



# Christian Freedom<sup>®</sup> International

2020

## ANNUAL REPORT

*"Remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering." Hebrews 13:3*



# From the President

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Dear Friend,

This year a ministry leader told me: “Persecution is a way of life for Christians in our country.”

This is true in many countries.

In 2020, Christians experienced massacres in Nigeria, imprisonments in Iran, kidnappings in Egypt, the on-going impact of ISIS in Iraq, false blasphemy accusations and debt bondage in Pakistan, and more.

In 2020, the Covid pandemic and shut-downs seized the world – and became another excuse to discriminate against Christians.

Despite it being the worst year on record for attacks on Christians, and Covid added immense burdens, persecuted Christians rose to the challenges – and their faith enlivened ours.

When it was critical to get aid out quickly during the Covid shut-downs, Christian Freedom International found new ways to get assistance – spiritual and material – to persecuted Christians.

Christian Freedom International’s schools and shelters continued throughout the year, with extra duties of following Covid guidelines. Sponsored children, families, and pastors never went a month without their aid – and with extra supplies to carry them through.

Each of our ministries pivoted to the new challenges and we reached into more countries to equip the faithful to endure persecution.

In a twist, the pandemic opened opportunities for persecuted Christians to help and care for others. Compassion flowed in all directions as CFI’s supporters gave to persecuted Christians who then reached others in great need.

One response was breathtaking. In Bangladesh, a Christian convert, a blind man who relies on begging for his family’s daily food and must keep his conversion a secret to survive in the streets, thanked CFI’s supporters and prayed for Americans because, “We know that there is more epidemic in your country than ours.”

Our Annual Report cannot tell all the ways that Christian Freedom International impacted persecuted Christians. Much gets done quietly without notice or applause. But the impact is eternal.

We are eternally grateful for all your prayers and support that made it possible.

For Christ,

Wendy Wright  
President

*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

*Romans 8:18*

## MISSION & VISION:

*Unshackling the Persecuted Church to survive . . . and thrive!*

- † Bringing relief, sparking growth, and assisting sustainability.
- † Advocating for religious freedom.
- † Safeguarding the endangered and oppressed brothers and sisters in Christ.
- † Equipping for maximum effectiveness.

## WHERE WE HELPED IN 2020:



# BANGLADESH:

Islamic radicalism is growing in Bangladesh. Christians – especially converts – are threatened in their communities by Islamists, Buddhist and Hindu extremists.

Christian Freedom International works primarily with converts to Jesus Christ. In 2020:



**CFI's Center for the Blind and Disabled** provided a safe place for persecuted Christians for training in the Bible, prayer meetings, to learn skills and make items to make a living. Eleven Christians stayed at the Center to get medical help in Dhaka.

**CFI opened a new Ministry Center** in a restricted area of Bangladesh. This Center hosts Bible teachings, prayer meetings, and distributes Covid aid packages.

**CFI provided emergency shelters** for 17 families (impacting 68 Christians).



**Pastors Training Seminar** - Over 150 pastors and Christian leaders (nearly all converts from other faiths) and 40 family members attended a five-day Bible training to strengthen their faith. Including coordinators, 220 people total benefited.

**Covid Aid** - Provided emergency aid packages for 156 families (impacting 624 people). Also provided Covid aid for 300 blind persons.

**White Cane Day** - Celebrated the annual day for the blind with gatherings throughout the country and gave food, white canes, and other resources for 210 blind persons and their families, reaching 700 people.

**A cyclone left Christian families destitute.** CFI provided one week of food and funds to repair houses for 40 families (impacting 160 people).

**Distributed 120 blankets in 3 areas.**



**Sponsorships** - Christian children received support for food, school supplies, tuition and exam fees, served with Biblical training by a pastor. Twenty-eight children and their families were served (approximately 112 people).

Sponsorship for pastors alleviates their dire poverty as they minister in remote areas. Their loving ministry led to 97 people being baptized. Fourteen pastors and their families (approximately 56 people) were served.

