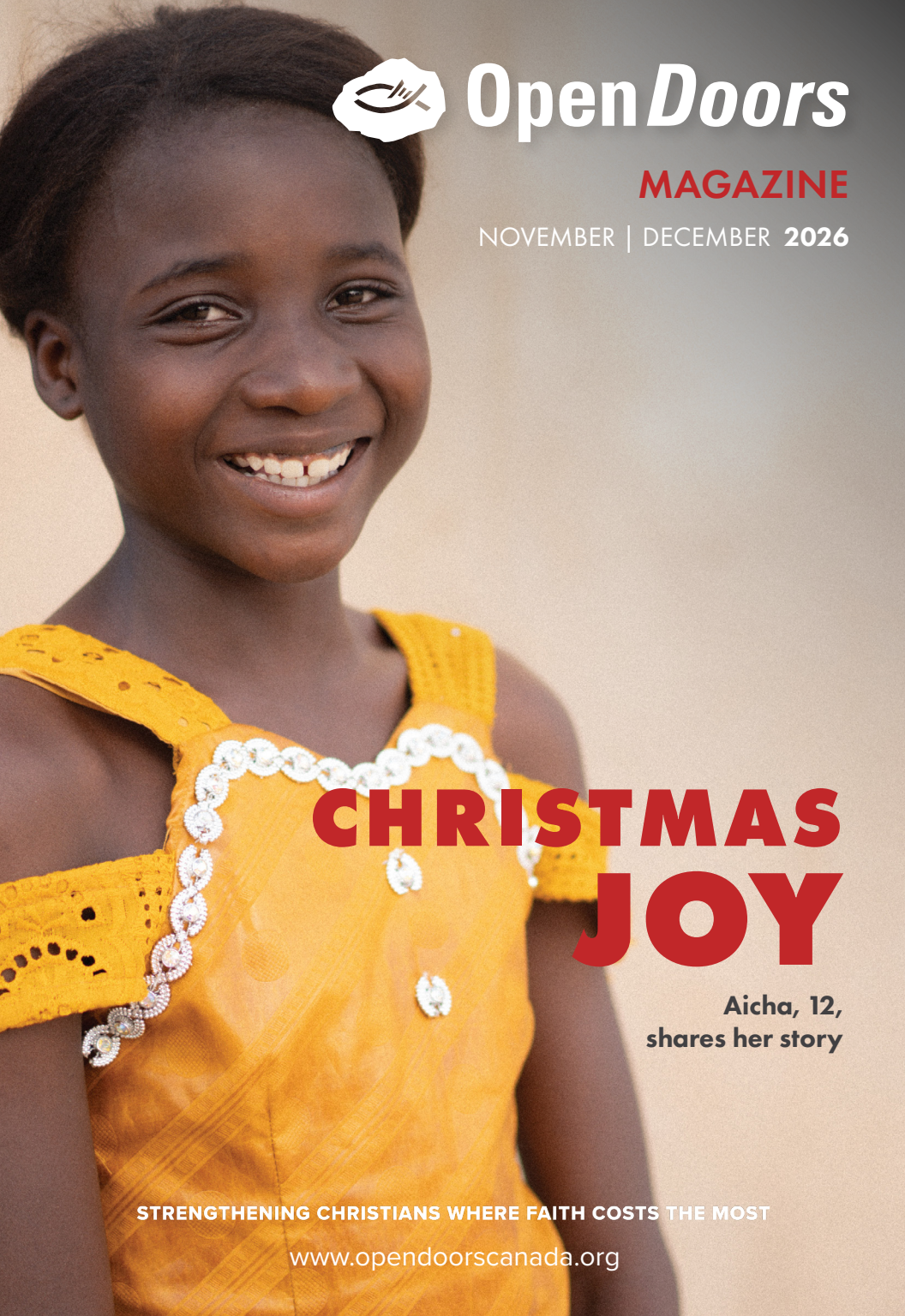


Open Doors

MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER | DECEMBER **2026**

CHRISTMAS JOY

Aicha, 12, shares her story

STRENGTHENING CHRISTIANS WHERE FAITH COSTS THE MOST

www.opendoorscanada.org







CONTENTS

Send Joy	4
IMPACT: ‘A Hug From God’	10
IMPACT: Hope Over Fear	12
Good News	14

Open Doors Canada
8-19 Brownridge Rd.
Halton Hills, ON L7G 0C6

(905) 636-0944
www.opendoorscanada.org
opendoors@odcan.org

/OpenDoorsCanada

Cover image: Aicha was just seven when persecution started. She’s been rejected and opposed ever since. But with your help, Aicha’s Christmas can be full of joy. Read more on page 4.

