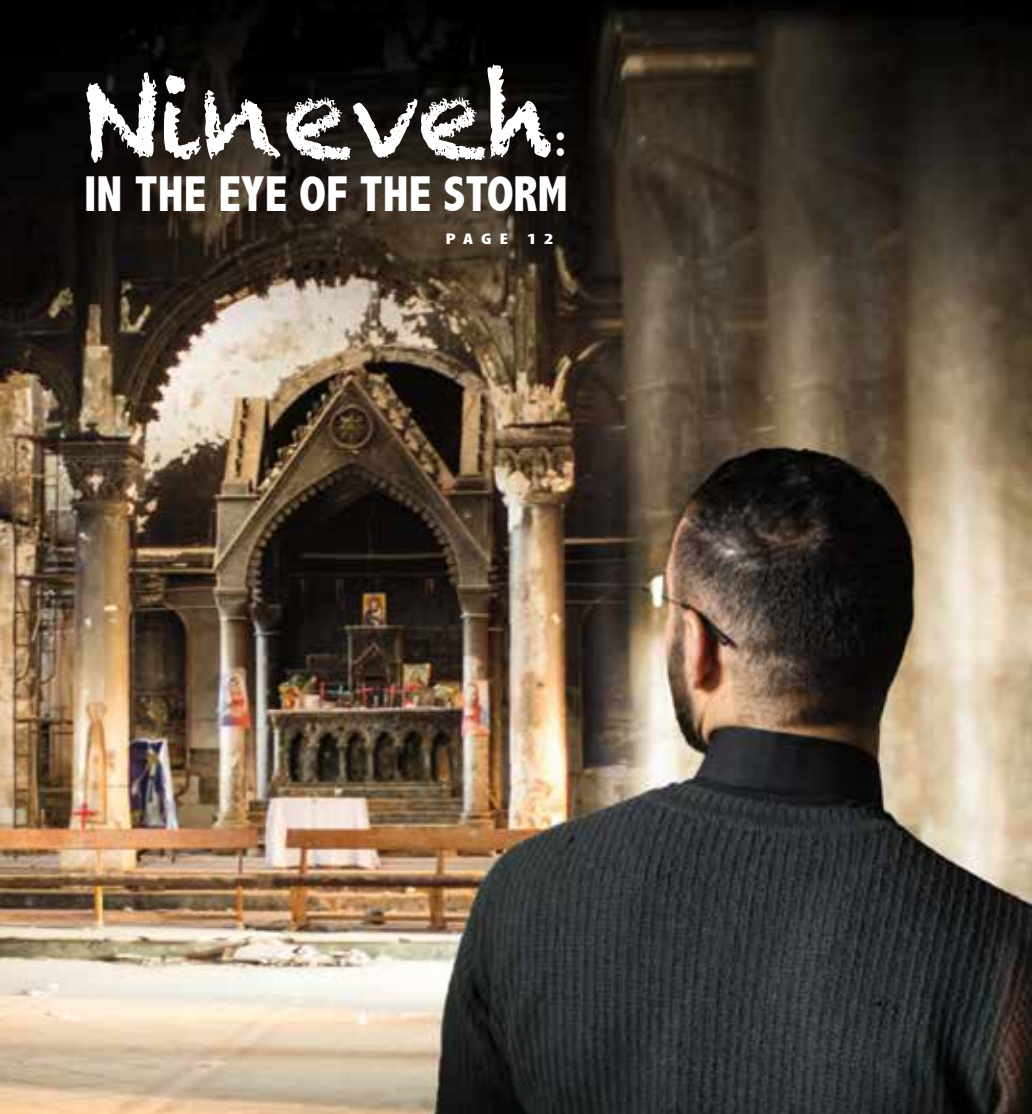


blessings

OPERATION BLESSING INTERNATIONAL | FEB 2017

Nineveh: IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

PAGE 12



**GIVING HOPE TO
LITTLE HEARTS**

PAGE 8

**A FAMILY TRANSFORMED
IN RWANDA**

PAGE 18

**LIFE COMES
FULL CIRCLE**

PAGE 20



Inside this issue

12

NINEVEH: IN THE EYE OF THE STORM



4

HAPPENINGS

Catch up with the goings on at Operation Blessing!



8

GIVING HOPE TO LITTLE HEARTS IN NEPAL

Five-year-old Ganga rescued from Nepal's brick factories



6

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

Find out what's trending around OBI!



