

A close-up photograph of a young boy with short hair, looking intently at something off-camera. He is wearing a light-colored polo shirt. The background is dark, and there are some blurred Christmas decorations, including a red ornament, visible in the lower right corner.

Open*Doors*

MAGAZINE

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**HE HAS ONE
WISH THIS
CHRISTMAS**

STRENGTHENING CHRISTIANS WHERE FAITH COSTS THE MOST

www.opendoorscanada.org



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Cover image: This Christmas, persecuted Christian children like Ezana have just one wish: for a safe childhood. Read about Ezana and his brother Fasil on page 4.

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GARY'S TAKE

Dear Friend,

My heart breaks when I hear the stories of children in persecution. In school, Christian students often suffer discrimination and harassment from both students and teachers. These cruel actions shape their identities, restricts them from future opportunities, and prevents them from breaking out of poverty.

During this Christmas season I think especially of the reality of separation that many children in the persecuted church experience. It happens when a parent converts to Christianity or is imprisoned for their faith. It could be because of abduction, forced recruitment, or being displaced for safety reasons. The bottom line is they are vulnerable to long-term trauma, causing both physical and psychological harm.

Enter Christmas – a reminder that Jesus came to be born in a place of vulnerability, a manger, and that shortly after would involuntarily flee the threats of a tyrannical dictator and be forced to live in hiding. It's a reminder and a comfort that Jesus relates very personally to the children of the persecuted church.

It's also a comfort to see how you have responded through the year in prayer and by faithful support bringing hope to the these most vulnerable members of the Body of Christ. Because of you, they know they are not alone. Thank you for standing with them not just at Christmas, but throughout the year.

Grace & Peace,

Pastor Gary Stagg
 Executive Director





ONE CHRISTMAS WISH

This Christmas, persecuted children like twins Ezana and Fasil long for just one gift – and you can help provide it...

Ezana and Fasil's* eyes shine as they anticipate Christmas. The games, the food, the songs they'll sing, the bustle at home as people come and hear about Jesus... It's a joy shared by so many children at this time of year.

But the excitement of these small boys from rural Ethiopia hides a deep desire. One wish, common to children of the persecuted church: All they want this Christmas is the gift of a safe childhood.

TARGETED BY EXTREMISTS

In the southern Ethiopian village where the twins live, evangelical Christians are relentlessly targeted. When someone converts to Christianity, they can expect a note on their front door with a deadly threat: If you don't denounce this God, we will slaughter you. Stones have been thrown at the church as believers pray inside. And in one horrific incident, Muslim radicals attacked a group of Christian women who were out evangelizing, they dragged them to the ground and urinated on them.

Pastor Yohannes*, who leads the local church, summarizes the persecution in one chilling sentence: "From the extremists' point of view, an evangelical Christian is as good as a dead and rotting person."

In such a frightening, volatile context, it takes real courage to

follow Jesus. But when your faith puts your own children at risk, it's harder than ever...

VULNERABLE VICTIMS

Ezana and Fasil's parents are dedicated to serving the Lord. Dad, Ermias*, has faced life-long persecution – but he has a kind and humble heart. It fills him with sorrow to see his boys suffer because of the family's Christian faith.

"Even if our children were among the smartest in school, the teachers refused to give them the grades they deserved. Their test scores would be lowered, but we could not afford to send them to another school," said Ermias.

Without an education, the twins have little hope for the future. With no security, they're in danger. For parents who love God and love their children, it's easy to see why persecution threatens faith.

The sad truth is, children like Ezana and Fasil are among the most vulnerable believers in the world. Bullying, physical attacks, isolation and denying children an education are common tactics of persecutors in many countries. It leaves even the youngest children feeling alone, forgotten and unsafe – and puts the future of the church in peril in the most difficult places to follow Jesus.

*names changed to protect their identities



YOUR CHRISTMAS GIFT

But you can make a difference this Christmas.

Thanks to Open Doors, Ezana and Fasil's church opened a school in its compound. The twins joined and now are thriving in class, academically, spiritually and emotionally. "I get an education from my teachers and I really like learning," says Ezana with a broad smile.

Not only does the school provide a safe place for Christian children, it accepts pupils of other faiths. This act of generosity has changed perceptions. "People like the fact we offer free education for the poor," said Pastor Yohannes. "The families who used to throw stones at the church have now started sending their children to this school."

But Ezana and Fasil are about to graduate, and their father fears what will come next. "They would transfer to another school with risks," said Ermias. "I worry about the future. I wish my children could continue studying in this school."

