- Take it to your church! Share the digital copy with your pastor, small group or prayer group

www.opendoorsca.org

GOD FULFILLS PROMISES IN BURKINA FASO

A new wave of terrorist violence in northern Burkina Faso is forcing Christians to flee from their homes. However, thanks to your prayers and support, they are not alone in their time of crisis. God has answered their desperate prayers.

Naomi and her husband Eli lived on good terms with their Muslim neighbours in their peaceful village. But this peace shattered when Islamist terrorists began to attack the Christian community.

It was a Saturday and Eli, a local pastor, had finished preparing his sermon and decided to go visit another pastor. While he was gone, terror struck.

“We suddenly heard gunshots. Outside, people were running and shouting.”

Naomi hid with her children. She comforted them and said, “Let’s be calm and start praying.” Naomi struggled to follow her own advice: “But I couldn’t pray. I just kept murmuring words and crying. The shooting lasted two hours. I went outside our house to wait for my husband. I saw his friend arrive. He looked very troubled.”

“Naomi, take heart. Your husband is dead,” explained the pastor. He was killed in the street as he raced home to protect his family.

THE DAY MY WORLD STOPPED

“My world stopped,” says Naomi. “At 45, I found myself alone to take care of my nine children. My husband risked his life because of us and now he was no more. My children and I wept bitterly together.”

Naomi had to move her family to a camp in the city of Kaya. “Christians were kind enough to host us. But they did not have the resources to feed us. We cried out to God night and day.”



“I sang songs of *praise* to God because he fulfilled his promises to us.”

The near-daily violence in Burkina Faso has caused hundreds of deaths since January 2019. Many are suffering; Christians have been particularly targeted. According to the UN, almost half a million people have been forced to flee within the country, 267,000 of whom in the past 3 months alone. 2,024 schools have been closed. A further 16,000 are refugees in neighbouring countries.

EMERGENCY HELP

Open Doors was able to respond with emergency help, all thanks to your ongoing support. Hundreds of extremely vulnerable families received maize, rice and dry beans for two months.

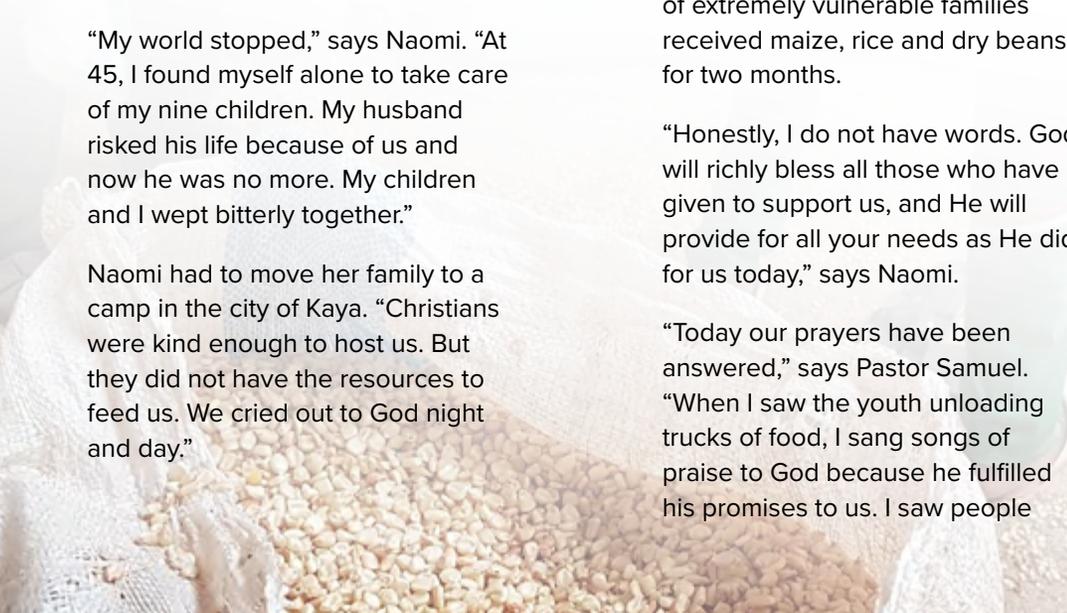
“Honestly, I do not have words. God will richly bless all those who have given to support us, and He will provide for all your needs as He did for us today,” says Naomi.

“Today our prayers have been answered,” says Pastor Samuel. “When I saw the youth unloading trucks of food, I sang songs of praise to God because he fulfilled his promises to us. I saw people

shed tears of joy. They did not think they would have so much to feed their families. This support has a great impact in the lives of the displaced people.”

PLEASE PRAY

- Thank God for the support given to displaced Christians in Burkina Faso.
- Pray for the pastors and workers who give courage and hope to families in difficulty.
- Pray for Peace in Burkina Faso and that Christians would be able to return to their village, sharing testimonies of God’s goodness.



WORLD WATCH LIST 2020

ASK YOUR MP TO REPRESENT YOU AT THE OPEN DOORS WORLD WATCH LIST EVENT ON PARLIAMENT HILL

The Open Doors World Watch List (WWL) is an excellent tool to raise awareness about the various situations facing persecuted Christians. It challenges governments around the world to leverage support for our brothers and sisters whose voice needs to be heard.

Last year we reached out to you to request your Member of Parliament (MP) to attend our WWL event on Parliament Hill, and we are grateful that so many of you responded by sending your MPs an invite.

