



Open *Doors*

MAGAZINE

JULY | AUGUST 2026

FORCED UNDERGROUND

**SEE INSIDE CHINA'S
SECRET CHURCHES**

STRENGTHENING CHRISTIANS WHERE FAITH COSTS THE MOST

www.opendoorscanada.org



CONTENTS

Forced Underground	4
IMPACT: Faithful Under Pressure	10
IMPACT: Underground, Under Pressure	12
Good News	14

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Cover image: In China, intense pressure has driven Christians into hiding. Now the underground church urgently needs your support. Read more on page 4.

GARY'S TAKE



Pastor Gary Stagg
Executive Director
Open Doors Canada

Dear Friend,

The world is changing more rapidly than ever before. Among these changes, we are witnessing increasing persecution that is placing the Christian Church under growing pressure, hostility, and restriction. As a result, more Christians are now compelled to gather quietly and in secret for fellowship, prayer, and worship. These gatherings—often held in homes, secluded areas, or hidden locations—are known as underground house churches. Despite the risk of being discovered by local authorities, believers continue to meet, driven by their deep devotion to the Lord and to one another.

In this issue, you will read about one such underground church in China. The story shares the fear and confusion that followed when the group was forced to disperse and their leader was imprisoned. Sadly, this situation is not unique—it is being repeated in various parts of the world where the Church is increasingly viewed as a threat.

Yet even in the face of these challenges, the Body of Christ remains steadfast. United in faith, strengthened by love, and sustained by the hope found in Jesus Christ, believers continue to stand firm. Their courage is a powerful testimony that no earthly opposition can silence the truth of the Gospel or extinguish the light of salvation.

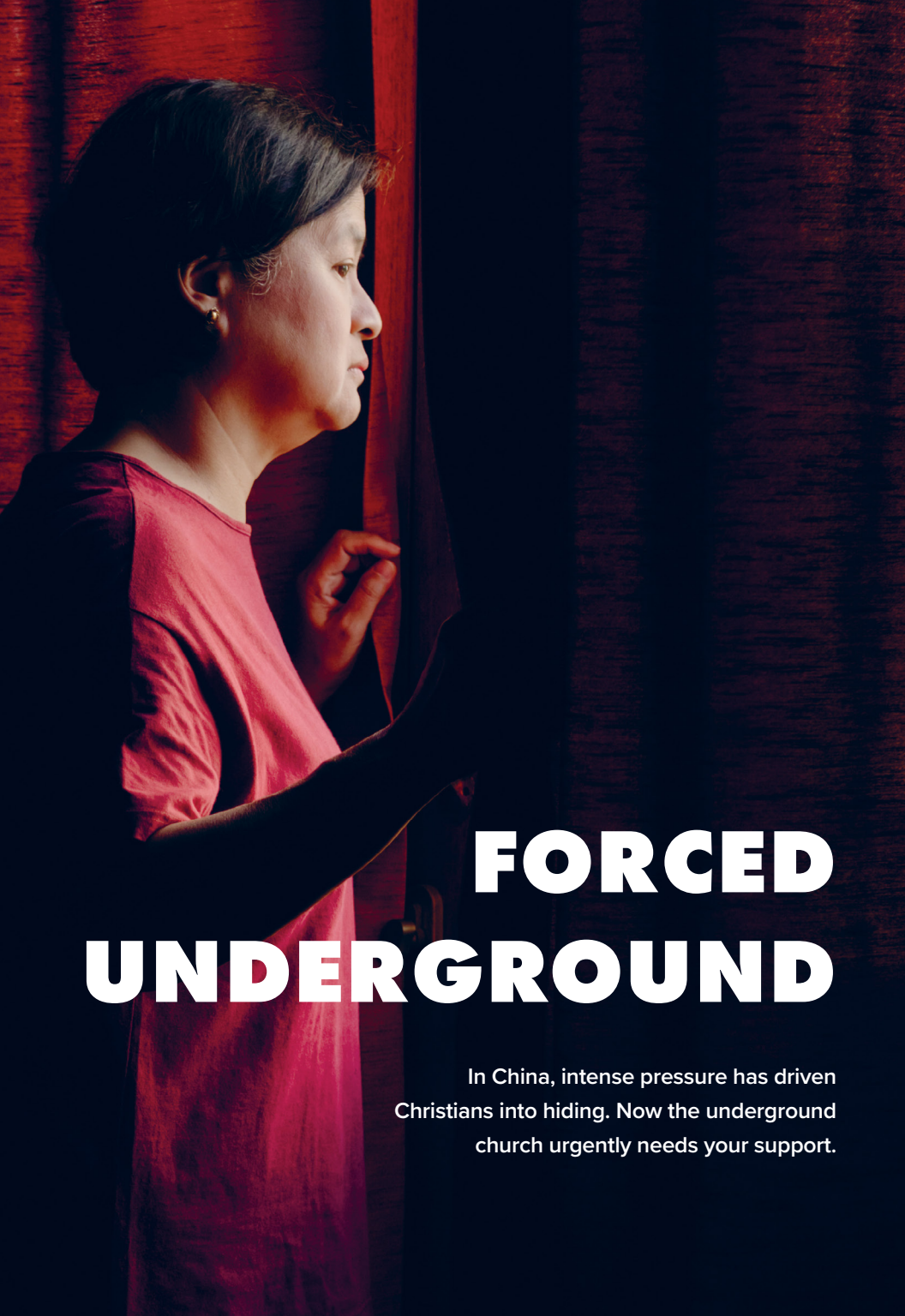
Through faithful prayer and the support of believers around the world, Open Doors is strengthening the underground Church so that it can continue to worship in the midst of hardship and opposition. Thank you for your ongoing support and partnership—it truly makes a difference.

