

Open *Doors*

PRAYER DIARY | March/April 2023



“‘You are the God who sees me,’ for she said, ‘I have now seen the One who sees me.’”

GENESIS 16:13

MARCH

Persecuted women

Wednesday 1 March – Iran

Sahar almost lost her marriage, her children and her freedom when she left Islam to follow Christ (see Magazine p8). By God's grace, she was able to flee to Turkey, where she received biblical training and spiritual encouragement through Open Doors. Give thanks for her courage in refusing to deny Jesus, and pray that her faith will grow.



Thursday 2 March – Turkey

Sahar (ABOVE) now helps other persecuted women in Turkey with spiritual and practical support. "I am able to share with other women who were Muslims and now are Christians what God has done in my life. I can share my experiences with them, teach them, be by their side, pray for them and guide them." Pray that her ministry will help other women understand their identity in Christ.

Friday 3 March – Afghanistan

Since the Taliban takeover, many women and girls have lost the opportunity to receive an education. Pray for a change of mind for the Taliban leadership, that they will see women as equal citizens and

acknowledge their right to be given an education and equal opportunities.

Saturday 4 March – Afghanistan

Ask God to protect women's rights activists who are fearlessly standing against the current regime and their teachings. Pray for wisdom and boldness as they continue their fight to bring hope and freedom to women in Afghanistan.

Sunday 5 March – Syria

Give thanks that, despite difficulties in obtaining visas for foreign trainers, Open Doors partners were able to run training courses for women's ministry leaders and those providing spiritual care for teenage girls. Pray that God will work through the trainees to highlight the importance of the role of women in their churches and communities.

Monday 6 March – Morocco

After Laila* became a Christian, she joined a church without her husband knowing about her new faith. When he found out, he divorced her. Laila is now struggling to provide for her children. Ask the Lord to meet her practical needs and strengthen her faith.

Tuesday 7 March – UK&I

Today, Open Doors is hosting a parliamentary panel event on the persecution of Christian women in Iran. Please pray that MPs will attend, engage with the issues raised and take tangible action to ensure the government includes specific projects for Christian women whose faith makes them particularly vulnerable.

Wednesday 8 March – International Women's Day

Millions of Christian women and girls around the world are persecuted for their faith and vulnerable because of their gender. Yet often their suffering goes unnoticed by the wider world. Pray that Open Doors' *See. Change.* campaign will draw attention to the plight of our sisters, and raise prayer and support to let them know they are not forgotten.

| Middle East

Thursday 9 March – Syria and Turkey

Please continue to pray for the communities devastated by the earthquakes that hit Syria and Turkey a month ago. Pray for wisdom and stamina for Open Doors partners supporting the bereaved and displaced, and pray that the local church will bring the light and hope of Christ to those in despair.

Friday 10 March – Iraq

Praise God that, although many Christians have left Iraq, people in the country are still coming to know Jesus. However, some of them must keep their new faith secret. Pray that all new Christians will have contact with other believers for fellowship and discipleship.

Saturday 11 March – Lebanon

Lebanese Christians are struggling under the weight of religious and sectarian pressure, a failing government and financial system, and the enormous influx of refugees. Ask the Lord to 'refresh the weary and satisfy the faint' (Jeremiah 31:25).

Sunday 12 March – Egypt

Despite gaining official permission, a church was stopped from repairing its roof after Muslim villagers attacked the truck carrying concrete. Police later provided security for construction to resume, only for the head of the local council to stop it again. Pray that the church's right to repairs will be respected.

Monday 13 March – Jordan

Last year, a number of Christian men from Muslim backgrounds were interrogated for several days. One was beaten with a metal chair and sustained liver damage. Ask the Lord to heal these men and pray that God's presence will empower believers in Jordan to withstand persecution.

