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THANK YOU, LORD!

30 ways the Lord has been at
work in Asia

A YEAR TO REMEMBER?

After a year characterised by social distancing, self-isolation, Zoom meetings, R-numbers and lockdowns, it might seem unusual to be full of thanks, but we are hugely grateful for your continued support over a uniquely challenging time and are astounded by the ways in which God has been at work.

2020 was the first year in our history that no member of our UK & Ireland team travelled to Asia. However, we increased our efforts to communicate with workers on the ground and have some incredible stories to share with you as we reflect on the year. As the impact of the pandemic rippled across Asia, we saw the power of Jesus at work in ways we never expected. Across the continent, God's people stepped up in faith, meeting fresh needs and championing the glorious message of the gospel. By His grace, lives have been transformed.

Thank you once again for your support in 2020. We pray that you will be richly encouraged as you read these 30 stories of God at work in Asia. We need only look to His continued faithfulness, evidenced time and time again, to be reminded that even in a year of great difficulty He is still sovereign and still working for His purposes. Hallelujah!



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Scripture -

1. MEETING THE SAVIOUR.

A team of Mongolian workers were blessed with great fruit on a mission trip this summer as they handed out the Word of God.

In July, a group of believers from the north undertook a short-term mission trip to the Uvurkhangai district in the south of the country. The area is best known for its ancient Buddhist monasteries, and is home to a number of small towns. The largest of these is Arvaikheer, which has a population of around 26,000 people and is a centre for traditional crafts, goat herding and equestrian sports.

The team were eager to bring the good news of Christ to this area and were grateful for many chances to hand out Scripture. During the trip, they distributed 728 New Testaments, 900 booklets containing the Gospel of Mark, 900 children's books and 200 audio versions of the Bible. They were also able to share the gospel and encourage local believers along the way.

Many people had heard of Jesus before, but they knew little about Him and had never heard an explanation of the gospel. Around forty people accepted Jesus as their Saviour, including four whole families. Each of these new believers was introduced to a local church, and we pray that many more will turn to Christ as they read the Scriptures for themselves.

Thank You, Lord, for raising up these workers and providing these Bibles!



Workers -

2. CHURCH PLANTS APLENTY.

A team in Iraqi Kurdistan have established new fellowships in numerous towns.

In a region full of refugees from Syria and the Iraqi Republic, there is much need of hope. Believers here have been ministering to those who have fled their homes, lost loved ones or even been abused at the hands of ISIS. Teams across the region are seeking to bring love, hope and healing into the most broken of lives.

We were thrilled to hear not only of numerous salvations and baptisms in the existing house churches, but also of new churches being started. Eight new churches have been planted in the Erbil area in recent months, along with two new house churches in the village of Siji, where Muslims and Yazidis are being introduced to Christ. Workers in the area have also been able to encourage and assist with the establishment of new house churches further afield, including further south in Sulaymaniyah, and even across the northern border into Turkey.

We give thanks for the zeal of these workers and praise the Lord for the blessings He is pouring out on their ministry!



Action -

3. ALL ABOARD!

A new minibus is helping exploited Pakistani children access a Christian education.

Millions of families in Pakistan are trapped by debts owed to their masters. They have no freedom to leave and their debts grow at a significant rate before being passed on to the next generation. We are eager to take action to break this cycle and were excited to provide a minibus in the Punjab region. The team have begun using the vehicle to transport children from the brick factories to school each day, offering them an education to which previously they had no access.

The children come from a mixture of Muslim and nominally Catholic backgrounds. One Muslim father said, “Christian people are loving, compassionate and have a heart for children. I believe my children will be secure and protected in a Christian environment.” We long to see these families released from their debts as their children go on to find safe and well-paid work in the future, and we pray that as the children and their families hear the gospel, they will find spiritual freedom too.

Thank You, Lord, for this vehicle and the passionate workers getting this initiative off the ground!





Workers -

4. SOUTH-EAST ASIA

In a country which restricts religious freedoms, it can be hard for believers to meet for fellowship and training. However, workers at one of our projects were able to make this happen in 2020. They enabled forty village leaders to gather for training in January, before running a women's Bible training day for 50 people in March. Twenty people received training in May, and a further session was held in July, enabling 25 leaders from rural mountain regions to receive training in God's Word. Praise the Lord for making this possible!



Action -

5. INDIA

Near Varanasi, a team runs a training and outreach programme from an ashram which serves as their base. Relations with locals had been poor, but after they prayed for a way to respond to lockdown a police officer asked them to make 1000 facemasks. The government had made masks mandatory, but the poor could not obtain them. The team told us, "We shared out of what we had and the Lord amazingly multiplied and keeps multiplying so we are able to keep helping those in greater need." Thank You, Lord, for the policeman's request, and for enabling your people to respond!



Scripture -

6. SOUTH-EAST ASIA

A team in South-East Asia has been hard at work translating children's materials into a minority language which does not yet have a full Bible. Leaders of children's groups have been trained to use an oral 'Bible-Storytelling' approach alongside the big books, booklets and MP3 recordings provided. Amazingly, the process of testing out the stories led to several listeners coming to faith! 110 churches now have the materials, and work is underway to develop digital versions.

7. BHUTAN

Pastor 'U' has continued to oversee his church in Thimpu whilst also conducting outreach in the Chukha and Haa districts of the nation. We give thanks that the church is growing in Christ and that a number of people came to faith on the outreach trips.