PLEASE ACT NOW

We need to make sure our newly elected MPs are equipped to support the persecuted church in Parliament this year. **Please invite your MP to represent you at the Open Doors World Watch List launch in Parliament on March 11, 2020.**

Sign and mail the postcard accompanying this magazine to ask your MP to prioritize this year's World Watch List event. You can also email your MP an invite by visiting: www.opendoor.ca/org/2020-wwl-in-parliament



MPs listening attentively at the 2019 World Watch List Event in Ottawa, January 2019



Executive Director, Gary Stagg (L) with former MP David Anderson (R)

WORLD WATCH LIST LAUNCH

Thursday, January 16, 2020 | 7pm

The People's Church | 374 Sheppard Ave E, Toronto, ON



Learn more about the dangers, risks and joys that being faithful to Jesus amidst persecution brings and the work Open Doors is doing to support those who live where faith costs the most.

This is a unique opportunity for you to meet a special speaker from the field who will bring you information that cannot be published openly.

Register for this event at: www.opendoor.ca/org/2020WorldWatchLaunch

NIGHT WITH THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

Come hear how millions of Christians are surviving under high levels of persecution and **what you can do to make a difference!**

Friday, January 17 @ 7pm
St. Clair Evangelical Missionary Church
3113 St. Clair Ave. E., **Scarborough, ON**

Monday, February 24 @ 7pm
St. Paul's Anglican Church
10127 145 St. NW, **Edmonton, AB**

Thursday, January 30 @ 7pm
New Life Community Fellowship
3900 Carey Rd. **Victoria, BC**

Wednesday, March 25 @ 7pm
Glad Tidings Church
2460 Mountain Road, **Moncton, NB**

Wednesday, February 5 @ 7pm
Argyle Road Baptist Church
3514 Argyle Road, **Regina SK**

Thursday, March 26 @ 7pm
Journey Wesleyan Church
131 Duncan Lane, **Fredericton, NB**

Friday, February 6 @ 7pm
McDiarmid Drive Alliance Church
635 McDiarmid Drive, **Brandon, MB**

March 2020
Ottawa - TBD
Ottawa, ON

Our persecuted family needs us to speak up for them, so that their voice can be heard. Thank you!



Would your church like to host this event? Contact us!

REGISTER FOR ANY OF THESE FREE EVENTS AT:

WWW.PERSECUTEDCHURCH.CA

SIXTY-SECOND STORIES



AN ANSWER TO PRAYER

Philip, a 27-year-old pastor from a small village in the east of Bangladesh, was distraught when he saw members of his isolated tribal community dying because of a lack of access to medical care.

With help from Open Doors, Philip trained as a rural doctor. The training meant that he could serve as a pastor and a doctor in his village. For a long time, the Buddhist villagers mocked and insulted the Christians. But that is beginning to change. “Now they have started to show respect towards us. They buy medicine from me and also say good things about my service,” Philip says.

“Through this medical service, I am building good relationships with them and telling them about Jesus Christ.” - Philip

CHRISTIANS IN EGYPT TARGETED

Join us in prayer for Houda Hanna and her two sons, Shenouda (22) and Ishaq (16), who were stabbed and beaten by Islamist extremists in their village in Egypt.

Ishaq explained that he and his family were sitting outside when an Islamist extremist neighbour passed by and told them, “Christians shouldn’t be out on the street because they are dogs.” Houda bravely refused to leave. The neighbour became very angry and attacked them with a knife.

Shenouda spent three days in intensive care, while Houda and Ishaq received stitches. Unfortunately, the local police say the attack was “just a normal quarrel.”



Please pray for a full recovery of these believers, and that they may receive a just hearing. Pray for peace and reconciliation -- that Christians can continue to live without fear in the village.



In October 2019, Open Doors provided 560 families with maize, rice and beans to help them survive after an attack.

URGENT PRAYERS FOR BURKINA FASO

On December 1st, 2019, armed men stormed a church in the town of Hantoukoura, killing the pastor and 13 other worshippers, including five teenagers.

Pastor Samuel Sawadogo, who cares for displaced Christians in the city of Kaya, told Open Doors, “We don’t know who the attackers are. They are targeting Christians, and we need a lot of prayer.”

Armed terrorist groups have spread into the country from neighbouring Mali and parts of Burkina Faso are now under the control of Islamist militant forces.

Please pray as hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced, and Christians particularly have been singled out.

TRAVEL WITH OPEN DOORS



TURKMENISTAN: JULY 2020

VIETNAM: NOVEMBER 2020

To learn more, contact us:
travel@odcan.org | (905) 636-0944



**You are North Korean.
You discover your parents' secret Bible.**

You have a choice.

Betray your parents to the authorities, who will send them to a labour camp.

Listen to their story, believe in Jesus and be ready to die for your faith.

“Wow. We’re all dead now.” That’s what 12-year-old Kim Sang-Hwa thought when she found her parents’ secret Bible.

Sang-Hwa had been taught at school to betray her parents if she found a Bible at home.

But she didn’t. Instead she listened to her father – and began a new life following Jesus.

She gained access to a secret world: the underground church of North Korea. As well as danger, she found love, light and hope.

Your longterm support and prayers will strengthen and give courage to secret believers like Sang-Hwa who are facing extreme persecution.

Every \$19 could provide a secret believer with a Bible.

Every \$95 helps provide a winter relief pack to help two North Korean families survive for three months.

Please act today: use the response form, phone (905) 636-0944 or visit www.opendoorsca.org.

Thank you

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