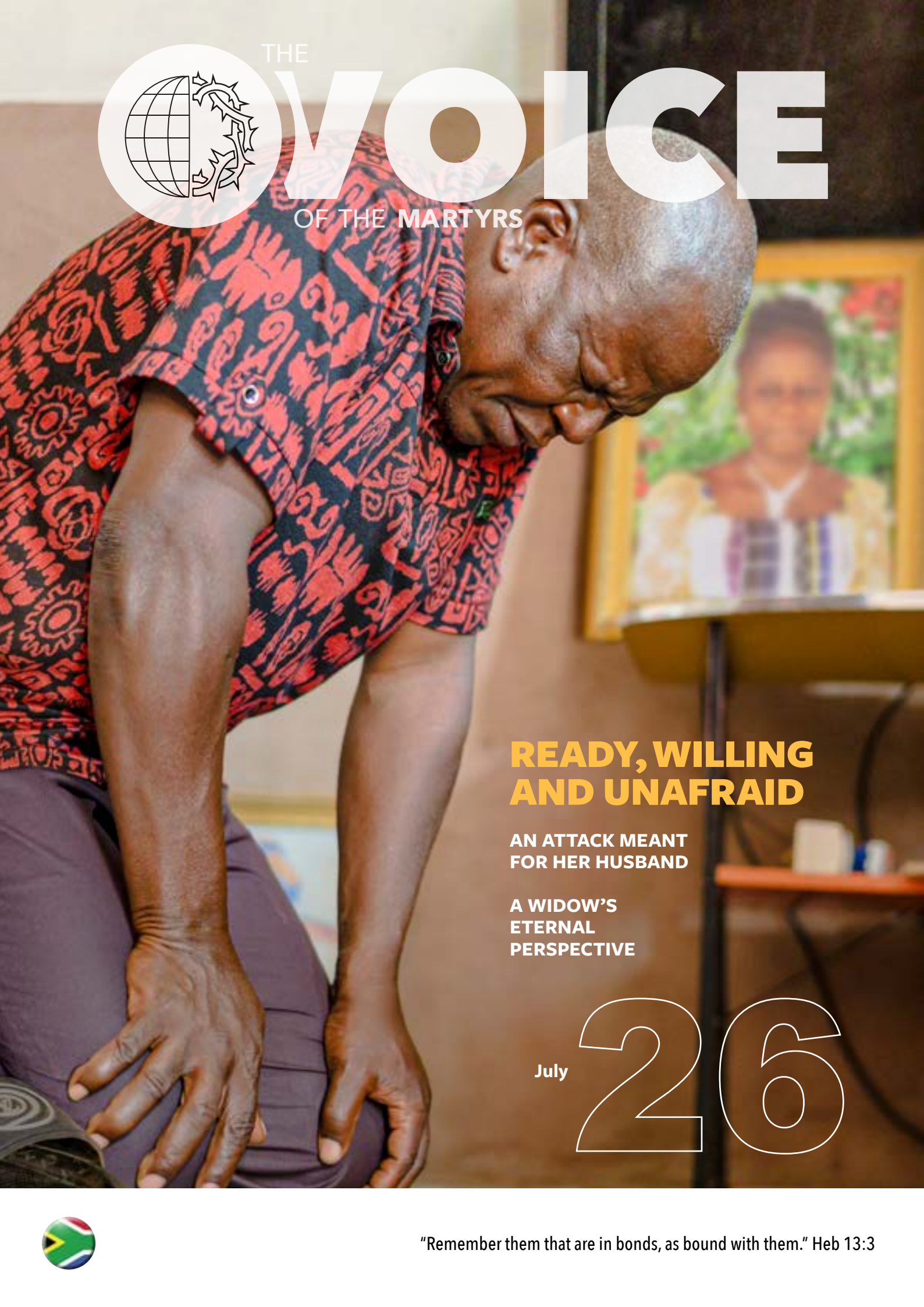




THE

VOICE

OF THE MARTYRS



READY, WILLING AND UNAFRAID

AN ATTACK MEANT
FOR HER HUSBAND

A WIDOW'S
ETERNAL
PERSPECTIVE

July

26



"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them." Heb 13:3



And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

Luke 17:4 - KJV



FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Parable of the Wealthy Fool

16. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: 17. And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? 18. And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. 19. And I will say to my soul, Soul,

thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. 20. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? 21. So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Luke 12:16-21 - KJV

Sam and Kate serve our persecuted Christian brothers and sisters in Southeast Asia. Kate is among several women who are dedicated to serving severely persecuted Christian women according to their unique needs.