Through the sponsorship program, special circumstances arise. CFI provided medicines and medical treatments for three pastors and five children in remote areas.

Also, 10 second-hand mobile phones (\$30 each) were provided for children in vulnerable situations.



## BHUTAN:

Christians face religious and social persecution in this small, very poor Buddhist country which prohibits preaching the Gospel. Christians must worship in private and risk punishment for charitable acts, education, and religious teaching.

Bible training inside Bhutan is very risky, and pastors could not travel during the Covid shut-down. This restricted the ability to train new pastors in discipleship and church planting.

CFI provided Kindles to load with Bible curriculum for pastors who train other pastors, and support for pastors' room rent and ways to make a living. This helped 25 students and teachers.

# BURMA/ THAILAND:

**VICTORY BIBLE ACADEMY** is CFI's Bible and vocational training school for Christian refugees from Burma/Myanmar. The students escaped persecution from Burma's military - which mercilessly attacks ethnic Christians and minorities. They are now training to reach the persecuted.

A goal of Victory is to teach Christian refugees to be leaders, equipped to shape the future of their communities and country.

The daily work in 2020 was cast in the shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic. While serving students, new doors opened to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

Forty-three full-time students received solid Biblical and vocational training through five classes a day for five days each week. Spiritual devotionals, an hour each day, are an important element of a well-rounded Christian education - encouraging the students to love the Lord their God with all their heart and soul as well as with all their mind.



*“At Victory I learned to have a relationship with others. Before I never trust. This is hard for me. Now I have many friends and want to help people.”*

*“Victory teaches me how to make a budget plan correctly and helps me how to use the money properly.”*



Victory's students served as leaders in four local churches: one Thai, one Burmese, and two Karen congregations. Teaching Sunday School and directing worship, the students gained experience in church and pastoral leadership as servant leaders in the churches. As these opportunities occurred weekly over the course of many months, the work of teaching grew into a ministry of discipleship.

One church leader observed: “The number of children served in Sunday School grows to 2 and 3 times the usual number, when they know that Victory Bible Academy will be there!”



*“After I learn weaving I bring the teaching back to my village and show my family how to do it. My mother said she remembered her mother do it. My mother never learned because we run away from fighting and my grandmother got too sick.”*

Students also led outreaches to give assistance to 786 people living in nearby villages. Gifts of rice, oil and other necessities were shared, along with words of grace and encouragement through Scripture. Families also shared personal needs and prayer requests and received prayer by the students.

One month a year, Victory’s students serve local villages through mission trips. In an organic way that allows students to learn problem-solving skills, each team visits a different village to assess their needs, then seeks to address those specific needs. Over 700 families were served during the month of December.

An unexpected focus of 2020 was organizing Covid aid missions. Loving our community in the midst of a global pandemic transcends statistics, but the numbers speak to the magnitude of the task: 611 senior citizens, 3,619 men and women, and 2,683 boys and girls were served. Food, facemasks, and hygiene products were distributed. Much needed encouragement was given, counseling, and prayer.



Amidst the global pandemic, a Muslim group reached out to CFI’s school to ask for help. In a direct fulfillment of Matthew 5:16 and Titus 2:8, the Christian reputation of Victory Bible Academy opened a door few would believe could be opened as students gave aid and even prayer. When asked why they solicited Victory, a key reason cited was the bold, Christian witness of the students who served their neighbors and loved their enemies.

CFI’s Victory Bible Academy also served the growing migrant community, hosted a weekly sports ministry (featuring takraw, a popular kick-volleyball game) and shared a powerful Christmas program with over 200 people in attendance.

Victory’s students learned to silkscreen t-shirts, and weave clothing in their traditional fashion – a skill that is lost growing up in refugee camps – and business skills. They also learned gardening, modern-cooking and international recipes, and how to navigate shopping and grocery stores.

*“I do love to teach others and make t-shirts. It helps me to support my family, my mission, my life, my future and my self developing.”*

# IRAN:

The Islamic Republic of Iran targets Christian converts from Islam. Authorities raid house churches, arrest, convict and torture Christian converts in jail.