8. SRI LANKA

In May, a missionary awareness programme saw fourteen events take place all over the island, encouraging the Sri Lankan church to join God's work of reaching the nations. Praise God for bringing many people along and for allowing these events to take place before the national lockdown!

9. MONGOLIA

Our partners were prevented from running their feeding centre for vulnerable children during lockdown, so they took home cooked food to the children. We praise God that this opened up gospel opportunities as the team met the children's families for the first time.

10. MYANMAR

Workers trained and sent out by our partners reached an estimated 4,000 people between them in 2020. Around 130 people made new professions of faith, with 79 people being baptised throughout the year. Thank You, Lord, for all that You are doing through our brothers and sisters in Myanmar.

11. JAPAN

A new partnership in Japan saw the distribution of Manga-illustrated Bible storybooks to children isolated during lockdown. We were amazed to discover that churches, kids' clubs and even primary schools had got behind the initiative. Praise God that many Japanese children are reading about Jesus as a result!

12. PAKISTAN

A group in the desert contacted our partners regarding a demon-possessed woman after their tribal gods and religions could not cure her. The team visited her and prayed for her and she was healed immediately. We give thanks that her whole household believed, was baptised and joined a local fellowship.



13. INDIA

The Indian lockdown caused devastating hardship among the poor. We were able to assist with the provision of rice and vegetables for hundreds of poor families, including the families of around one hundred pastors. Thank You, Lord, for this practical witness to the love of Christ.

14. NEPAL

Bishnu was frustrated as travel restrictions prevented outreach trips in Nepal. However, he was able to witness to families whose children received free education at his church. Praise God that Bishnu could give these families Bibles and tracts when they asked for copies of God's Word!

15. SOUTH-EAST ASIA

Our friends conduct outreach to their own minority group in a closed country. They reported 837 new believers, 627 baptisms and twenty-five new house churches over a four-month period. Thank You, Lord, for this rapid growth of Your church!

16. MONGOLIA

Over the Christmas period, a team visited several poor families along with a local pastor. Gifts were given to children who could not have imagined receiving them and the gospel was shared. We give thanks that twenty-one children accepted Christ, with some now attending the local church regularly.

17. SOUTH-EAST ASIA

With human trafficking and sexual exploitation a dangerous and prevalent issue in the region, we give thanks that a team was able to give an anti-human trafficking presentation to well over one thousand students last February amid their ongoing efforts to combat these dark realities.

18. IRAQ

When lockdown prevented 'M' from running her women's Bible study, she took the sessions online. Praise God that He has increased the number of women attending as a result, and has been speaking to many in vivid dreams of His plan of salvation!

19. CHINA

Work to digitally distribute Scripture to Uyghur people saw almost 1000 Bible downloads in the first quarter of 2020 and hundreds of website visits per day through the summer. We give thanks that at least one person from each of the 360 Uyghur villages in China has accessed these digital Scriptures!

20. MONGOLIA

In July, one gospel worker took eleven teenagers on a one-week gospel camp in the Gobi Desert after they had shown interest in Jesus at his English classes. We are thankful that four of these youngsters were baptised right away, and four more were baptised in October. (Picture below.)



21. MIDDLE EAST

When we funded a digital Scripture campaign in a closed country, we had no idea if it would work. Praise God that more people received access to God's Word in one month than in the whole history of the country, with 100,000 people reading Scripture and 70,000 watching gospel presentations!

22. SOUTH-EAST ASIA

When our partners started livestreaming gospel messages on Facebook, they saw a huge increase in viewers. Now, over five thousand people regularly access the talks. We give thanks that gospel-centred, relevant and engaging messages on the virus, money and education caught the attention of many non-believers.

23. PAKISTAN

A team of workers spent their Sundays teaching classes and games to children in brick factories. Through 35 classes, around 400 children were reached, with 80% coming from non-Christian families. Thank You, Lord, for the ten people from brick factories who have been baptised in recent months!

24. MYANMAR

Although the distribution of Scripture has been curtailed, work to translate and print Bibles and other materials has continued throughout the year. 200,000 Bibles in eight languages are ready for distribution as soon as restrictions are lifted. We praise God that the production of Bibles has not been halted.

25. SOUTH-EAST ASIA

In-person ministry has been widely disrupted, but the Word is still being proclaimed. The numbers accessing some online church services have exploded from a few thousand to hundreds of thousands. Praise God that He has made a way for His Word to be proclaimed to many, even at this time!

26. INDIA

We were moved to hear of Sam, a four-year-old boy in India who prayed daily for our partners' coronavirus relief efforts. He chose to break open his piggy bank and give all of his money towards this work. Thank You Lord for this young boy's heart for the poor!

27. THAILAND

A team from a Muslim-majority country in South-East Asia visited the south to share the gospel with Malay communities and leaders. We give thanks that the trip went well - so well that the team decided to return a month later to follow up with people they had met!

28. PAKISTAN

After recovering from a struggle with coronavirus, one worker resumed his ministry, sharing the gospel in his local community and the surrounding area. We thank God that this worker was able to disciple dozens of people, and that twenty-seven were baptised in the following months!

29. MONGOLIA

In July, 60 volunteers from across the nation came together to provide relief and reach out to their nation. They travelled over 7500km, distributing food, face masks, sanitiser and gospel materials to 340 vulnerable families. Praise God for this team, and for the local churches who will continue to bless these families.

30. SOUTH-EAST ASIA

We praise the Lord that the first known Christians from four unreached, tribal groups gathered for fellowship and teaching in August after workers from their country shared the good news with them. We give thanks for their salvation, and praise God that they were provided with chickens as a gift!