Tuesday 14 March – Palestinian Territories

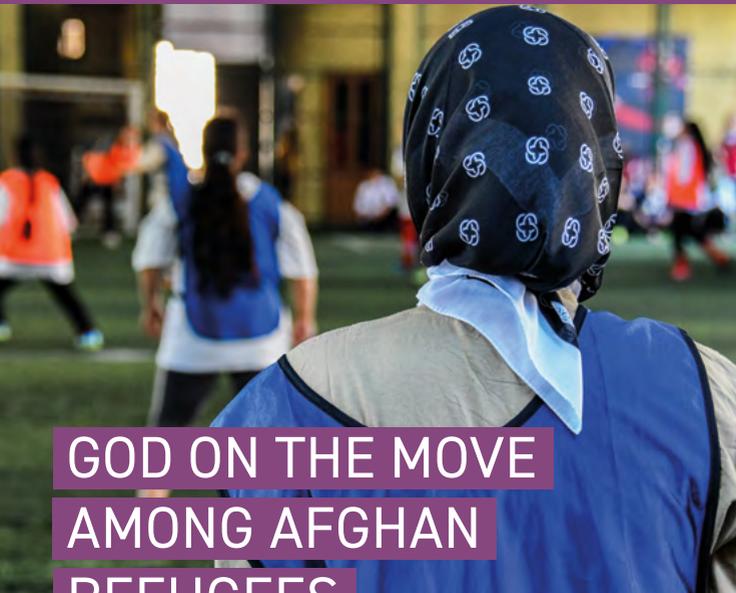
There are a small number of believers in the region from Muslim backgrounds. Pray for the provision of spiritual mothers and fathers to disciple them, and ask the Holy Spirit to transform the hearts of family members who are hostile to their faith.

Wednesday 15 March

As part of Open Doors' *Hope for the Middle East* campaign, 160 Centres of Hope have been established in Syria and 126 in Iraq. These provide practical and spiritual support to local communities. Praise God for these centres and pray that each one will further spread hope this year.

*Names changed for security reasons

Give thanks for ANSWERED PRAYER



GOD ON THE MOVE AMONG AFGHAN REFUGEES

LAST FEBRUARY, WE ASKED YOU TO JOIN US IN A YEAR OF FOCUSED PRAYER FOR AFGHAN BELIEVERS. YOUR PRAYERS ARE BEING ANSWERED – IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE.

All over the world, sports such as football have a wonderful way of bringing people together. This includes Central Asia, where an idea by Open Doors local partners has led to the emergence of something very special.

For Afghan refugees arriving in a particular part of the region, finding work is extremely difficult. Children often witness the stress and hardship this brings their families. They see the hopelessness in their parents' eyes and watch their siblings go to bed hungry. To

escape from it all, some have even considered suicide.

In response, Open Doors local partners began organising activities, like football and volleyball, for the children. Not only has this provided them with joy and friendship, it's also led to the creation of a small house church after 15-20 of them gave their lives to Jesus!

Another person lifted by your prayers and support is Fatima*. After her husband was killed, she and her family fled to a neighbouring country,

but shortly after arriving, one of Fatima's six children died. The family's situation was desperate: their small apartment could barely accommodate them all, Fatima had no source of income, and her youngest is disabled and needs constant care.

After Open Doors local partners gave practical and pastoral support to Fatima and her children, others were inspired to regularly visit and provide care for the family. This has greatly encouraged Fatima, who is one of thousands of Afghan refugees benefiting from your ongoing support.

And in September, we requested prayer after it emerged that many refugees were being unlawfully deported back to Afghanistan. The reasons for this were unclear, but it was highly worrying for Christians who would be at risk of death if they returned to their homeland and their faith was discovered.

Thankfully, believers were protected from these deportations and Open Doors local partners are providing them with support whilst they

stay hidden and eagerly await the day when they can live freely without fear of deportation. "I have only one dream – to have a passport," said the pastor of a small house church. To have this would give them a sense of belonging and freedom.

“Through prayer, we are united as we are the body of Christ.”

Thank you for continuing to stand with your Afghan family. "I know that my Jesus and yours is one," says Gulshan*, a secret believer from the country. "Through prayer, we are united as we are the body of Christ. May the Lord make you aware of our pain."

PLEASE PRAY

- Give thanks for God's beautiful work among Afghan refugees
 - For God's continued protection of believers in and beyond Afghanistan
 - That the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of Afghan believers will be met.
- *Names changed for security reasons

Gulshan (BELOW) knows you're praying for her, whilst football has been a lifeline for young Afghan refugees (TOP LEFT)



| Iran

Thursday 16 March

The Iranian people have suffered many months of unrest following the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini in September 2022, after she was arrested by the morality police for an 'improper' hijab. Protests continue despite the risk of arrest, torture and even execution. Ask God to comfort those who have lost loved ones during this period of upheaval.

Friday 17 March

Young people in Iran are especially fired up to fight for their freedom. The protests and activities in Iran are peaceful, but the authorities continue to criminalise them. Please pray for unity and wisdom as young people raise their voices together, and that the right to peacefully protest would be enshrined in law.