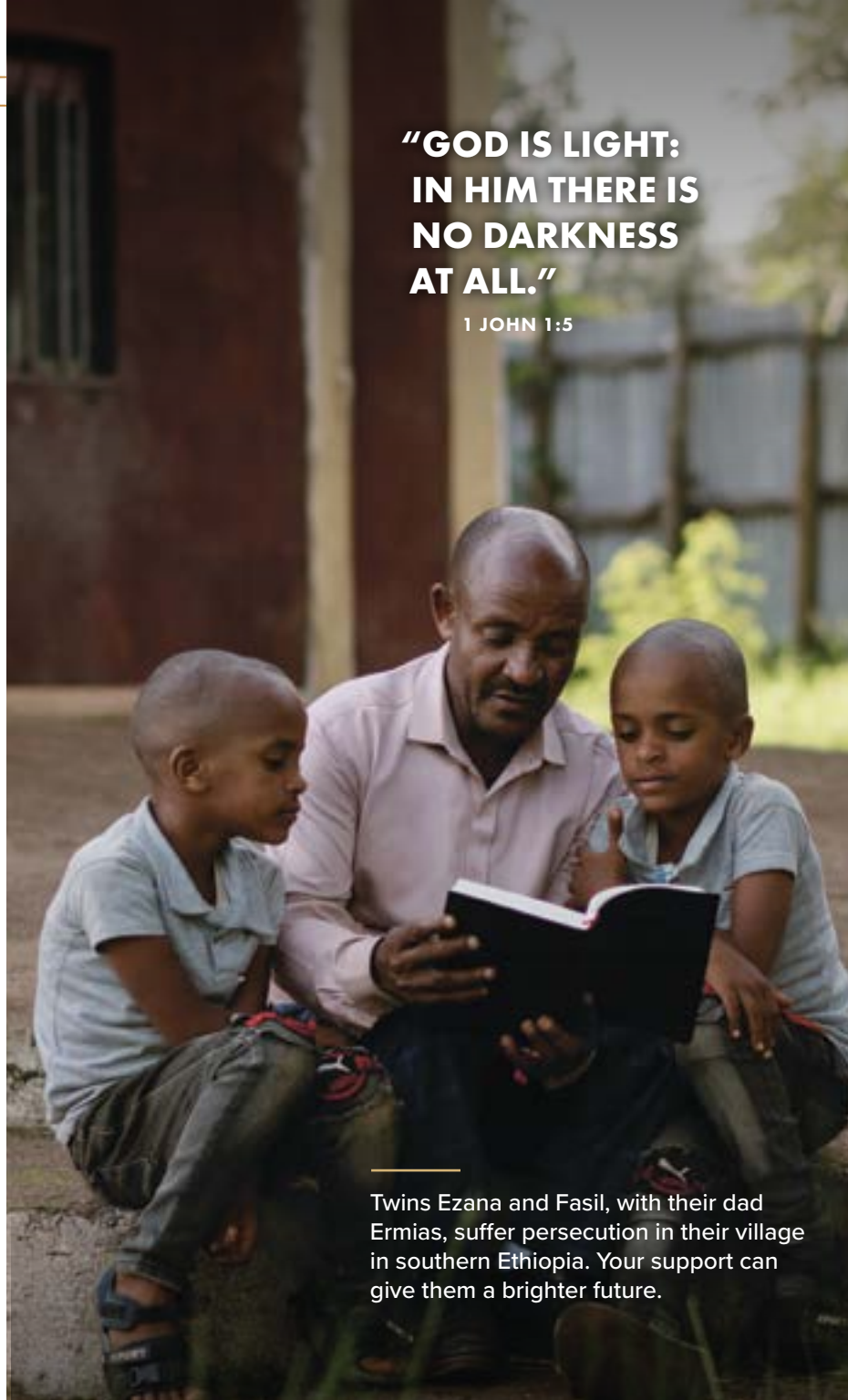
This Christmas, you can give these young twins – and other persecuted children – the one thing they long for: a safer childhood.

Your gift and prayers will ensure children persecuted for their faith are protected, provided for and given an education. With your support, children like Ezana and Fasil will have a bright future – and they'll grow to be strong, resilient and courageous witnesses for Christ.

"Because they are the next generation for the gospel," Ermias reminds us. "They are the ones to continue the works of God. They are the hope for the church."

**"GOD IS LIGHT:
IN HIM THERE IS
NO DARKNESS
AT ALL."**

1 JOHN 1:5



Twins Ezana and Fasil, with their dad Ermias, suffer persecution in their village in southern Ethiopia. Your support can give them a brighter future.

Please will you
give the gift of a
safer childhood to
a persecuted child
this Christmas?