18

A FAMILY TRANSFORMED IN RWANDA

Providing a struggling mom with a fresh start



7

WORLD DAY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

A day to remember that no person should be a slave to another



20

LIFE COMES FULL CIRCLE

An abandoned mother of four learns to make it on her own with the help of vocational training



ISRAEL Widespread fires destroy forests, cars, homes and more in Israel. Operation Blessing and our volunteers helped provide blankets, water and other supplies to residents of Haifa displaced by the flames.

OPERATION BLESSING HAPPENINGS

HONDURAS Four girls proudly display their diplomas at the end of the school year. Operation Blessing rebuilt a ruined building in their community, turning it into an education center.



JORDAN Stacks of mattresses await distribution to displaced families. Forced from their homes by ISIS, many Iraqi Christian families fled across the border to Jordan, where Operation Blessing has distributed food, bedding and other essentials.



LIBERIA Lois poses with her baby girl, Vanell, after she received treatment for bilateral clubfoot. At just 1 month old, Vanell arrived at a clinic operated by Operation Blessing partner MiracleFeet where she was given four rounds of specialized casting.

ETHIOPIA Hibre stands proudly with her two grandchildren. This family received food, clothing, medical support and more with help from Operation Blessing and our partner, Embracing Hope Ethiopia.



NICARAGUA Dalia sits in her classroom, thankful for the chance to go to school. Operation Blessing has provided scholarships for Dalia, and other children, as part of a trafficking prevention program in Nicaragua.

PERU Giovanna shows off fresh vegetables from her garden. This 31-year-old mother of three learned how to grow a variety of produce at an Operation Blessing agriculture workshop and now sells what she grows for extra income.





THIS MONTH ON TWITTER.....

If you do not follow us on Twitter, you may have missed this poignant photo and post about orphaned children in Zambia. This girl is one of 200 children who had to walk long distances to collect water — contaminated water. With Operation Blessing's help, she and the other children now have a water well right in their community, complete with a filtration system to ensure the water they drink is safe.



"HE BROUGHT THEM OUT OF DARKNESS, THE UTTER DARKNESS, AND BROKE AWAY THEIR CHAINS."

— PSALM 107:14

ON FEBRUARY 20, we observe World Day of Social Justice — a day to remember that no person should be a slave to another. Operation Blessing provides relief for victims of human trafficking, sexual abuse and child labor.

Join our cause to break the chains of modern-day slavery.

VISIT OB.ORG/SOCIALJUSTICE TO BLESS THE VULNERABLE TODAY

DON'T MISS ANOTHER TWEET!

FOLLOW US ON



twitter.com/operationbless

Giving *hope* to Little Hearts in Nepal



Five-year-old Ganga and her family worked in Nepal's brick factories.

Five-year-old Ganga was born in a small, rural village in Nepal where many children and their parents migrate every six months between farming in their communities and working in nearby factories. Every member of the family is expected to work no matter their age. The labor is considered difficult but necessary for families who live in extreme poverty.

Continued on page 10



Continued from page 9

The children's efforts help their families afford food and shelter, but long days make it impossible for the children to attend school, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and marginalization and costing these little ones their childhoods. But their families are simply hoping for their next meal, never mind clean and stable living conditions.

As of 2014, the Nepalese Central Bureau of Statistics estimates that more than one out of three children ages 5 to 14 are in the workforce, with a higher average in rural areas.* A catalyst for change was necessary if these families were to have any hope of providing a better life for themselves and their children.

In March 2016, Operation Blessing International partnered with a team of volunteers and other non-governmental organizations to build a safe house for up to 34 children, ages 4 to 14. The safe house's purpose is to give children better living conditions

and the opportunity to make school a priority while also providing for their basic needs, thereby lifting the parents' burden. The children who would come to live in the safe house were not abandoned by their parents, and the children still visit with their parents, sometimes at the shelter and sometimes at their parents' homes.

Little Ganga recently came to live at the safe house with her 6-year-old brother, Kishor, after their family had

been working in the brick factory for two seasons. Her parents had not been able to provide proper clothing, food or money for school; the children were used to living on the streets, eating grass, roots and trash or simply going without.

Due to their extreme poverty, Ganga and Kishor were becoming aggressive toward others and were untrusting of peers and helping adults when they first arrived at the safe house. Those who truly wanted to help Ganga found it difficult to break

through her tough exterior.

Over time, Ganga and Kishor came to understand that they could let down their defenses. The siblings learned that the grown-ups at the house were helping to provide a safe place. Once their basic needs were met, Ganga and Kishor steadily learned how to trust others.