Grace & Peace,

Pastor Gary Stagg



OPEN DOORS MAGAZINE is published 6 times a year to provide concerned Christians with information about events affecting persecuted Christians worldwide. ODC is a member of Canadian Centre for Christian Charities and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. The material contained in this publication cannot be reproduced in any form, including on the internet, without written permission. © 2026 Open Doors Canada.

A woman with dark hair, wearing a red dress, is shown in profile, looking out of a window. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights on her face and dress against a dark background.

FORCED UNDERGROUND

In China, intense pressure has driven Christians into hiding. Now the underground church urgently needs your support.

Jinyi* froze.

The sound of heavy footsteps outside the darkened room was unmistakable. She glanced at the faces of the young people – more than 100 of them – who a moment ago had been joyfully worshipping God.

Then, Jinyi's worst fears were realized...

The door burst open and Chinese police officers in black uniforms swarmed the room. Panic set in. Believers were rounded up and detained. Jinyi's husband Zhang*, the house church leader, was arrested and imprisoned.

Within minutes, Jinyi's secret, underground house church had been blown apart – and her world was turned upside-down. But for this mother-of-two, the ordeal was just beginning.

ABANDONED AND ISOLATED

With her husband in prison, Jinyi had no way to provide for her children, so in desperation she reached out to local churches for help. But instead of receiving support, Jinyi was turned away.

"I QUESTIONED MYSELF, EVEN GOD." JINYI

People feared the authorities and

did not want to be implicated by association with her.

It was a crushing betrayal. "I felt hurt and disappointed," says Jinyi, who had been involved in student ministry for years. "I questioned myself, my strength, I even questioned God. In that loneliness, I struggled to hold on."

ALWAYS WATCHING

Jinyi's story is all too common in China, where the state is tightening its grip on the church. Authorities are stepping up efforts to identify, raid and punish house churches – and pressure intensifies with every passing day.

One church leader told us, "Everyone knows about Jinyi's situation but no one dares to get involved. The atmosphere is too tense. A few years ago, there were five churches in this region. Now there's just one government-approved church. House churches have broken into small groups, staying low and hidden."

Surveillance is everywhere, and the authorities issue chilling threats to church leaders. An invitation to 'tea', for example, is a warning: you are being watched. It's illegal for anyone under 18 to affiliate with any religion, and the Chinese government continues to introduce legislation to stunt the growth of the church.

In this dangerous, volatile climate, there's a risk underground churches will simply disappear. But incredibly, and with the right support, underground churches can still grow...