Saturday 18 March

Shockingly, some prisoners have been issued with death sentences without a valid reason, or even a proper trial. Pray that justice will prevail and that all prisoners will be granted a fair trial and saved from death row. Ask God to protect unfairly imprisoned Christians from torture.

Sunday 19 March - Mother's Day

Anahita* was arrested and imprisoned in Iran in December alongside her husband Pastor Abdolreza*. As a result, her teenage daughter is now on her own. Ask God to protect her daughter and provide someone to care for her, and pray

that Anahita and Abdolreza will be swiftly released.

Monday 20 March

The Iranian government is increasing its surveillance and control over people's lives, making it harder for believers from Muslim backgrounds to meet in secret. If caught, they risk being prosecuted for 'crimes against national security'. Ask God to grant strong faith and courage to believers meeting in secret.

Tuesday 21 March - Persian New Year

Today is Nowruz – or Persian New Year, which is celebrated in Iran on the first day of spring. Ask God to give fresh hope and courage to persecuted Iranian believers today – especially those who are isolated, imprisoned or grieving.

| Ramadan

Wednesday 22 March

Ramadan begins this evening – the annual Islamic month of fasting in order to seek Allah. Secret believers who hide their faith for fear of persecution can struggle to remain hidden during this month – especially if they are not seen to observe the fasting period. Pray for God's protection over them.

Thursday 23 March - Southern Philippines

In the southern Philippines, some believers from Muslim backgrounds see Ramadan as an opportunity to share the love of Christ with their Muslim friends, neighbours and families. "Last Ramadan, the house church shared a feast with our fellow Muslim

neighbours," shares one believer. Pray that these opportunities to share the gospel will bear fruit.

Friday 24 March - Malaysia

Abu is only seven years old. Although it's not compulsory for him to fast during Ramadan, he feels embarrassed to eat in front of his school friends and siblings, who mock him when they catch him eating or drinking. Please pray that God will protect Abu from insults, and that he will experience God's love, joy and peace.

Saturday 25 March

Many children feel pressured to fast during Ramadan and, because they are so young, they end up feeling ill by the end of it. Pray for the children who do not want to fast, that they will be able to ignore the negativity around them. Pray that the adults around them will have compassion and not force them to do something they are not ready for.

Sunday 26 March - Egypt

In many Muslim countries, God is working through visions. Rania* in Egypt describes the miraculous healing of her son, who said, "I saw Christ looking at me. He called me, saying: 'Child, arise.'" Pray that more Muslims will supernaturally encounter Jesus in dreams and visions during Ramadan.

Monday 27 March - Indonesia

This is the first Ramadan that Marjo* will not be celebrating. He was baptised at Christmas, but now he is unsure whether his family will still accept him when they gather. Pray for Marjo and other believers who

are experiencing pressure during Ramadan, that they will know God's presence with them.

Tuesday 28 March

Pray for converts from Islam who are no longer celebrating Ramadan. It's not easy to let go of years of traditions and embrace a new identity as a Christian in a predominantly Muslim environment. Pray for God to give believers the courage to stand strong in their faith and hope in Jesus.

Wednesday 29 March

Children of new believers from Muslim backgrounds can struggle to understand why they don't celebrate Ramadan anymore. Pray that God will help believers to deal with the mixed emotions they may experience during this month.

Thursday 30 March

Pray for Christians choosing to fast during Ramadan, that they will draw closer to God. Pray that God will open up opportunities for believers to share their faith with Muslim friends and family, and that He will give them courage to respond to any questions with the truth of the gospel.

Friday 31 March

Eid Al-Fitr is celebrated at the end of Ramadan, and it's one of the biggest religious festivals in the Muslim calendar. Muslims typically gather in an open space to pray for peace and blessings. Ask God that, as they pray, He will transform their hearts, that they may also grow in compassion towards Christians living among them.

*Names changed for security reasons

Hope springs from a fresh start in East Africa

Thank you so much for your prayers and gifts for our sisters and brothers around the world who are risking everything for Christ. Believers like Aminah* in East Africa are being supported and sustained in their faith despite the persecution they face.

Aminah became a Christian after her son was healed through prayer at her local church. "My husband didn't like it," she remembers. "He said that it was fine if the prayers had worked, but that our visits to the church should end there and then."

