



Updates and Horizons

February 2023



St Paul's
D O R K I N G



Of your World Church Newsletter!

In February 2013, Marjory Prior, a much loved and sadly missed member of the World Church Team, proposed that we should produce a monthly newsletter. She suggested an A5 sheet of news, with the reverse covering prayer requests. [Newsletter Feb 2013](#)

The team back then comprised Jonathan Papworth, Charlotte Chaplain, Ed Cole, Sally Hulbert, Val Praud, Marjorie Prior, Esther Purdy and Sue Swain-Fossey, two of whom remain members.

Many things have changed over the intervening ten years. The list of mission partners we support has evolved as circumstances change, whether because of retirement (e.g. Tricia Wicks in 2014) or newly identified worldwide problems (e.g. child trafficking, and our support of Oasis in Mumbai since 2021). But equally, some of our mission partners remain (e.g. Penny and Juan Carlos in Peru).

We carefully follow the work of our mission partners and comply with our Terms of Reference to ensure recipients make the best possible use of the financial support we provide. There are fewer individuals in the mission field than before, so today, we support more organisations (e.g. Open Doors' work in Syria).

But an important aspect of the work of the World Church Team remains to keep the St Paul's family up to date with our mission partners' work, with major world events (such as the recent earthquakes in Turkey and Syria) highlighting wherever possible the involvement of trusted Christian organisations such as Tearfund and Open Doors.

So please keep reading for this month's news, and remember we welcome comments and suggestions to worldchurch@stpaulsdorking.org.uk



REUTERS IMAGE

The deadly earthquakes that hit southeast Turkey and northwest Syria on 6 February 2023 have horrified us all, as we read daily of the mounting death toll and devastation the earthquakes and aftershocks have left in their wake. As of 18 February, more than 46,000 people are reported to have died, and the death toll continues to rise, with many people still missing. [Reuters](#) reports that the death toll in Turkey stands at 40,642, while Syria has reported more than 5,800 deaths. Tens of thousands more have been injured and an estimated 1 million people have lost their homes and are living in

temporary shelters. More than 264,000 apartments have been destroyed in Turkey, with questions arising about the safety and sturdiness of recently constructed buildings. According to the Turkish authorities, around 80,000 people are in hospital, placing a huge strain on the health system, itself badly damaged by the disaster.

Heroic search and rescue teams from around the world continue desperate efforts to locate lingering survivors, and there are miracles as survivors continue to be pulled from the wreckage 12 days after the

earthquake hit. A group of firefighters, medics and rescue dogs from the UK assisted in the rescue efforts, as this [BBC article](#) explains.

Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has stated that 13 million of the country's 85 million citizens are impacted and has declared a three-month state of emergency in the affected area. According to the [World Health Organisation](#), about 26 million people across Turkey and Syria need humanitarian assistance – the



worst natural disaster in the WHO European Region for a century. All this across a region already suffering turmoil from the conflict in Syria and the ongoing refugee crisis.

The epicentre of the most powerful earthquake was near the cities of Nurdağı and Gaziantep in Gaziantep Province, just outside the regional capital of southeast Turkey, home to millions of Syrian refugees. Turkey hosts the largest number of refugees in the world, some 3.5 million Syrians, according to the [UNHCR](#), which runs one of its most extensive operations from Gaziantep.

At St Paul's, we support [Open Doors](#) in their work in Syria. As can be seen in this image, [Open Doors](#) local partners rushed to provide food, clothes and other support to the people sheltering in churches following the earthquake.



"We're still in the shock phase," says local Open Doors partner Ibrahim* in Aleppo. "What we're doing now is providing shelter for the Christians at some churches and providing them with food and warmth - it's very cold now." (*not his real name).



People left their homes suddenly, and in many cases can't return - either because their houses have been destroyed or are unsafe. "We're talking about more than 20,000 Christians now in the streets," says Ibrahim. "I'm now in the street also. No one is at home. No shops, no food. People are really suffering." But amongst this terrible suffering, there are small glimmers of hope for the Christian communities: "We want the love of Christ to be reflected in what we are doing," he says. "It's a good opportunity to embrace the people - and to bring greater unity between the churches, because all churches are now working together to serve Christians living in Aleppo and helping them to survive."

Ibrahim says: "Our goal is to strengthen what remains. So we need always to help people not only to survive, but also to thrive. So we need to help those Christians, not only with relief support, but also we need to think of the long-term."

"Words cannot describe what we went through this whole day," says Majd George, a teenager in Latakia who is sheltering in a church. "Please pray for those people who are trapped, that they will be rescued. Also pray for those people who lost everything or lost their loved ones."

A church leader who shepherds refugee Christians in Hatay, Turkey, says: *"The whole city is destroyed. People are in a very difficult and tough situation here."* When asked how we should pray, he says: *"Please pray for the people who have lost their loved ones and are in sorrow and despair, that God would comfort them. Please pray for the people who are helping and serving. And please pray that the ways would be opened soon, so we can bring more help to the area. God bless you all."*

Working with partner churches in Turkey and Syria, Open Doors partners are doing all they can to support desperate communities with immediate relief now, and to help rebuild lives in the long-term. You can read more about the efforts Open Doors and their partners are making to support Christians impacted by the earthquakes [here](#). Donations can be made via their website appeal [here](#).



Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC)

St Paul's is part of **Churches Together in Dorking**, which is collecting in Dorking High Street for the **DEC Turkey – Syria Appeal** from Thursday 23 to Saturday 25 February. The DEC is raising funds for medical aid, shelter, food, clean water, and other supplies. The UK government is matching the first £2million of donations from the public.

Any donations would be hugely appreciated, and verbal support is also welcomed. While financial support has already been promised from around the world, the immensity of the devastation and the work needed to

rebuild and care for the victims in the future is a hugely daunting task.

To donate to DEC visit [DEC turkey-syria-earthquake-appeal](#)



Cyclone Gabrielle in New Zealand – Despite being eclipsed by the earthquake in Turkey and Syria, the recent cyclone has caused devastation in the North Island of New Zealand that would normally warrant media headlines.

Five have died, and huge areas have been devastated in what has been described as the country's most destructive weather event in decades. Just a month earlier, Auckland and surrounding areas were hit by record rainfall, which caused floods, killing four people. Then, shortly after the

cyclone, the Wellington area was shaken by a 6.1 magnitude earthquake.



A member of the St Paul's family, currently visiting New Zealand where she was raised, said:

"Thousands have lost everything, and bridges and communication towers are blown over and broken. There are power outages, and the flooding has destroyed huge areas of orchards and farmland, let alone houses under water and residents waiting on their rooftops for rescue."

She ended by extending her love and prayers to the many whose lives have been impacted. Join your prayers to hers for those who have lost homes, livelihoods, and especially those who have lost loved ones.



For information about any of the above, please contact **St Paul's World Church Team:** Carlton Beasley, Annabel Blanch, Sally Hulbert, Jonathan Papworth and Elizabeth Shaw worldchurch@stpaulsdorking.org.uk
 More information about our Mission Partners: [Dave Bookless A Rocha](#), [Centre de la Réconciliation - Lille](#); [New Hope Children's Centre - Kenya](#); [Jenny and Stuart O](#); [Oasis, Mumbai - India](#); [Open Doors - Syria](#); [Penny and Juan Carlos Marcés - Peru](#)