GROWING MINISTRY

When Jinyi was all alone – her husband in jail, her faith shaken – our Open Doors local partners stepped in. They met with Jinyi, supported her practically, prayed with her, and strengthened her



Open Doors partners met with Jinyi to encourage her and help her practically. Support like this keeps the underground church alive.

faith. Soon, this courageous woman was ready to serve again.

“The calling I once received from God came alive again,” says Jinyi. “I thought about the young adults who attended our gatherings, now scattered like lost sheep. I knew I must help them stand firm in the Lord once again.”

Jinyi started meeting young people, one-on-one, to encourage them. Some started leading Bible groups. Others hosted youth gatherings. Now, Jinyi's ministry includes 10 underground small groups reaching more than 70 young people – and faith is growing amid persecution.

“There have been countless moments when I wanted to give up,” says Jinyi. “My husband is still in prison and our gatherings must remain underground. As a leader, I feel isolated and in need of support as others avoid us out of fear. But your support and encouragement

makes me feel less alone and less afraid.”

STAND STRONG

Underground churches like Jinyi's, in China, are under intense pressure. But with your steadfast support, persecuted believers will stand strong – and the church can grow against all the odds.

Open Doors' vision is to lift up our brothers and sisters who share our faith but not our freedom. Your gift and prayers can encourage underground church leaders, provide persecution training, offer practical aid and distribute Christian literature where it's needed.

“I FIND STRENGTH KNOWING YOU ARE WITH ME.” JINYI

When you come alongside believers like Jinyi, you become the answer to their prayers. “I felt I couldn't carry the burden of leading these young people, but God upheld me,” says Jinyi. “I find comfort and strength knowing you are with me on the path of serving the Lord.”

*Names changed for their protection

Will you support the church where faith is forbidden?

PLEASE GIVE

Every \$38 could provide practical, medical, legal and pastoral support to an underground believer.

Every \$57 could train underground believers to persist through persecution and support others.

Every \$91 could build future underground churches through a youth leadership program.

PLEASE PRAY

- For Jinyi. Ask the Lord to strengthen and comfort her, and provide for her family.
- Ask that Jinyi's husband, Zhang, will soon be safely released from prison.
- For underground churches bravely meeting across China, that God will protect them.



STAND FIRM IN PRAYER

You have a vital part to play in helping the underground church stand firm where faith is forbidden. How? By praying.

Step into an underground church meeting, and it would probably feel similar to your own church, with Bible readings, worship and prayer. But the difference is, these believers fear every knock at the door. Because what they're doing is illegal and highly dangerous...

Today, pressure on unregistered churches in China or Laos is intense. Not so long ago, especially in China, house churches were tolerated by the authorities. But now Christians risk arrest, surveillance, harassment, intimidation and punishment. Their churches can be closed at any moment.

There are state-approved churches in China and Laos, but these are tightly controlled. Christians face a choice between going to a legal church where teaching must align with Communist Party policies, for example, and government permission is needed for everything from worship services to printing Bibles – or going underground.

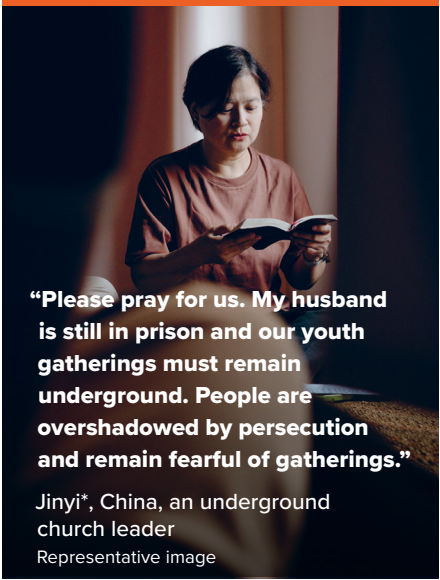
Our brothers and sisters in these nations share our faith but not our freedom. They need your prayers.

Pray for underground Christians, that they will have the courage, wisdom and resilience to keep growing in faith. Ask the Lord to provide creative ways for believers to meet and share faith.

Pray for church leaders, including those in prison. Pray for endurance and protection, and courage to always speak with humility. Pray too for their families during times of hardship.

Pray for those who persecute Christians, that the Lord would open their hearts to the gospel and they would encounter God's loving kindness and saving grace.