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GARY’S TAKE



Pastor Gary Stagg
Executive Director
Open Doors Canada

Dear Friend,

The story of Aicha in this issue is both sobering and inspiring: a young girl, only seven years old, walking to church in her finest clothes, suddenly met with opposition because she had chosen to follow Jesus. What she endured reminds us that faith can come at a great cost, especially for our brothers and sisters who live where following Christ brings rejection, danger, or hardship.

Yet Aicha’s courage also reminds us that the grace of God is greater than fear. She did not give up. Five years later, she continues to stand, and the witness of her faith has not been in vain. She is no longer the only believer in her family, and through your kindness, she is assured that she is not forgotten.

This is why I urge you, as Scripture says, “Let us not grow weary in well-doing, for in due time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Gal. 6:9). Your prayers, gifts, and compassion are seeds planted in the soil of God’s kingdom. You may not always see the harvest immediately, but the Lord sees every act of mercy and every sacrifice made in His name.

So be encouraged, friends. Your prayers and support are strengthening the weary, comforting the persecuted, and helping young believers like Aicha know that the family of God stands with them. Thank you for all you do!

Grace & Peace,



Pastor Gary Stagg



SEND JOY

Aicha was just seven when persecution started. She's been rejected and opposed ever since. But with your help, Aicha's Christmas can be full of joy.

A seven-year-old girl, dressed in her finest clothes, walks along dirt tracks on her way to church in Burkina Faso. Suddenly her uncle steps onto the path, menace in his eyes…

Little Aicha is the first person in her Muslim family to choose to follow Jesus. Her uncle has been lying in wait for this moment. He approaches, beats Aicha violently, and forces her to go home.

It's a terrifying attack, the first time Aicha is targeted for her faith.

But this brave little girl wasn't about to give up.

Five years later, Aicha is 12, she's no longer the only believer in her family, and right now she's counting down the days to Christmas – when your support will bring joy.

COURAGE AND FAITH

Aicha discovered Christianity when a local evangelist shared the good news. "I heard that Jesus is the way, the truth and life, and I told the pastor I would like to give my life to Jesus," she said.

Despite her uncle's beatings, Aicha became a regular at church with her neighbours. What she had found in Jesus was worth the cost. Then Aicha's younger brother, Azis, and sister, Somaia, started coming and their lives began to change too.

But their parents were wary – until one day, Aicha's father became desperately ill.

"I heard a voice saying, go to the pastor and you will find the solution," remembers Aicha's mother, Asseta. "The pastor prayed for him, my husband and I received Jesus, and we all started our Christian journey."

Looking back, Asseta is proud of Aicha's courage and faith. "I believe God gave boldness to our children to persevere despite persecution," she adds. "It was God's plan for the children to stand firm, then lead us, the parents, to salvation."

PERSECUTION

But following Christ brought rejection, discrimination and hardship to the family.

"After we received Jesus, everything changed," recalls Asseta. "My family blamed me for leading my husband to become a Christian. From that moment, they completely rejected us, stopped visiting and stopped all the support they had been providing for us."

For Aicha, the isolation and hardship is hard to bear. Growing up in a place where your faith makes you a target is tough. And Aicha is not the only child facing persecution...

Around the world, thousands of Christian children are vulnerable because of their age and faith. Young believers are harassed at school, ridiculed by their community and even denied access to parents. When you feel alone, how can faith survive? If the next generation gives up on Jesus, the future of the church is at risk.

SEND CHRISTMAS JOY

That's why Christmas is so special for persecuted children. Aicha says it's more than a season, it's a reminder of the hope she finds in Jesus.





"Christmas is the birth of Jesus, the Saviour of the world. It's not about food or clothes, it's about receiving Jesus in our hearts," says Aicha, flashing a smile.

This year, you can send joy to Aicha. With your support, Open Doors partners will provide food to keep the family going, help to cover medical bills, and encouragement so their faith remains strong. You can even write to Aicha, and other persecuted children, so they will know they are not alone.

Our vision is to see the next generation of Christians stand firm for Jesus – and your gifts and prayers are vital. Thanks to you, even in the midst of pain and loneliness, Aicha can experience the joy of the Lord.

"My hope for the future is to be filled with the Holy Spirit, so I can go and tell other people about the gospel of Jesus," says Aicha. "May the peace of God be with you all!"

Will you send joy in time for Christmas?

PLEASE GIVE

Every $30 could supply food and housing to a persecuted family for a month.