Yet in 2020 new research found explosive growth in the church with a population of up to one million Christians. Underground house churches are growing in a nation where converts face jail and torture.

The converts who become pastors need solid Biblical training and practical skills to make a living. Christian Freedom International discovered a new Bible and vocational school specifically for Iranian convert pastors. It is designed to train pastors to minister in Iran without depending on foreign funding for their livelihood.

Classes and training for 25 students have begun even as the school is being built. Christian Freedom International provided support to build housing that will double as shelter for Christians escaping persecution.

# IRAQ:

Christian refugees, especially the elderly, suffer from the cold winters. Christian Freedom International distributed warm coats to refugees who have not returned home after ISIS invaded and destroyed their villages. Medical and health supplies shipped from the U.S. were distributed to refugees and clinics serving Christians.



# EGYPT:

Christians in Egypt are familiar with discrimination and martyrdom. They have experienced it for centuries. Many live in Garbage City, a neighborhood of Cairo, where they collect and sort the city's waste.

CFI provides child sponsorships - monthly support for basic needs - for Christians in Garbage City. In 2020, sponsors provided monthly support for 30 children which also benefits their families (impacting approximately 120 people).

Through sponsorships we learn of families' needs and helped a number with medical and other issues.

The COVID outbreak and lockdown in Egypt caused more hardships, and many Christians lost their work. Christian Freedom International provided care packages every month, seeking new Christian families to help each month, reaching 160 families (impacting approximately 640 people).



# LEBANON:

The Beirut port explosion killed over 200, injured thousands, and destroyed much of the city. Christian Freedom International provided emergency food aid through a church in the early days after the blast.





## NIGERIA:

*Fulani herdsmen attacked “Mariam’s” village. Soldiers hid them in a school. The Fulani herdsmen found them and killed her husband.*

Islamists and militant Fulani herdsmen have made Nigeria a killing field. They kidnap, maim, and massacre Christians and destroy their villages.

Christian Freedom International helped 25 widows and their dependent children with training in starting micro-enterprises, and provided seed funding for their new ventures, benefitting 124 people.



*“Leah” was resting at home when militants and herdsmen invaded her village. She and her husband escaped with their five children. They caught her husband and hacked him to death with a machete, then burned their house.*

## NORTH KOREA:

The totalitarian dictatorship in this isolated country demands absolute obedience and worship. Christians are forbidden from praying, worshipping, believing in or following Jesus. The punishment is prison camp, torture, and execution.

Christian Freedom International works with escapees to send rice, Bibles, and radios into North Korea. In mid-2020, the South Korean government prohibited sending any literature or items that upset the North Korean regime.

Christian Freedom International partners with Free North Korea Radio to broadcast Bible and Christian programs into North Korea. (The South Korean government ban is not able to stop the broadcasts.)



The programs include Bible readings, sermons, North Korean propagandist songs with the lyrics changed to worship God, and special segments to teach how to pray. Weekend programs end with the Lord’s Prayer.

According to surveys of escapees from North Korea commissioned by the Broadcasting Board of Governors, Free North Korea Radio consistently ranks the most popular single hour of broadcasting since its inception.



## PAKISTAN:

Discrimination of the worst kinds against Christians exist in Pakistan. Christian Freedom International works with impoverished Christians to ease their plight.

Entire Christian families are held in debt bondage in brickyards, condemned to making bricks under harsh conditions.

Christian Freedom International sponsors provided monthly support for 35 children and their families (benefitting approximately 140 people). The sponsorship included food, resources, and pastoral care for the children.

Christian Freedom International began a new partnership in 2020 to help an additional 20 widows and their children, and 60 families in two brick kiln villages (benefitting approximately 320 people). Teachers train Christian women in sewing and beauty techniques to make a living.

Kitchen areas and latrines were built for poor families, and clothes for Christmas given for children.

Christmas gifts and celebrations were held for brickyard families, and an additional 40 impoverished Christians.