PLEASE PRAY

- For God's protection over Ezana and Fasil as they grow in faith, love and wisdom.
- That Christians parents like Ermias will trust God and nurture faith in their children.
- That Open Doors partners will reach the most vulnerable persecuted children, to help those who need it most.

PLEASE GIVE

Every \$40 could provide trauma counselling to a persecuted child, bringing hope and healing.

Every \$60 could provide vital emergency food to three families affected by violent persecution.

Every \$84 could give a year's education to a persecuted child, helping them have a brighter future.

How you help persecuted children through Open Doors

Children of the persecuted church are often beyond the reach of other charities, so your support is critical. By supporting Open Doors you provide:

Protection

This includes trauma counselling and healing camps which are run during school holidays.



Security

You ensure children have a safe and stable environment, by helping parents be financially independent and providing safe community spaces.



Education

This is key. Your support helps run 'bridging' schools (like the one Ezana and Fasil attend). These schools not only educate children in a safe place, where they can live out their faith, they provide a neutral place to reconcile communities. Your gifts mean scholarships are granted to the poorest children. Your support also trains Sunday school teachers so children are disciplined well and grow spiritually.



UPCOMING EVENTS



IDOP Sunday

November 5

Live online event at 7pm ET/4pm PT
Visit www.opendoorscanada.org/idop

IDOP Sunday services with Open Doors speakers in Pickering, Cambridge and Scarborough. Church locations and times found at www.opendoorscanada.org/events



Night With the Persecuted Church

November 24, 7-8:30pm EST

Malton Baptist Church
3415 Etude Dr., Mississauga, ON



2024 World Watch List Launch

January 16, 7pm EST

Join us online for the release of the 2024 World Watch List event at: www.opendoorscanada.org/worldwatchlist

Let Open Doors Canada come to you!

We are now booking 2024 events, including *Night With the Persecuted Church*, Sunday services, and more! Contact us at events@odcan.org or call (905) 636-0944.

Your gift of a brighter future

Jenny had a future of hardship, persecution and struggle ahead of her – until you stepped in to change the story.



Twelve-year-old Jenny can't forget the first time she saw her father cry.

He had returned home from days of demanding work, fishing near their home in the Philippines. Because of his Christian faith he is often restricted to fishing in certain areas – and this time, the other fishers had lashed out with threats

and violence. Believers were even killed.

“It was truly heart-breaking to see my father so devastated,” said Jenny, the memory bringing tears to her own eyes. “He couldn't fish for several weeks, but I am grateful God took care of us.”

Jenny and her family live in a stilt home in the southern Philippines. They belong to one of 13 tribes in the region. Of all the groups, theirs is the most discriminated against. In fact, they're known by the government as DOME people: deprived, oppressed, maltreated, exploited.

But Jenny is even more vulnerable because her family follows Jesus. “At school, they treat me badly and say mean things about me,” said Jenny. And what do the coming years have in store? Typically, Jenny might expect to be married soon, with a lifetime of children, chores and hardship ahead.

But that's not Jenny's future. Because you have given her something better.

Thanks to you, Open Doors partners established a literacy program in the area. Jenny loves learning and is thriving, among the top in her class. It's given her a dream... “I want to make a positive difference in the lives of others. I want to be a teacher or a youth leader in the house church, like my sister, and help others grow in faith,” said Jenny.

And this positivity and resilience is infectious. Right now, Jenny is bursting with excitement about Christmas. “I absolutely love Christmas because it fills me with happiness,” she smiles. “It's the

only time I receive a gift, which makes it special, and we remember how much God loves me and my family.”

This Christmas Jenny will be remembering you, too – and she wanted to pass on a message to thank you for your gifts and prayers. “I am truly thankful for the support you provided for the literacy class,” she said. “It's inspired me and other children to dream big, knowing we have Jesus by our side.”



PLEASE PRAY



- Give thanks for Jenny's future of hope, made possible through your support. Pray she will one day realize her dream.
- Pray for Jenny's family as they battle economic hardship. Ask for God's protection over them.
- Pray for Open Doors partners running the literacy program in the Philippines.

'You were sent to help us'

Roshan has been rejected by his grandparents and lives in poverty, in India, all because of his mother's decision to follow Jesus. But he has a bright future, thanks to you.

Not long after little Roshan* was born into a Hindu family in India, his mom took a decision that would change his life forever.

A travelling missionary came to the village and asked Roshan's mom, Devi*, if she believed in Jesus. "Yes I believe," she replied, with conviction and faith. "I've always

wanted to be a Christian. I want to commit my children's futures to the hands of Jesus."