Every $71 could provide Christian education to two persecuted children like Aicha.

Every $93 could give vocational skills training to persecuted believers.

PLEASE PRAY

- Aicha asks you to pray for God's blessing on her, so she can take care of her family and share the good news of Jesus.
- Lift up persecuted children everywhere who need joy to arrive this Christmas. Pray they will know they are not alone.

PLEASE WRITE

Send Aicha a message of Christmas joy. She'd love to hear from you!

For more info, visit:
www.opendoorscanada.org/write

‘LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME’

For many children, Christmas is a joyful time of gifts, games and family. But for Sasha, Zhenya, Rayan and Jamil, the season may look very different.

Persecuted children need your prayers at Christmas. As you read these stories, will you pause and pray – and send joy?


SASHA* AND ZHENYA*

Sasha* and Zhenya*

Situation: Abandoned by their mother, living in hardship
Location: Central Asia

“Maybe Jesus told Open Doors about our situation.”

Sasha and Zhenya were praying with their dad, Samman. Their mom had abandoned them, they had no church family, and they were living in poverty.

Then, there was a knock at the door. It was Open Doors partners, visiting secret believers and handing out Christmas gifts. Suddenly, the two children knew they weren’t alone.

Pray for Sasha and Zhenya

- Lift up Sasha and Zhenya this Christmas, and pray they will grow strong in faith and love.
- The family live in a half-built house. Ask God to provide what they need to complete their home.

Jamil, age 8

Situation: Pretends to be a Muslim to keep him and his mom safe
Location: North Africa

“Do not be afraid. Jesus is always with you. Keep praying.”

When Jamil’s mom Echrak* became a Christian, Jamil’s dad became increasingly violent. One day, Echrak and Jamil left. Now, the pair live with another relative – and keep their faith secret.

This Christmas, Jamil will celebrate in secret quiet moments. When no one is watching, he and his mom will pull out their hidden Bible, quietly sing Christmas carols, and pray.

Pray for Jamil

- Ask God to protect Jamil and his mom as they secretly celebrate Christmas.
- Pray that Jamil will know he is not alone, and will feel the love of his global church family this season.

Rayan*, age 8

Situation: Must keep his faith secret, living in the shadow of war
Location: Iran

“When I am afraid, I think about the cross and feel safe.”

Rayan’s mom is a Christian but his dad does not follow Jesus. In Iran, where believers face extreme persecution, Rayan has learned to be cautious about sharing his faith.

But it’s hard for Rayan to hide what he believes – especially at Christmas time.

Pray for Rayan

Rayan’s mom asks you to pray with her: “Please pray for peace in Iran. Pray for strength for Christian families raising children in difficult circumstances. Pray that, one day, we may be able to follow Jesus openly and celebrate Christmas without fear.”

**Names changed for security reasons.*



‘A HUG FROM GOD’

Daniela’s father was murdered by a drug gang in Colombia – because he dared to share the gospel. Your support meant Daniela was not left alone.

Seven years ago, Daniela’s life changed forever.

Her beloved father, Pastor Plinio, was shot dead. He’d been relaxing in his rocking chair at the end of the day when the family heard two gunshots – and he was gone.

The killing was supposed to be a warning to local believers, delivered by warlords who control Colombia’s drugs cartels. For Daniela, aged 12 at the time, it was simply devastating.

“I remember crying every night asking God, why my family and no others?” remembers Daniela. “Back then, I was drowning in sorrow.”

But today, thanks to your faithful support, 19-year-old Daniela is thriving – and she holds more tightly to Jesus than ever.

YOUR SUPPORT AND PRAYERS

Immediately after the incident, Daniela and her family spent four months in the safety of a trauma care facility, funded by supporters like you. Your gifts then helped the family buy a new home, and start to rebuild their lives.

In early 2024, Daniela was invited to an Open Doors event in Colombia and happened to see a leaflet with her picture on the cover. “I discovered the leaflet was produced for children, to show that despite difficult moments, following Jesus is worth it,” says Daniela. “They said my story was impacting millions of lives.”

She added, “Maybe it’s one of the hardest ways to serve God, but in that moment, I felt privileged. God was using my story.”

Fast forward a few months, and Daniela learned that kind people like you had offered to sponsor her education. “It was God Himself, paying for my studies,” Daniela smiles.

Today, this young woman is on a journey of healing and she’s full of hope for the future. She works as a graphic designer, and while she still misses her dad terribly, the memories don’t hurt as much.

Above all, Daniela’s faith in Jesus is strong – and your steadfast love and care has helped her survive persecution.