Back at home, she tried to reason with her husband about continuing to go to church. But he wouldn't have any of it. "He said, 'If you don't leave that Christian religion, you can't stay any longer in this house.' Then he ordered my two oldest children who had



joined me at church to go into the house. He beat them up until he was satisfied."

As he left for work, he told Aminah to return to Islam, or leave the house and never come back.

YOU'VE HELPED AMINAH REBUILD HER LIFE

But Aminah couldn't leave her children, so she stayed. Her husband sent people to spy on her to make sure she didn't attend the church. He also stopped sending money home to support the family. After



LEFT Aminah can send her children to school again, thanks to you

two months of hiding at home, Aminah managed to visit her pastor in secret, who connected her with Open Doors local partners. They provided Aminah with a small loan, and she built a simple shop next to their house. She finally had an income of her own.

| "I'm really hopeful"

After six months, her husband returned home and saw that she was doing well. Furious, he beat her. "I was panicking," Aminah says. "He said that if I cared for my life, I should tear down the shop and leave. I felt so bad. I really wanted to kill myself. But while I was thinking of how to kill myself, I stopped, because of my children. I broke down my shop and left."

Aminah had a plot of land nearby – and, through her church, Open Doors helped her to restart her life again. She built a new home for herself, and a new shop. She now has enough money to send her children to school. "I'm really hopeful," she says. "I'm much better now. I passed through hard times, but if it were not for your support, I would have sat somewhere to cry, or worse."

PLEASE PRAY

- For emotional and physical healing for Aminah and her children
- That God would continue to provide for them, and soften her husband's heart
- For local Open Doors partners in East Africa as they help more Christians like Aminah.

*Name changed for security reasons

Persecuted women

Saturday 1 April - North Africa

Give thanks that Aizah, whose story we shared in 2019, has been using her own experience of persecution to help other women who have left Islam to follow Jesus. "The way we, as Open Doors, try to help the women is going on a discipleship journey with them," she says. "I don't give up on them, no matter how long it takes. God is faithful. When we fail, He takes care. He helps - He changes lives."

Sunday 2 April - Afghanistan

Under new restrictions imposed by the Taliban, many women are unable to work. As well as disempowering women, this also negatively affects the economy. Ask God to convict Afghan leaders of the value of women in the workforce, and pray that the restrictions will be lifted.

Monday 3 April - Philippines

Aida was evicted from her own home when she became a Christian. Her neighbour even said, "Why don't you just kill her because she converted?" Despite this opposition, Aida believes that the more her faith is tested, the stronger it becomes. Give thanks for her boldness, and pray specifically for the salvation of her family.

Tuesday 4 April - North Korea

Pray for Open Doors' ministry to North Korean women refugees in China. Strict Covid measures

have made it very difficult to gather for Bible studies. Ask God to provide a safe way for the women to meet, and to equip them to share the gospel with their families and friends.

Wednesday 5 April - Tunisia

Amina* was expelled from her house by her father when she became a Christian. Pray that the Father of all comfort will comfort and strengthen her in her faith, and pray that those reaching out to her will know how best to provide the practical and spiritual support she needs.

Thursday 6 April - Middle East

Open Doors runs discipleship training to help women discover what the Bible teaches about women. "Some women do change and the training has a positive effect on them," says one of the trainers. "Others resist, it confuses them. It is a real struggle and the process of changing your view is painful." Pray for Christ's wisdom and perseverance for the women teaching these courses.

| Easter

Friday 7 April - Good Friday

As we remember Christ's sufferings, remember all believers who are under pressure today to deny their faith in Jesus, whether from their family, community or the state. Pray for strength to overcome, for 'the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world' (1 John 4:4).

Saturday 8 April

For the first disciples, Holy Saturday was a day when all

their hopes seemed lost. Pray that persecuted believers who have lost hope for the future will know God's promise that 'weeping may stay for the night, but joy comes in the morning' (Psalm 30:5).

Sunday 9 April - Easter Sunday

"Since we have such a hope, we are very bold" (2 Corinthians 3:12). Ask the Risen Lord to protect Christians celebrating Easter today in places where worshipping in public is risky. Pray that their witness will be fruitful, and pray that those of us who are free to worship will use our freedom courageously.