The Blessing of Christ's Body

On 23 July, 2024, we were finishing up our morning prayer and Bible study when our phone started to ring. It was one of our team members in Laos. After we finished our devotions, I (Sam) returned his call. Nothing could have prepared me for the news he would tell me. One of my fellow workers in the Gospel, Thongkham, had been killed for his Christian faith. I'd served for more than two decades in Southeast Asia, but I had never had a call like this one.

Within days, our team and I (Sam) flew to Laos to be with his wife, Sengdara, and their children. When we met with Sengdara, she was grieving and told us her story through tears. Thongkham had been warned multiple times in the months leading up to his murder. Still, he continued his ministry because he was very bold in his faith. Despite the risks he was facing, he knew people need to hear the Gospel and encounter Christ. Details of Thongkham's killing clearly indicated that this had been a well-planned and premeditated attack, so we moved Sengdara and her children to a safer location.

Not long after Thongkham was killed, I (Kate) began a new role with VOM's international ministry team, meeting with Christian women who have experienced trauma through persecution in Southeast Asia. On my first trip in this new role, I visited Sengdara a few months after Thongkham's death. She shared with me how she was worried. She couldn't stop crying. Added to her husband's murder and their church now looking to her for guidance, her father had become ill. I asked her to pull out her Bible, and together we read Matthew 6. After we had read verses 25–30 together, she said, "I need to be reminded that God is going to take care of me." We just held each other, and I let her cry.

Many of the persecuted Christians we help are women like Sengdara: Their husbands have been taken, jailed or killed for their faith. For me (Sam) to have Kate ministering to our precious sisters with me is important. She can care for and comfort Sengdara and others like her in ways that I cannot, providing care and support to address the physical, spiritual and emotional needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ. This is the blessing of the body of Christ.

Sam and Kate

About the cover: Pastor Andre Efosa prays near a photo of his wife, Miriam, who was killed because of Andre's faithful witness for Christ.



A Song of Goodbye

Miriam Efosa leaves an enduring legacy of love and service in northern Benin.

Andre and Miriam Efosa married young and served the Lord together. Andre was an ordained pastor, and the two formed a strong ministry team. He preached, taught and evangelized. Miriam led women's ministries and Sunday school classes.

Andre described her as a pillar in their church. "If anybody spoke of going against the doctrine of our church, even if I wasn't around, she would rise up and say 'no' and correct wrong things," he said.

Miriam and Andre's adherence to biblical truth, especially to fulfilling the Great Commission in a Muslim-majority region of Benin, cost Miriam her life.

A Gift from God

When Andre was young, he hoped to secure a lucrative job in business, but God had other plans. "Many told me, 'You are called to become a pastor,' and I would reject it," he said.

Around that same time, Andre began having dreams about his future wife. Then one day a church leader delivered a message. "The Lord showed him that God was about to give me a very great gift," Andre said. "But the warning was that if I was not ready to take that

“The Holy Spirit told me to sing a song. I was singing, and then, when there were too many tears, I would stop.”

gift from God, the Lord would give that gift to another person.” As he pondered those words, he felt in his heart that the message had to do with his future wife.

Despite having no money to pay for Bible school, Andre followed the Lord’s direction and enrolled. During a conference for youth and young adults, he caught a glimpse of Miriam for the first time.

“Then in the night an angel of the Lord appeared to me and told me, ‘You shouldn’t mistake any longer who you are going to marry,’” Andre said. He woke up early the next morning, looked at Miriam again and realized she was the person he’d been seeing in his dreams.

Miriam was a pastor’s daughter. Her father taught at the Bible school. After Andre finished his training, the two married and began their ministry together. “I will confess that she worked more than me,” he said.