## PAKISTAN URBAN REFUGEES:

*(In Thailand)*

Thousands of Pakistani Christians have fled to Thailand for asylum. In 2020, the global pandemic brought the already-slow journey to freedom in another country to a virtual halt. Christian Freedom International's ministries became even more needed for the stranded refugees.

Christian Freedom International runs sponsorships for 36 Pakistani Christian families, a church for the refugee community, and a school for refugee children.



## SCHOOL:

CFI's school has an excellent student-teacher ratio of 1:9, with 4 full-time teachers serving 37 students, ranging from primary age to high school. Classroom education consists of 30 hours per week, Monday through Friday. Students and staff get a nutritious lunch each day.

Covid caused an unexpected interruption to in-person education, threatening to upset the vital work of teaching. But methods were changed to allow students to learn until they could return to school.

In 2020, three students graduated from high school with skills and knowledge they gained from a Christian education to serve Christ and His kingdom.

Christian refugees are at constant risk of being detained by Thai authorities and held in the overcrowded Immigration Detention Center. Organized in a safe manner, students from CFI's school visited the Immigration Detention Center several times to encourage those Christians detained there.



## MICRO-ENTERPRISE:

Christian Freedom International provides training and an income for Pakistani Christian refugees by making t-shirts. In 2020, nine refugees and their families benefited from the program by sewing and crafting clothing.

Christian Freedom International's Freedom Fighter line of T-shirts is produced by Pakistani Christian refugees.

"I am happy to sew T-shirts and make some money for my family. I like the friendly and caring personality of Pastor Akhtar who brings us tea and food during break time"  
"So far, working in Thailand I have not experienced such love and trust from other places I have worked at. God bless you all."  
"Thank you to everyone who orders and wears T-Shirts sewn by me. They were sewn in love for love is what God showed for us when he created this opportunity."

In 2020, an additional item was added to the production line: Facemasks!



## CHURCH:

Pastor Akhtar serves the Pakistani Christian refugee community through preaching and counseling. Sermons on the fruit of the Spirit, the Lord's prayer, Jesus and the Samaritan woman and Forgiveness have been some of the topics of study. During Easter a sermon series on the seven sayings of Christ on the cross was very encouraging. In the Advent season, the children performed a Christmas play in several churches.



## FAMILY SPONSORSHIPS:

Meeting a critical need for Pakistani Christian refugees in Thailand, Christian Freedom International's sponsors provided for 36 families. This covered housing assistance along with "love bags" (containing such items as: rice, oil, tea/coffee, salt, sugar, dishwashing soap, laundry detergent, soap, toothpaste, shampoo). These were distributed to around 155 people every month.

As the Covid lockdown featured prominently in 2020, these provisions were appreciated even more during this difficult year.

Pakistani Christian refugees captured the gratitude of those who are helped by this vital ministry:

*"Dear Sponsors, thank you for your support. My whole family prays for you. I first praise God for blessing me and my family with you all."*

**A Hindu mob bashed this church's windows during an attack on Christians.**



## SRI LANKA:

Christian Evangelicals and converts face harassment and violence from Buddhists, Hindus, and most spectacularly from Islamists who bombed churches on Easter Sunday in 2019.

Buddhist monks and Hindu mobs attack Christians during worship services and vandalize churches. Pastors, converts, and widows are particularly vulnerable.

Christian Freedom International funded security cameras for churches, and milk cows for a pastor/farmer who was beaten and livelihood stolen by Buddhist monks. We also provided emergency Covid aid for Christians who had experienced persecution.

We supported a local Christian leader with materials to train 85 teachers in effective methods to teach the Bible to children for a faith that will endure persecution and hardships.

### EQUIPPING CHURCHES TO HANDLE PERSECUTION

FAMILIES SERVED

MILK COWS FOR A PERSECUTED PASTOR

15

CHURCH FENCE TO PREVENT INVASIONS OR TAKING THE PROPERTY

200

CCTV CAMERAS FOR CHURCHES

475

COVID AID RELIEF FOR PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

50

TOTAL NUMBER OF FAMILIES BENEFITED

740 FAMILIES/  
2960 INDIVIDUALS

# USA:

This year an ambitious project to help Christian refugees reached its goal.