“For me, your support was like a hug from God, showing me that He was there,” says Daniela. She points to a handful of letters pinned to her wall, sent to her by Open Doors’ supporters over the years. “They are words of encouragement, little messages of God that He sends through His people.”

Daniela added, “Our experiences with God help us remain firm in Him. He is our comforter. He will always be there. He is our Father.”



PLEASE PRAY

- Pray for Daniela, that God continues to heal and guide her as she grows in faith.
- Lift up Daniela’s family, that they also will find comfort and strength in Jesus.
- Ask for God’s protection over at-risk young Christians in Colombia.



HOPE OVER FEAR

Last year, Elie survived a deadly church attack. This Christmas, he's bravely returning to church – thanks to your support.

To see nine-year-old Elie in church, taking communion with his family, you would never know what he's had to overcome to be here.

Just last year, on June 22, Elie was standing in St Elias Church in Damascus, Syria, when a deadly attack took place.

A gunman stormed in, firing shots. Elie's mom, Sally, pulled her son down between the pews and used her body to shield him. "Don't be scared, the Lord will see us through," she whispered. Then, the attacker exploded a bomb.

Twenty-two Christians were killed. Sally managed to get Elie out, but then collapsed on the ground. Elie thought she'd died. Sally, seriously injured, was rushed to hospital. Thankfully, she survived – but the family have been left with deep emotional wounds.

"None of us will forget that day," says Sally quietly. "The children fear everything. They're scared something terrible might happen again."

Elie has been too afraid to return to church and last year, the family didn't even celebrate Christmas.

"I long to go to church, but at the same time I fear going there," confesses Elie. "I imagine I will hear shooting. My mind tells me there's nothing to fear. But my heart says something might happen."

COURAGE AND HEALING

Thanks to your faithful prayers and support, this Christmas, Elie will be back at St Elias to celebrate the birth of Jesus with his church family.

It's a huge step, requiring real courage. But Elie knows God is with him.

"Faith is the most powerful thing in life," says Elie, with wisdom beyond his years. "Once you believe in God, you become strong in every aspect. Nothing can defeat you. Those who are weak become strong."

Since the attack on St Elias, your support has helped to train 60 new trauma healing counsellors in Syria, who are ministering to believers like Elie. Your gifts have also funded an income generating program, so Elie's family can build long-term financial stability. Sally has been unable to work because of her injuries, and the family depends on this vital support.

Today, because of you, Elie is looking forward to Christmas with hope.

"I wish this Christmas will be filled with goodness, and that nothing else befalls us," says Elie. "We will set the manger in our living room, and place baby Jesus inside. To me, Jesus is love. Peace. He came down to save us from evil."



WWL 6

PLEASE PRAY

- Pray for little Elie this Christmas, as he bravely returns to St Elias Church following last year's bombing.
- Ask God to continue to heal this family, and others, who were traumatized and injured in the attack.
- Pray for Open Doors' partners and counsellors as they support persecuted Christians in Syria.

GOOD NEWS

YOUR SUPPORT IS BRINGING EMERGENCY RELIEF TO THE CHURCH IN NEPAL



One local partner said, "The relief support was very well received and greatly appreciated...The blankets were especially important as winter is approaching."