In addition to helping with church ministries, Miriam raised animals and trained many young women to become professional seamstresses. She was also an amazing cook. “She knew how to cook more than anyone,” Andre said proudly, smiling. “If you happened not to have appetite and taste her food, and taste the sauce, you will eat all the food.”

The two were married more than 20 years, serving in local churches while raising three daughters and one son. But while Andre was away on a ministry trip, their lives drastically changed.

“An Attack Planned for My Husband”

The area of northern Benin where Andre and Miriam served is 98% Muslim. “It was a tough place,” he said. Muslims in his community were particularly resistant to the Gospel, even when God answered prayers and miraculously healed people.

Andre traveled regularly for ministry, and Miriam fully supported his evangelistic efforts, fasting and praying when he went to remote areas to preach the Gospel. But on March 31, 2023, while Andre was ministering in another part of Benin, someone viciously attacked Miriam.

Delphine, the couple’s 12-year-old daughter, came home from soccer practice after dark and saw her mother lying on a couch. “I went into the sitting room and I saw her, I greeted her. She didn’t respond,” Delphine said. Delphine continued into the kitchen for something to eat but grew concerned that her mother hadn’t yet responded.

Delphine found a flashlight, and what the light revealed shocked her. Miriam’s face, shoulders and one leg were bruised and bloodied. Delphine ran out to get help, and as she dashed back through the kitchen, she saw something scribbled on the kitchen table.

It is an attack, and this was planned for my husband and they meant it for my husband, Miriam had written.

Delphine quickly ran to the nearby home of a church deacon. He called a nurse, who rushed to Miriam’s side. She was alive, but barely.

They took her by ambulance to the nearest hospital, but the small, rural medical center could do nothing for Miriam. Assaultants had forced acid down her throat, and she could barely breathe.

When Andre received a call that his wife was in the hospital, he asked to speak with her, but she was unable to talk. Only when he arrived at the hospital did he fully realize her dire condition.

“The acid started destroying her inner organs,” Andre said. His wife, typically so strong, was now incredibly weak. “She didn’t have any strength or capacity for speaking and it was only briefly that she could breathe. Her shoulders, her face, her chest were reddened and bloodied with wounds. Her mouth was swollen like someone had tried to force her to drink the acid.”

Andre transported Miriam to multiple hospitals in a desperate effort to save her. As the two traveled by ambulance together to a larger city nearly 200 miles away, hoping to find a medical cure, Andre said the Lord spoke to him.

“The Holy Spirit was telling me when we were in the ambulance that my wife was going home,” he said. “The Holy Spirit told me to sing a song. I was singing, and then, when there were too many tears, I would stop. And then when I find myself again, I would resume and sing again. ... I was saying goodbye to her like that. Because the song was a song that speaks about the love of God for me, what the Lord did for me.”

Andre sang the song again, with tears forming in his eyes:

*The Lord loves me, in suffering.
I was having pains, and the Lord loves me. He is love.
In this realm, in the worst of miseries I was suffering.
The Lord came and fetched from there.
I will always say, again and again,
the Lord loves me, he is love.*



▲ Pastor Andre continues in ministry with the help of his adult daughter, 25-year-old Veronique (*far left*), while still raising Delphine (now 14) and his young son, Nicolas (8). The area where his new church is located is also in a Muslim-majority region.

After that emotional ambulance ride, Andre took his wife to two more hospitals hoping for a medical solution. On 10 May, 2023, after 40 days of suffering, Miriam died.

Mourning but Still Ministering

Miriam's funeral stirred mixed emotions for Andre and his children. He was surprised by the large number of people who attended. "I didn't think people would come like that and give honour to her, and I will never forget that," he said. "People showed love; they showed love that they had for her."

But Andre's grief was compounded when some of Miriam's family members questioned why he was away when she was attacked. A few even thought he might have been involved.

Police investigated the crime but never made any arrests. Andre strongly suspects local Islamic extremists planned the attack after Andre shared the Gospel with a local imam.

"I used to witness and share the Gospel in the village," he said. "Muslims have a rule you shouldn't enter the household of an imam. I remember the imam coming to my house after I visited him and saying, 'Why did you not come back to speak about your Gospel in my house anymore? Why did you not come back?'"