As a result of clean, stable living conditions and a daily education provided by Operation Blessing and our partners, Ganga and Kishor are now much healthier. Ganga has been transformed as a result of personal and educational provisions. She now wears proper clothing, is well fed and regularly attends public school, which is a 10-minute walk from the safe house.

Operation Blessing has been an integral part of constructing the safe

house and providing the necessary furnishings. Ganga and the other children now have mattresses, a clean bathroom and warm blankets for the first time in their lives!

Children who were once working in factories are now receiving the kind of care, compassion and education that can propel them into greatness. ♦

**From the Annual Household Survey from the Government of Nepal's National Planning Commission Secretariat, Central Bureau of Statistics*



Operation Blessing builds a home for Ganga and other children in need of safe shelter.





Bill's Blog

by **Bill Horan**, President
Operation Blessing International

Read more from Bill's Blog
at ob.org/bill

I'm writing this from the city of Erbil in the Kurdistan region of Northern Iraq. I am deeply troubled by what I've seen and learned here. The impact of our efforts to assist displaced and persecuted Christians is significant, but so much more is needed to help our brothers and sisters in Christ.

It's a huge relief that ISIS is finally on the run, but the persecution of Christians in Iraq and throughout the Middle East will not end with the defeat of ISIS. The inhumane brutality practiced by jihadists towards Christians is well publicized,

but the untold story is the open discrimination and increasing cruelty toward innocent Christian families. Believers courageously cling to their faith in spite of persecution and some are dying for it. All but a few feel abandoned, and many think that the rest of the Christian world doesn't care about them. We need to change that.

In Haiti, there's an age-old Creole proverb that says, "Beyond mountains, there are mountains." It's a metaphor that can be interpreted in a number of ways, but its essence is — once you overcome a great problem, you

Continued on page 14

Nineveh: IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

Iraqi Christians take back the Nineveh plains, but many more challenges await



Continued from page 12

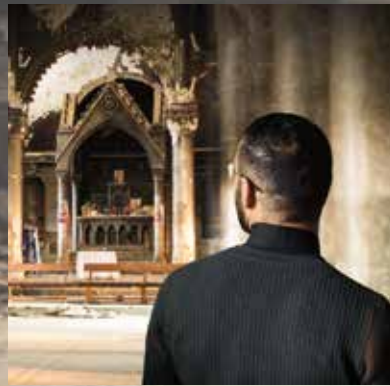
are faced with a clear view of the next challenge (and there's always a next one!). In this case, ISIS was the proverbial mountain that had to be climbed, but for millions of Christians in this part of the world, there are even bigger mountains of discrimination and persecution on the near horizon.

I have met with church leaders and grassroots Christian groups here in Northern Iraq; all are passionately committed to assisting displaced Christian families that once lived in the Nineveh plains, an area written about in the Bible with the story of Jonah's aborted mission to warn the residents of Nineveh, and his time in the belly of a great fish. This region has long been the one area in Iraq where Christians could live peaceful and productive lives — but

ISIS changed that by forcing legions of believers to flee, destroying homes and churches and subjecting those they caught to such torture that hardly anyone has the will to return.

Under the protection of a heavily armed escort of Christian Syriac militia volunteers, David Darg (VP of International Operations), Diego Traverso (Manager of Special Projects in the Middle East) and I visited what was once the largest Christian community in Iraq. Up until August of 2014, Qaraqosh was home to over 50,000 Christians, but that once-flourishing safe harbor is now a smoking ruins and most former residents that we spoke with this week said they are too terrified and discouraged to ever return.

Continued on page 17





Continued from page 14

The central government of Iraq is at odds with the regional government of Kurdistan in a tug of war to control the Nineveh plains. Both Iraq and Kurdistan claim to offer Christians and religious minorities freedom of religion, but there is an ever increasing amount of anti-Christian influence on Baghdad, plus the Kurds have their own designs on independence. This all adds up to a continued struggle for Christians who choose to stay in the region, and leaving is not an option for many. I met a man who moved his family to Jordan two years ago where they were safe, but laws there made it impossible for him to get a job. So when he ran out of money, he brought his family back to Iraq. They are staying with extended family in Erbil,

but that cannot go on forever.

A hurricane of political and theological warfare rages between the Sunni and Shia factions in the Muslim universe. The storm swirls around Christians and has torn their lives apart. Now, they are in the eye of the storm, a temporary lull while attention is on ISIS. But they know that as soon as the smoke clears, they will again be the target of hatred. Where can they live in peace? Many are heading for Jordan, some to Australia and a few to America, but wherever they go, they will be starting over without proper resources, connections or work permits.