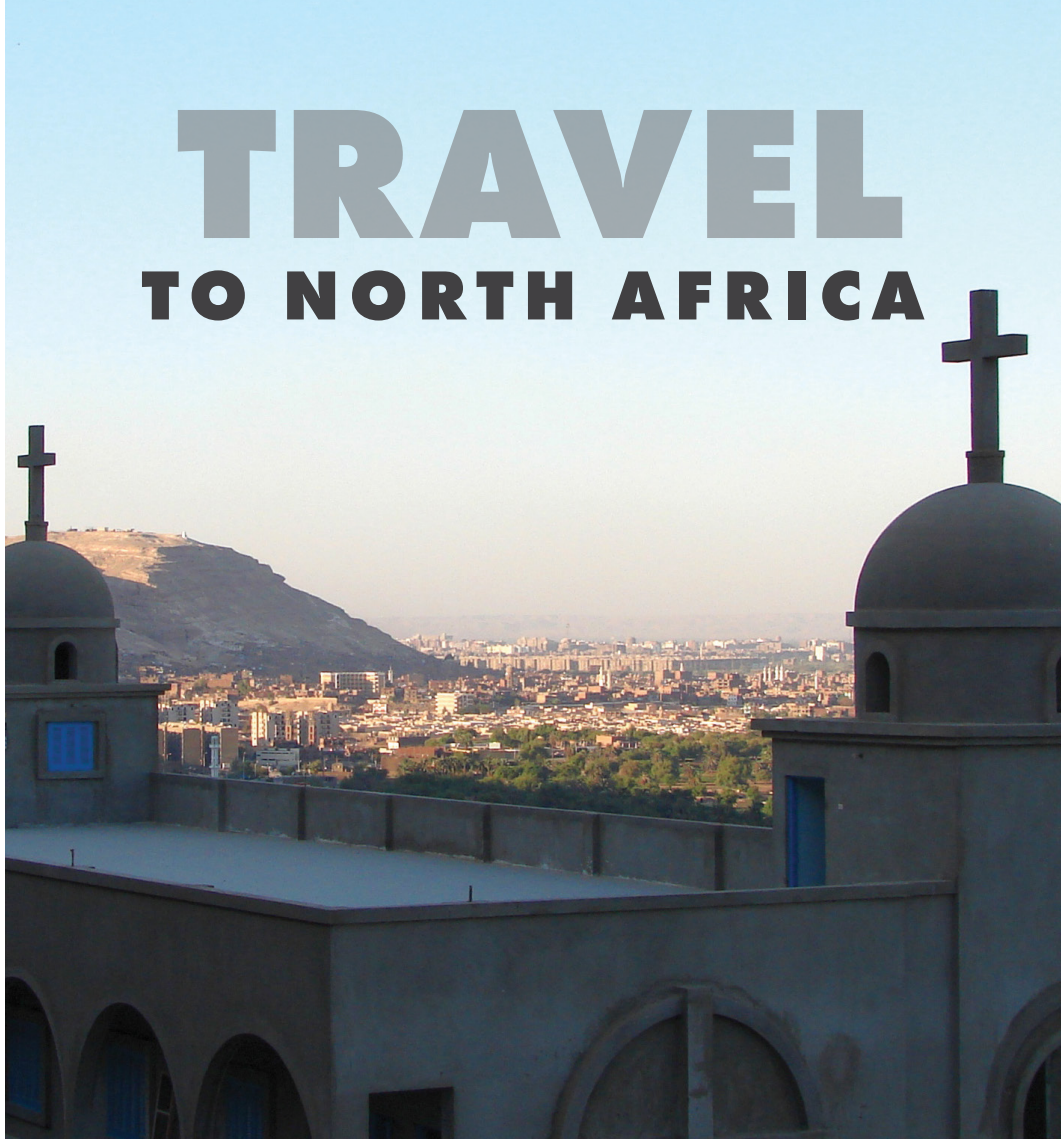
Last month's devastating flash floods in Nepal have resulted in over 900 deaths and thousands more affected. Within those floods, the local church was also affected. Our local partners know of at least 70 church members who have died and another 75 who are missing. Several churches were also destroyed. Recently, our local partners were able to deliver much-needed relief to 300 families who have been affected by the flooding in Nepal. It was an opportunity both to support suffering Christians and help the local Nepalese church be a light for Jesus to their country and neighbours.

THANKS TO YOU, CHILDREN ARE INTRODUCED TO BIBLE STORIES



Thanks to your support, children in Central Asia have received Bible story resources to supplement what they have been learning in Sunday School groups.

Our local partners in Central Asia have been working in discipleship groups to minister to families and their children. Generosity from supporters like you means that these persecuted believers have access to the Word of God, which they might otherwise not. In particular, our local partners were able to provide children with scripture booklets, comic book bibles, Bible story colouring books for toddlers, and other resources to supplement the teaching they received in the small groups. They also help the families continue the teaching at home. Efforts like this ensure that God's truths are passed on to the next generation of Central Asian Christians!



Join us for an exciting opportunity to bring love and encouragement to believers in North Africa.

For more information, and to apply, visit
www.opendoorscanada.org/travel
or email travel@odcan.org

Send joy in time for Christmas

Aicha's smile is a reminder that persecution doesn't have the final word.

Since becoming a Christian, this 12-year-old has suffered discrimination and violence. Today, she remains cut off from her wider family. Yet she holds on to Jesus.

This Christmas, you can send joy to Aicha.

With your help, Aicha will know she is not alone. Your Christmas gift can bring joy and strengthen her faith.

Every $30 could give food and housing to a persecuted family for a month.

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

Thank you.



"CHRISTMAS IS ABOUT RECEIVING JESUS IN OUR HEARTS."

AICHA, BURKINA FASO

Open Doors Canada 8-19 Brownridge Rd., Halton Hills, ON L7G 0C6
(905) 636-0944 | www.opendoorscanada.org | opendoors@odcan.org

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