"I found peace and joy because of your support."

Andre said the imam's tone was laced with menace and sounded more like a threat. "He said it not with a good mood. He didn't say in the way to encourage me," said Andre. "He said it with another spirit."

Andre did not visit the imam again. One month later, Miriam was attacked.

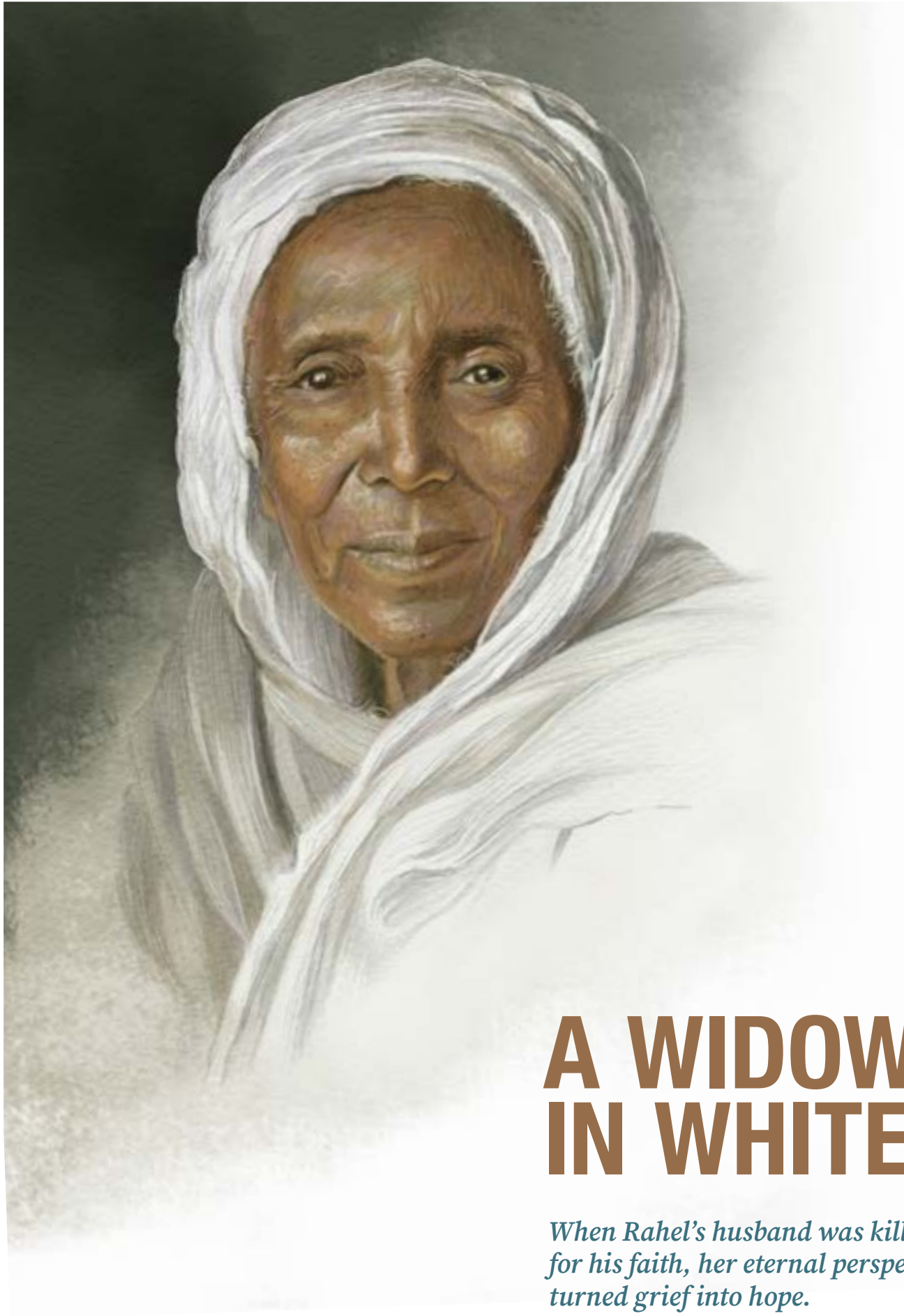
Andre was overwhelmed by medical bills after

Miriam's hospitalizations. With help from the global body of Christ, the medical expenses were covered. "Your help saved me from the shame of these expenses, these debts," he said. "I found peace and joy because of your support."