Pray for China and Laos, that misconceptions about Christianity will be uprooted, and seeds of the gospel will be spread instead. Pray that hearts and minds will be open to Jesus.



"Please pray for us. My husband is still in prison and our youth gatherings must remain underground. People are overshadowed by persecution and remain fearful of gatherings."

Jinyi*, China, an underground church leader
Representative image



"Pray for my family to serve the Lord together. Pray the Lord will provide a better house so we can sleep comfortably."

Phonesay*, Laos, who was driven from his village by persecution



"We're thankful we can worship with believers nearby, but pray my family can be released from this place, onto land where we can build a house."

Pastor Khoun*, Laos, who was driven from his village into a detention area



"Pray that whatever happens, I will stand firm and never deny Christ. Pray we will have strong faith in God and follow His Word."

Kanya*, Laos, whose home was destroyed by a mob

*Names changed for their protection

FAITHFUL UNDER PRESSURE

Kanya* and Phonesay* were among eight families forced from their villages by persecution. Today, their underground church is thriving – thanks to you.

Prayers spilled out of Kanya* as she watched a violent mob tear down her home.

Angry villagers smashed doors with hammers, ripped tiles off the roof with their bare hands, and demanded she give up her faith in Jesus. But Kanya wasn't afraid...

"I just thanked the Lord and prayed. I even sang a song," she says. "I firmly answered that even if I die, I will never renounce Jesus."

It was supposed to be a joyous day. God had been at work in Kanya's family; she and her husband Phonesay* had been

reconciled after many years apart. They had gathered in their home to worship the Lord and make a public declaration of their faith.

But in Laos, a country ranked 28 on Open Doors' World Watch List for its high levels of persecution, any deviation from the traditional animist belief system is risky. In rural areas especially, converting to Christianity is seen as a betrayal.

So the community turned against Kanya and Phonesay. After the attack on their home, the family were expelled from the village. Along with seven other families of believers, this couple and their

four children were sent to live in the forest, on government land. The area was undeveloped, with no electricity, no toilets and little food. But with your generous support, this underground church is thriving.

YOUR KINDNESS

Your gifts meant Open Doors partners could provide basic construction supplies and food to this small Christian community, and help clear the land for new huts. "We first built a place of worship at the new location, so we'd have somewhere to gather," says Phonesay. "We worship the Lord every day, from Monday to Sunday."

Then your support helped to run persecution preparedness training, to strengthen the church's faith in times of hardship. Finally, Open Doors partners supported a livelihood project to give this community an income. "The training taught me to be patient," says Phonesay, "and the project supports us whenever we have needs."

"I WILL NEVER RENOUNCE CHRIST"

KANYA

Thanks to your support and prayers, Kanya and Phonesay remain faithful under pressure.

Their underground, illegal church could be shut down at any moment – but they do not give up. "Living in the forest with other believers has made me happy, because we share the same faith," smiles Phonesay.

And Kanya added: "I saw God's love through these blessings from you, our brothers and sisters. If we face trouble, we must lean on God. He will not abandon us."

**Names changed for their protection*



WWL
28

PLEASE PRAY

- Kanya asks: "Pray that whatever happens, I will stand firm and never deny Christ. Pray we will have strong faith in God and follow His Word."
- Phonesay asks: "Pray for my family to serve the Lord together. And please pray the Lord will provide a better house so we can sleep comfortably."

UNDERGROUND, UNDER PRESSURE

When you lead an underground church network in China, danger is everywhere. For Ling*, your support keeps her going.

Persecution has never been far away for Ling*, a Christian in south-west China.

It started immediately after she and her husband Song* came to faith in Jesus. They'd returned home to their families, eager to share the gospel. But when Ling refused to join in with ancestral worship, things turned ugly. "The pressure on me was immense," remembers Ling. "My brother-in-law hurled insults and threatened to hit me."

Persecution continued even after Ling and Song's families converted to Christianity. The wider community felt shocked, angry and betrayed, and targeted Ling's family with gossip and rejection.

More recently, persecution has come from the authorities. Ling is certain she's being watched, her mobile phone tracked. This secret surveillance fills her with fear.

But through it all, Ling has boldly

shared her hope in Christ. And your support has strengthened and developed this faithful woman into a courageous leader in China's underground church.