Operation Blessing is firmly committed to help Christian families secure a soft landing wherever they settle. ♦

A family TRANSFORMED in RWANDA



PROVIDING A STRUGGLING MOM WITH A FRESH START

Mukashema and her husband, Tuyizere, have three children, 5-year-old Sendrine, 2-year-old Emanuel and 6-month-old Jean de Dieu. The family comes from an impoverished region of Rwanda where simply surviving can be a daily challenge. Though it's been more than 20 years since wide-scale genocide tore the country apart, Rwanda's economy is still struggling to recover.

As many families labor just to put food on the table, other important priorities, like education for their children, are often overlooked. For Mukashema and her family, reality set in when their 2-year-old son, Emanuel, was diagnosed with malnutrition. Mukashema sought help from an Operation Blessing partner organization, Gardens for Health International (GHI), dedicated to finding agricultural solutions to childhood malnutrition.

As part of GHI's Early Childhood Development program, Mukashema was able to attend a variety of classes. While their mother learned new skills,

Sendrine, Emanuel and Jean de Dieu enjoyed GHI's children's program, which includes activities that promote cognitive, behavioral and social development as well as nutritious food and playtime.

With support from Operation Blessing, GHI taught Mukashema how to prepare healthy meals that provide her children with the nutrients they need to grow strong. Speaking of little Emanuel, Mukashema said, "I have been able to feed him a balanced diet, and he is looking much better."

The help didn't end there. Not only did this dedicated mother learn how to provide her children with proper nutrition, she also received training in agriculture, hygiene, early childhood development and more. With what she learned, Mukashema has successfully planted her own garden.

Taking pride in her accomplishment, she said, "Now, we are feeding [our children] vegetables... and they are growing." She now hopes to pay it forward by helping others start their own home gardens.

"I find that when kids are not well fed, they always think about hunger," Mukashema said. "But when they are full, they are happy and they like to play with others, especially at school."

Thanks to the help her family has received, young Sendrine is now even able to attend school. "When she comes home from class," Mukashema recalled, "she shows me what she learned, and I can't help but smile."

As they grow older, Mukashema hopes to send all three of her children to school. Through GHI and Operation Blessing, this family now has the tools to provide a better future for themselves and their children. ♦



life comes full circle

An abandoned mother of four learns to make it on her own with the help of vocational training

For Safia, life appeared to be on a good course as she entered adulthood. She was wed to a barber who owned a small shop in Pakistan and earned plenty to support his family. Over the next few years, she experienced a happy marriage

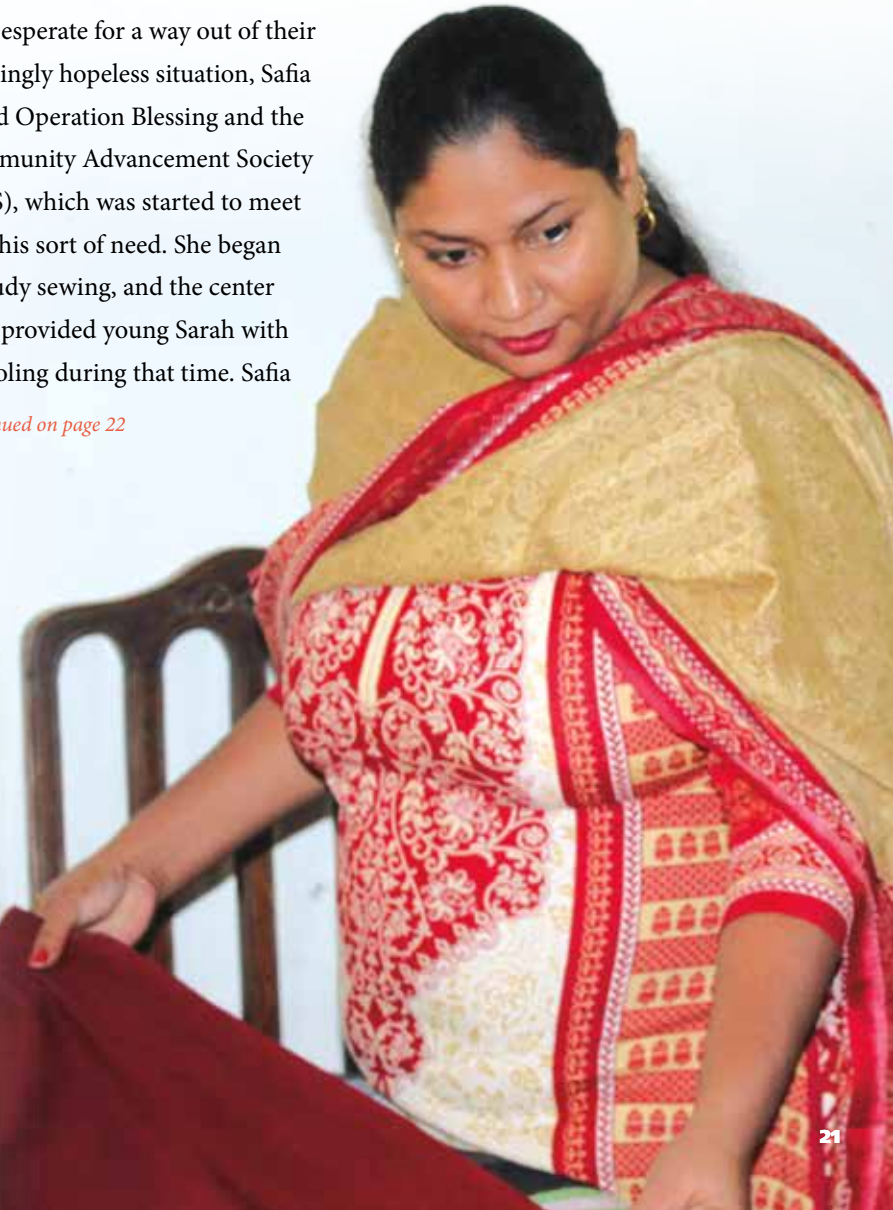
and the birth of two beautiful daughters, Tabita and Sabeeta — but unfortunately, daughters alone were not enough in her culture.