Though Andre moved his family to another part of Benin for safety, the number of Christians where he lives today is also very small. "It is a Muslim area, exactly like where I was when my wife was killed; very tough," he said.

But Andre remains committed to bringing the good news of Christ's love to all. He asks for support in the battle for souls.

"I would like to request that people help me in prayer that the village people could meet God and have their eyes opened," he said. "My prayer request is that this war by Muslims against the Gospel would collapse." ■



A WIDOW IN WHITE

*When Rahel's husband was killed
for his faith, her eternal perspective
turned grief into hope.*

“What do I say as a woman of God? I give them mercy, I pardon them. I forgive them,”

Rahel sits peacefully in a simple gown and speaks of the comfort she has in Christ.

“I am not a very strong person, but God speaks to me,” she said. “So I listen to God’s voice. During my low time, God was with me, and he is strong, and I trust him.”

Rahel lives in a part of central Ethiopia where extremist rebels and Muslim groups often target Christians. In April 2023, the body of her husband, Tesfa, was discovered inside their church building along with that of another church member. The two men had been brutally killed, and the news of their deaths sent fear through the congregation. Police are still uncertain who is responsible for the attack.

“I believe that it was a plan of the demons,” Rahel said, “to scare us and also to scatter Believers.”

Learning to Live for Christ

Rahel wasn’t always committed to Christ.

Like many Ethiopians in that region, Rahel’s family visited the Orthodox church but also worshiped local gods and animal spirits. Rahel said those occult practices provided an opportunity for demonic influence in her life. At age 15 she married Tesfa. Over time, Rahel began to suffer from an unknown illness combined with severe depression. She said she felt oppressed by satanic forces.

Rahel started to pray she would die but worried about her young children. One day she shared her situation with a Christian friend named Sebele. “I didn’t really believe that God would save me, but I just wanted to try anything that could keep me alive to support my children,” Rahel said.

Sebele offered to pray for Rahel. “If God helps me to stay with my children, then I will accept the God you are talking about,” Rahel said. Overjoyed, Sebele responded, “The God I worship can raise the dead!”

Sebele prayed for Rahel and took her to church. Rahel was so weak she could barely sit. But when the pastor prayed for her, she said she felt something like a big weight fall off her back. Her strength returned and she easily walked home. “I became a free person,” she said. “I believed in Jesus and was delivered from the oppression.”

Tesfa was away at the time, but when he returned, he was amazed at the change in his wife. He visited the church and also became a follower of Christ. The couple raised their children in that church family, and Tesfa eventually became a deacon. Then came the attack.

Rahel was visiting relatives the night Tesfa was killed. When she returned home, she was surprised his shoes

weren’t at the door. She asked her daughters where he was, and no one knew. Then some people told her to rush to the church. When she arrived, her 16-year-old son was there, tearing his clothes and crying out, “They killed my father!”

Rahel refused to accept the news at first, but the commotion at the church convinced her. Later she tried to comfort her children but didn’t know how she would provide for the family’s needs. She did know that God cared.

“I sensed something even before his death,” she said. “Don’t be afraid,” she said the Lord had told her. “I will be with you, and I am like a caregiver for you.”

A Change of Garments

After Tesfa’s death, Rahel followed the common local tradition of dressing in black clothing to express her love for her husband and her deep loss. She continued wearing black long after his funeral.

Some widows in that region wear dark clothing for the rest of their lives, signaling their ongoing mourning. But a Christian leader challenged her choice of apparel.

“Was your husband with the Lord when he died?” he asked. “Are you with the Lord? Do you think that we need to dress in black as Christians?” The leader added that wearing black was a local tradition of many who have no hope. But she, as a Christian, had hope that her husband was with the Lord in heaven and that she would see him again. After that admonition, Rahel began wearing white clothing.

Today Rahel is active in her church, just as she was for many years with Tesfa. With help from the global body of Christ, she has experienced God’s provision.