In 2009, CFI opened Freedom Inn with a clear mandate: be a safe home for newly arrived Christian Karen refugees from Burma to help them assimilate in America.

The Karen had fled Burma's brutal military regime and America welcomed thousands to our country. But it was a harsh landing for some. The only life and homes they knew were jungles and refugee camps.

Several refugees contacted Christian Freedom International. They had been assisted by Christian Freedom International inside Burma or Thai refugee camps before coming to the U.S.

So CFI bought a quaint motel in Sault Ste Marie, MI, and refurbished the rooms into small apartments for them.

In no time, word spread among the Karen. They found their way to Freedom Inn.

Over the years, numerous families lived at Freedom Inn. The renovated motel was transformed into a Karen village. The lobby became a community room for classes and gatherings. The pool was drained and fashioned into a garden.

Adults studied to learn English and pass U.S. citizenship exams. Children were tutored by local volunteers. One family's apartment was decorated with their daughters' trophies for spelling bees.



Karen and American families intertwined as they lived life together.

When the Karen moved to the upper peninsula Michigan town, the Lane family jumped all-in to help them. Their son J.D. returned from college and offered his beat-up truck to teach them how to drive.

One young woman, Mercy, crashed his truck – and won his heart. They are now married with two little ones.

Big-hearted Jack (aka Santa Claus) and Ginney Kinney bought the house next door to be close to the Karen. They became caretakers of Freedom Inn and grandparents to the Karen families.



Rather than settling into what could have become generational subsidized housing, one by one the Karen outgrew the 'starter home' and moved on in freedom. Even then, when Karen families moved away, any excuse for a BBQ or party was enough to drive back for a weekend with their Sault family.

This year, Mu Eh, Aung Sain and their daughters, the last family at the Inn – who cared for the property along with Jack – had saved enough to buy a house nearby.

Just as Freedom Inn's mission was accomplished, and during an economic downturn, God provided a buyer.

We held one final gathering in August.

Karen-Americans and local families told stories of fond memories – and marveled at how God used the Freedom Inn to change and enrich their lives by bringing them all together.

One after another, they expressed gratitude to CFI's supporters who made it possible.

The Freedom Inn was a place in America where Christians served the persecuted – and all were blessed.

# UNNAMED LOCATIONS:

Due to security concerns, we cannot name all of the places Christian Freedom International works. Here are three:

## COUNTRY 1:

Christians are monitored by communist authorities, jailed and fined by local leaders, and their property confiscated and damaged by communities. Believers have been tortured, killed, or disappeared.

Persecution is expected, especially against converts to Christ. It takes a strong faith to persevere.

Contact with foreigners can cause more problems. Christian Freedom International worked through local leaders to train, disciple, strengthen and protect children - to build a faith that will endure.

All told, 2,141 people were reached, and 871 chose to be disciplined.



## COUNTRY 3:

Multiple terrorist groups operate in this region, all targeting Christians in this “one huge treacherous minefield”. Villages are burnt to the ground and people massacred. Children are left homeless and roaming.

How are the survivors helped?

“A lot of what we do cannot be made public or else we are requesting a visit from the destroyers,” our partner said. “Our contacts and God's agents are embedded deep behind the ‘enemy line’ to reach the survivors.”

Along with emergency food aid for children and support for women in camps, Christian Freedom International's support went toward helping to relocate a former slave girl of the terrorists, abducted after her pastor father was murdered. She escaped her captors who were still looking for her.

*One pastor is inundated with news of tragedies. How does he handle it?  
“My Response is I cannot save all. I know. But can I save a few? Yes! Can I find friends and partners to help me? Yes! May I ask you to help me?”*

## COUNTRY 2:

These Christians are a minority in their refugee camp.

Extremists have fired shots at the Christians' tents. Those without guns used rocks and Molotov cocktails, then machetes to demolish the homes.