PROTECTED AND STRENGTHENED

Today, Ling runs a network of secret fellowship groups. It started small; secret meetings in humble homes, believers praising and praying fervently. But it grew...

People started walking for hours to join a group. Numbers increased. Ling's husband Song stepped up to lead too, and the couple joined a local missionary team dedicated to sharing the gospel with ethnic minority communities.

Recently, thanks to your gifts and prayers, Ling attended Open Doors discipleship training. She attended discreetly, to avoid scrutiny, and benefited from being with other leaders of the underground church, as they shared stories, encouraged each other and grew in faith. Matian*, our partner who facilitated the event, said, "The enemy does not rest and the spiritual battle grows ever more intense. The devotion of those who came to our discipleship training deeply stirred my heart."

Your support also allows our partners to visit Ling and offer practical aid, comfort, prayer and

renewed hope. It's a risk – but it's vital. Several training events had to be cancelled after Christians were detained by the authorities, so travelling to meet isolated believers is even more important.

"Seeing the fruit of our people-to-people ministry is touching," added Matian. "God is using Open Doors to come alongside village believers like Ling. Your support has deepened believers' understanding of God's word, strengthened faith amid persecution, and helped them know they are not alone."

**Names changed and re-enactment images used for their protection*



WWL
17

PLEASE PRAY

- Ask God to strengthen the faith of Ling and Song, and other underground church leaders in China.
- For Open Doors partners like Matian who take extreme risks to serve ethnic minority believers.
- That the underground churches in these regions will grow and flourish, and point people towards God's goodness.

GOOD NEWS

YOUR PRAYERS ARE BEING ANSWERED IN NORTH KOREA!



Thanks to your prayers, miracles occur! A prisoner in North Korea was released early and is now recovering.

Praise out of North Korea! Deacon Jang* had built a ministry helping and evangelizing to those who crossed into China. He was arrested in 2014 and sentenced to 15 years in prison. Now, Jang has been released under a special amnesty—a rare occurrence for prisoners detained on religious grounds.

As you can imagine, Jang was barely recognizable. He lost a lot of weight, most of his teeth, and even his skin was dry and tough. He is slowly recovering at home in China. Praise God for his release, and keep praying for his healing!

YOUR SUPPORT IS BUILDING CHRISTIAN LIBRARIES IN IRAQ



Thanks to your support, churches in Iraq have been able to build up libraries with resources to equip and strengthen Iraqi Christians.

Open Doors partners in Iraq are dedicated to building up and strengthening the existing persecuted church in that nation, which includes identifying ways that funds can be effectively utilized. One such project this year is building up the libraries in Christian churches. Making solid Christian resources available to persecuted Christians is a vital way to ensure they can grow in their faith, and over time help strengthen the Iraqi church.

Randa, a librarian in one of these churches, says “The library is a legacy...it helps [Christians] grow in their Christian faith but also intellectually, socially, culturally and scientifically.”

CHURCH WITH NO HOME

TOUR

Join us for this in-person event to hear stories that will help you connect with your brothers and sisters who have sacrificed everything to follow Christ.

MANITOBA AND QUEBEC

Sunday, October 4 - 7:00pm

International Worship Centre
1077 St James St.
Winnipeg, MB R3H 0K6

Sunday, October 25 - 7:00pm

MCI Montréal
5685, rue Chauveau
Montréal, QC H1N 1G8

**presentation will be in English*



More dates coming soon!
Visit www.persecutedchurch.ca
or scan the QR code to see all
upcoming events.



Would you like Open Doors Canada come to your church for a Sunday service or weekday event? Contact us for openings in Fall 2026.

Email us at odcevents@odcan.org or call (905) 636-0944.

UNDERGROUND



UNDER PRESSURE

In China, Christians like Jinyi* are being driven underground.

With her husband in prison for leading a house church, Jinyi has started a secret network of small groups. But she can't do it alone.

**WILL YOU SUPPORT THE CHURCH WHERE
FAITH IS FORBIDDEN?**

EVERY \$57 could train underground believers to persist through persecution and support others.

Give now at www.opendoorscanada.org, scan the QR code or call (905) 636-0944. Thank you.



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