“My situation was very difficult and shocking,” she said. “But God always encourages me.” She said he is constantly reminding her that “I am your leader. I am your provider. Put your trust on me.”

Internally, Rahel’s heart has changed, much like her clothing. She said she feels no anger toward her husband’s killers.

“What do I say as a woman of God? I give them mercy, I pardon them. I forgive them,” she said.

Rahel knows someday she will see her husband in heaven, and they will both be dressed in imperishable garments.

“His soul went to heaven and is with his Father. We have a home in heaven he prepared for us, so our flesh may die, but our soul will live forever.”

Until then, she asks others to pray for her and her family. “I just want you to pray for my children. And also pray for me to be strong in my faith and finish the race.” ■

Prayer Diary

July 2026

- W 1. Laos Pray that Bibles and Christian literature will reach every Christian in Laos, despite government restrictions.
- T 2. Western Sahara Pray that Muslims in Western Sahara will seek the truth about Christ.
- F 3. Cameroon Pray for the protection of Christian converts like Fadimatou and Moussa, who are persecuted by Muslim family members.
- S 4. Nicaragua Pray that young Christians will mature in faith through discipleship training.
- S 5. Kazakhstan Pray for Kazakh Christians who have been disowned by their families for rejecting Islam and turning to Christ.
- M 6. Burundi Pray that Front-Line Workers will maintain a bold and loving witness in Muslim communities.
- T 7. Sri Lanka Pray that Anura, Ayesha and their church will be bold in faith as they face harassment and persecution.
- W 8. Kenya Pray that Front-Line Workers will be able to deliver more print and audio Bibles to remote parts of Kenya.
- T 9. Venezuela Pray that churches will remain open despite pressure from the authoritarian government.
- F 10. Lebanon Pray that Christian converts from Islam will inspire their family members to follow Christ too.
- S 11. Sudan Pray that Christians who have lost everything because of the war will sense God's presence and provision.
- S 12. Oman Pray that online and broadcast ministries will reach Omanis who have never heard the Gospel.
- M 13. Morocco Pray that Christian converts will persevere when their rejection of Islam angers family members.
- T 14. Tajikistan Pray that Believers who are beaten and questioned by the secret police will remain strong in Christ.
- W 15. Burkina Faso Pray for Christians in northern and southwestern Burkina Faso, who are at great danger for following Christ.
- T 16. Nigeria Pray that God will meet the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of those who suffer at the hands of Boko Haram.
- F 17. Mauritania Pray that those who carry Bibles into the country will be able to distribute God's Word without detection.
- S 18. India Pray that Christians who can't read will have access to audio Bibles in their own language.
- S 19. Azerbaijan Pray that Bibles will be available for all Azeri people who want to know God's Word.
- M 20. Libya Pray for the enduring testimony of Libyan Christians, using 1 Thessalonians 3:12–13 as a guide.
- T 21. Yemen Pray that Yemenis caught in the middle of a civil war will find peace and restoration in Christ.
- W 22. CAR* Pray that indigenous churches will experience the love and support of the global body of Christ.
- T 23. North Korea About 30,000 Christians are detained in prisons and labour camps. Pray that they will know the Lord's peace and presence.
- F 24. Tanzania Praise God for the distribution of hundreds of study Bibles and training materials for pastors.
- S 25. Burkina Faso Pray for those wounded or widowed during a recent Islamist attack that killed 28 Christians.
- S 26. Bhutan Pray that Christians will boldly share the Gospel with Buddhist monks in the country.
- M 27. Russia Pray for the unity of Russian Christians as government policy seeks to divide them. Use John 17:20–24 as a guide.
- T 28. Uzbekistan Pray that Christians who are rejected by their families will stand strong in faith.
- W 29. Kuwait Pray that Kuwaitis will become curious about Christ and seek information through local Christians and online resources.
- T 30. Burundi Pray that the example of new Christians will lead their persecutors to repentance and faith in Christ.
- F 31. UAE** Praise God that Emiratis have access to the Bible via the internet and other means.

*Central African Republic

**United Arab Emirates

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"Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them." Heb 13:3



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