Several Christians were kidnapped, taken to a mosque and beaten to forcibly convert them to Islam. Two escaped and another was released, too weak to walk or speak. One kidnapped family was killed. When the Christians lodged complaints with the authorities, their ration cards were withheld.

Christian Freedom International provided food and clothes for 25 families (benefitting about 100 people).

They requested, “Pray that we can continue our religious activities freely, without any fanatics' attacks.”

*The places where Christians suffer the most are also the hardest to reach. These courageous Christians pay a high price to follow Jesus. And those who serve them can do more when we partner together as one body in Christ.*



## SPONSORSHIPS:

CFI's sponsorships directly connect Christians with a child, a pastor, or a family who live in, or fled from, places where their Christian faith put them at risk.

Many of the supplies that are given to sponsored children also benefit the entire family. CFI staff visit the homes of the sponsored children and know their families.

Many of the older sponsored children have brothers and sisters to care for.

By actively sponsoring one child or pastor you not only shape their life but help to provide for the well-being of an entire family.

**In 2020, through prayers, writing letters, and giving monthly support, caring Christians improved the lives of:**

- Christian children in Egypt, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. Their families also benefit from the monthly supplies.
- Pastors in Bangladesh whose effective witness - because they converted from other religions - can deprive them of family, jobs, and security, and makes them targets for attacks.
- Christian urban refugee families who fled Pakistan to Thailand to seek asylum.

Total children helped - 93 (benefitting approximately 372 people).

Total Pastors helped - 16 (benefitting approximately 64 people).

Total families helped - 36 (for an approximate total of 144 people).

Generally accepted practices count support for one person will benefit their family of 4 - 5 people (including children and elderly relatives). Christian Freedom International uses the conservative estimate of 4 people.



# LEADERSHIP:

## INDIGENOUS STAFF:

Many dedicated, courageous Christians work with CFI to deliver aid, educate children, train and disciple believers, provide shelter, and lift up the name of Jesus Christ under dangerous circumstances. We do not disclose their names for their safety.

## U.S. STAFF:

Wendy Wright,  
President/CEO

Lisa Jones Poths,  
Vice-President/CFO

Carol Hoopes,  
Accounts Manager/  
Data Specialist

## BOARD MEMBERS:

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\*Independent Voting Member

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Will Buehler, Board  
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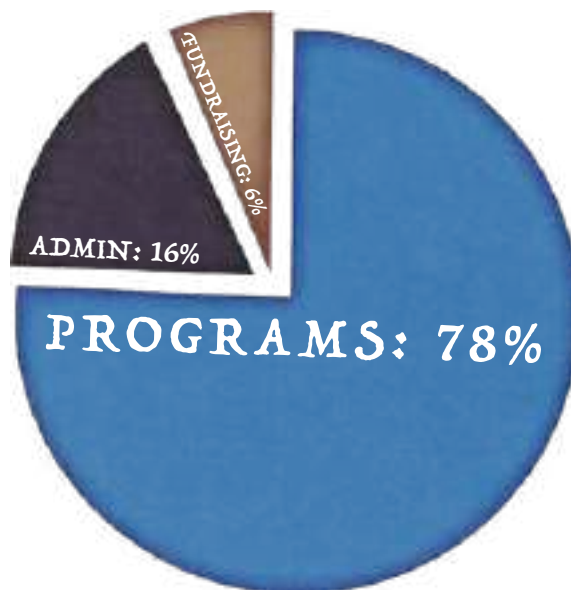
Ann Buwalda,  
Jubilee Campaign

# FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY:

2020 Total Contributions: \$1,084,318

2020 Total Expenses: \$875,975

Financial accountability organizations have given Christian Freedom International their highest rating:



P.O. BOX 535  
Front Royal, VA  
22630

[www.ChristianFreedom.org](http://www.ChristianFreedom.org)  
1-800-323-CARE  
[info@christianfreedom.org](mailto:info@christianfreedom.org)

[cifreedom](https://www.facebook.com/cifreedom)  
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