Monday 10 April - Sri Lanka

Praise God that Sri Lanka's Supreme Court has ruled that compensation be given to the families of victims of the 2019 Easter bombings. Over 250 people were killed when suicide bombers targeted six locations, including three churches, on Easter Sunday four years ago. No one has yet been held responsible for the attacks. Pray that this ruling will be a catalyst for identifying and holding to account the perpetrators.

| Africa

Tuesday 11 April - Mozambique

Mozambique has risen nine places on the World Watch List due to the growing presence of Islamic militants in the north. In response, Open Doors is stepping up its activities to help those affected by the violence. Pray for Open Doors partners supporting displaced Christians with emergency food aid and persecution survival training.

Wednesday 12 April - DRC

At least 17 people were killed and 20 injured when Islamic extremists bombed a church service in North Kivu province in January. Pray that DRC's government will take action to protect people's freedom to gather to worship, and pray for those providing comfort and practical support to those affected.

Thursday 13 April - Nigeria

Pray for comfort for the family and congregation of Father Achi, who was killed when Boko Haram burnt down his church in Paikoro. Fr Achi had previously been shot, kidnapped and survived another church bombing, but had refused to give up serving God's people. Praise God for his courageous faith and pray that his witness will bear much fruit in the life of his community.

Friday 14 April - Nigeria

Nine years after Boko Haram abducted over 270 schoolgirls from Chibok, around 100 girls remain in captivity. Keep praying for their safe return, and pray that the girls and their families will not give up hoping in the Lord to deliver them.

Saturday 15 April - Burkina Faso

Give thanks that security forces have rescued 66 women and children abducted by jihadists in January. Ask God to heal those traumatised by their kidnap, and pray for protection for Christians still living under the threat of Islamic insurgency.

*Names changed for security reasons

Finding living water in the desert

You're helping Nadia disciple persecuted believers on the Arabian Peninsula



“Just before finding Jesus, it was the lowest moment of my life,” remembers Nadia*. “I felt like there was no hope.”

Nadia had always been searching for God. Even from a young age, she realised that she wouldn't find Him in Islam. She had known about Jesus from childhood – but didn't make the connection between Him and everything she was searching for. Her spiritual seeking led her instead to New Age and occult practices. “On the Arabian Peninsula demonology, the spirit world is very much accepted,” Nadia says. “It's mostly used to instigate fear.”

“I knew that I wasn't alone.”

However, as she continued exploring these practices, she found that her life was falling apart. Jesus found her when she was estranged from her family – and just after her father died. “That was really the first time that I felt there was a Father who had adopted me after my own father had passed,” she says. “There was a peace there, and I knew that I wasn't alone.”

YOUR PRAYERS ARE GIVING BELIEVERS HOPE

Although Jesus had rescued her, following Him in the Arabian Peninsula – where Christianity is largely suppressed – brought new challenges. “The risks are very real,” Nadia says. “It's very challenging to find a church and other believers. One of the main reasons is fear. One could

be afraid that they're talking to someone who's not a believer, but they're posing as one.

“The first time I met other believers, real born-again believers, it was a wonderful experience. I had prayed for that for a long time... It was very overwhelming.”

Open Doors partners have worked with Nadia to disciple her and help her grow in faith – and to begin to share her depth of faith with others across the region.

Nadia is grateful for your continued prayers: “The idea of so many people around the world praying for me and for the people in this area really gives hope as to how connected we are as the body of Christ. The more people in this area know this, the more encouraged they'll feel that they're not by themselves. Those prayers have affected me and other people living in this region who've found the truth and seen the light.”

You can find a longer version of Nadia's story and a video interview at [opendoorsuk.org](https://www.opendoorsuk.org)

PLEASE PRAY

- That Nadia will continue to grow in her faith
- For strength and boldness for believers on the Arabian Peninsula
- That God would help Open Doors partners to reach and support more persecuted Christians.

*Name changed for security reasons
Representative image

| China

Sunday 16 April

The World Watch List highlights how China is leading attempts to redefine human rights, with a focus more on 'stability' and 'security' than value and dignity. It represents a dangerous move towards global authoritarianism, with regimes exerting greater control over their people. Pray that these plans will be frustrated.

Monday 17 April

New laws were introduced last year that require permission for religious content to be shared online. It's forcing Christians to be careful and creative in what they post online. Pray that God will use the restrictions to deepen faith, inspire ingenuity and further spread the gospel in China.