It was a moment of joy for the family – but it had terrible consequences.

"You bring shame on us because of your faith in Christ!" Devi's

family cried, when they heard of her conversion. "We're breaking all bonds with you. Don't call us even if something happens to you or Roshan. We won't help. Let go of your faith or never come back."

So Devi and Roshan left. Village after village rejected them until finally, in an isolated forest community, the pair were welcomed by believers like themselves.

The village is desperately poor, it's true. And Devi struggles to make ends meet with her small cleaning job. But thanks to your amazing support, persecution won't hold Roshan back from a bright future.

Open Doors runs a school in the village, and your gifts and prayers mean Roshan has a place there – and is thriving. "My teacher told me Jesus loves me," says Roshan. "And the best part of going to school is during Christmas when I get to sing and dance and celebrate Jesus' birth with everyone."

With your support, 29 pupils receive an education as well as spiritual input. They're from different religions and backgrounds, and the school fosters peace and understanding between families.

For Devi, a single mom, it's a relief to know her son is safe – and that Christians like you care. "When I was a Hindu I made lots of sacrifices and donated money for prayer for

my children. Now though, I know Jesus hears my prayer – and He sends people like you to help us," says Devi.

"You are instruments of God's blessings and messengers of God's love," she added, smiling. "Through you, Roshan has free access to education, the privilege to grow and the opportunity to build a future. I am very happy and thankful for you."

**names changed to protect their identities and images are representative*



PLEASE PRAY



- Pray young Roshan would grow in understanding, grace and faith, knowing Christ's love.
- Give thanks for teachers working in Roshan's school, and ask God to give them wisdom.
- Lift up Devi to the Lord. Give thanks for her extraordinary faith and courage amid persecution, and pray God will continue to bless her.

BECAUSE OF YOU...



Kenyan women sing and celebrate after being given Bibles. Your support allowed them to read Scripture in their native language of Swahili.

YOUR GENEROSITY PROVIDED BIBLES IN KENYA

Open Doors partners were able to visit a community in coastal Kenya to encourage the believers there. As part of the trip, they delivered thirty Swahili Bibles that will enable the community to study the Word in their own language. “Thank you for giving us a Bible,” said one of the Christians. “You have impacted this church in a huge way. You have taught me a lot, I am grateful.”

This area of Kenya is near the Somali border, and jihadist activity is common. Religious minorities are an easy target, but thanks to you these brothers and sisters are being strengthened.

THANKS TO YOU, YASIN HAS CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Yasin, 20, was born to Muslim parents in Uganda. When he decided to follow Jesus, his father chased him out of the house. “He persecuted me more and abused me, called me stupid, useless, and continued to wish me death.” He moved in with his uncle, who supported his faith, and was able to train in carpentry.

Open Doors local partners supported Yasin with tools and materials and financial support to start his own workshop. Because of your continued support, we are able to help Yasin and other new believers like him who have no family or support to turn to.



Yasin works with the tools provided by your support. Often, believers who are kicked out of their homes have little to no prospects for the future.



The above picture shows Madusala being baptized. Because of a water shortage in the region, she was baptized in her own living room using a bottle of water.

YOUR SUPPORT IS CHANGING LIVES IN CENTRAL ASIA

One way that Open Doors partners work to help the church in Central Asia is providing financial support to evangelists that travel through the region doing discipleship. This includes providing food and hospitality so that they can focus on their ministry.

One evangelist shared how he worked with a woman named Madusala*, who endured abuse from her husband for her faith. Open Doors was able to care for her, and the evangelist eventually baptized her. This is one of nine new baptisms that occurred in the region over the past couple months. Thank you for helping the church grow and thrive!

**Name changed for security reasons.*

COME AND MEET YOUR FAMILY THROUGH PRESENCE MINISTRY

2024 trips are now open to register!

North Africa: April 2024

Contact us for more details (905) 636-0944 or email: travel@odcan.org





**All they want
this Christmas
is the gift of a
safe childhood.**

Ezana and Fasil* remember the day rocks rained down on their church roof in Ethiopia.

They know, no matter how hard they worked at school, the teachers dropped their grades.

And because their dad is a bold and courageous evangelist, the twins are in danger...

Ezana and Fasil have only one wish this Christmas – and you can make it happen.

Will you give Ezana and Fasil the gift of a safer childhood?

Every \$84 could give a year's education to a child impacted by persecution, helping them have a brighter future.

Your gift will mean everything to the boys. Without your support, they have little hope for the future. Please give using the response form, phone (905) 636-0944 or visit www.opendoorscanada.org.

Thank you

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