When her third daughter, Maha, was born, her husband and his family began to taunt her for not bearing a son. Safia's husband grew to resent his daughters, and he eventually began to abuse Safia. Her once happy marriage dissolved, and when she gave birth to her fourth beautiful baby girl, Sarah, her husband took another wife.

Sarah was only 1 year old when Safia and her daughters were sent away to live with Safia's mother. Although Safia and her husband remained technically married, she and her girls had been all but abandoned. He gave the family a small sum of money each month, but it wasn't nearly enough to make ends meet. As a result, Safia's daughters often went without sufficient nutrition. Then, when the time came, her husband refused to send little Sarah to school.

Desperate for a way out of their seemingly hopeless situation, Safia found Operation Blessing and the Community Advancement Society (CAS), which was started to meet just this sort of need. She began to study sewing, and the center even provided young Sarah with schooling during that time. Safia

Continued on page 22





Continued from page 21

worked hard and finished her course of study as one of the top ten students in her class.

Upon graduation, she was gifted with a sewing machine, enabling her to immediately begin earning a living. With help from CAS, she also found a job as a sewing teacher, providing her family with another revenue source.

Life has now come full circle for Safia. Today, she enjoys a happy life again, this time with her mother and her daughters. With her new income, she is able to pay for their household expenses, as well as her daughters' educations. CAS and Operation Blessing empowered this once bereft and abandoned woman to carve out a bright future for her family.

In Safia's own words, "I am very fortunate to be a part of this very compassionate institution, which made me more confident in a comfortable learning environment. For all the care my daughter, Sarah, and I have been given here, I am very thankful to God and the donors who arranged this facility in our vicinity." Thank you for making stories of hope like this possible! ♦



Defining MOMENTS

“

At the time of the delivery, I remembered each of the lessons I learned in the childbirth workshop,” Jeraldine said. “I am so thankful to God and Operation Blessing for your support!

”

Read more at
OB.ORG/JERALDINE



AS OUR FISCAL
YEAR COMES TO A
CLOSE, IT IS CLEAR
THAT IN 2016 WE
ACCOMPLISHED
MORE THAN EVER...
BUT THAT HAS COME
AT A PRICE. WE NEED
YOUR HELP TO DO
EVEN MORE.

VISIT:
OB.ORG/BLESS2017

YOUR PAST SUPPORT HAS HELPED:

- Bring safe water projects to communities in need.
- Feed hungry families worldwide.
- Aid the persecuted fleeing violence in the Middle East.

Give a special gift before our fiscal year end on **March 31** to help replenish our budget and bless more hurting families. Your support makes life change possible!



operationblessing.org



P.O. Box 2636, Virginia Beach, VA 23450



(800) 730-2537