Tuesday 18 April

Heavy fines are often used by the authorities to hinder Christian activities and send a warning to others. Ji Chungang (41) was fined the equivalent of around £16,200 for organising an 'unauthorised' religious training event. Ask the Lord to strengthen and encourage our brother, and meet his needs.

Wednesday 19 April

"Even if this comes against us, and even if our son will lose his job, we'll never be afraid," said a couple who were among believers from a church arrested after a member was found listening to an audio Bible on his commute. "We can earn our living as farmers, despite how laborious it'd be." Praise God for such courageous faith.

Thursday 20 April

"Some pastors are afraid of the potential of persecution that is coming, while others encourage their congregation to focus on the sovereignty of God," says an Open Doors partner. Pray that pastors will draw strength from knowing that God has given them a spirit of 'power, love and self-discipline' (2 Timothy 1:7).

Friday 21 April

Open Doors local partners in China have numerous activities planned this year to help believers grow in their faith and equip them to stand strong amid persecution. Pray that each session will 'accomplish what I [God] desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it' (Isaiah 55:11).

Saturday 22 April

Lewis* comes from a Buddhist background. Despite hostility at home and at school, he has led many classmates and teachers to Jesus! He now leads a small house group. "Please pray for me and my current life group members, that we will all continue to grow spiritually," he asks.

| Latin America

Sunday 23 April – Nicaragua

Nicaragua is in the top 50 of the World Watch List for the first time due to increasing hostility towards Christians from the government. "More and more, we find ourselves immersed in an environment of fear," says Pastor Diogenes*. Pray that Christians will remain bold in their faith.

Monday 24 April – Nicaragua

Several church leaders have been detained as the government seeks to silence opposition to President Daniel Ortega and his government. One of the most vocal is Rolando Alvarez, Bishop of the Diocese of Matagalpa, who is under house arrest for 'crimes' against society and the government. Pray for the release of all leaders.

Tuesday 25 April – Colombia

The persecution of Christians in Colombia is worsening, largely due to an increase in violence, including murders. Pray the words of Psalm 5:11 over believers who are exposed to danger for their faith: "Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you."

Wednesday 26 April – Colombia

The Open Doors Children's Centre – which provides shelter, education and discipleship for children affected by persecution – is expanding its staff team and extending its buildings. Pray for wisdom, strength and provision during this transitional period.

Thursday 27 April – Venezuela

Despite threats by armed groups, Pastor Victor* and his wife Karen* continued to preach the gospel, even leading gang members to Jesus. Tragically, Pastor Victor was found dead shortly after being abducted. Ask God to birth 'a new thing' (Isaiah 43:19) in Karen as she settles in a safer region.

Friday 28 April – Mexico

"In this world, we'll have peace and love. United, always united holding hands, we'll go out to the world singing to God." These words were sung by 77 pastors during an event run by Open Doors partners to help them prepare their churches for persecution (PICTURED BELOW). Ask God to encourage these pastors in their ministries.



Saturday 29 April - Mexico

"When you respond to persecution appropriately, you can win the community to Christ," says Pastor Lauro Núñez. He's seen locals from his indigenous community, even his persecutors, soften towards him after he resisted retaliation. Pray that this testimony will be replicated across Mexico, leading to people coming to know Jesus.

| UK & Ireland

Sunday 30 April

Last year, volunteers and staff completed more than 800 speaking engagements across the UK and Ireland. It led to many people hearing about the persecuted church for the first time. Ask the Holy Spirit to continue anointing speakers in the preparation and delivery of talks.

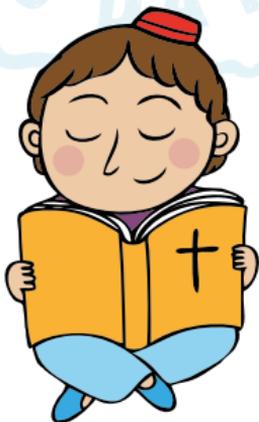
*Names changed for security reasons



New resource
for children
and families

SET OFF ON A **JOURNEY OF PRAYER** WITH THE SECRET CHURCH

Our brand new *World Watch List Prayer Passport and Map* is a great resource for families and children's groups.



The 48-page passport has information about each country as well as spaces for children to write their own prayers, helpful 'Word Watch' sections explaining key terms, and exciting ideas to help them pray. And there's also a full-colour wall map with colour-in spaces for the top 50 countries.

Order your free copies today at opendoorsuk.org/resources or call our Inspire team on **01993 460015**.



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