I have recently become the Chair of St Mildred’s Mission Committee and so was keen to update myself on the work of our mission partners. St Mildred’s has been supporting five mission partners over the last few years. Our partners are Christian charities rooted in the Bible and committed to sharing the love of Jesus with others.

It has been a privilege to connect with our partners and hear about their work. I was initially intending to write a short piece for the newsletter but was overwhelmed by the response to my request for information that I wanted to share this with you in this special pullout feature. I hope you too are blessed as you read and learn more about what God is doing through His people, both at home and abroad. All content is published with kind permission from our partners.

We’re a very small group on the Mission Committee and would love to see more people from the church join us. If you have an interest in mission and would like to find out more about how to get involved, please email me at missions@stmildreds.org.uk

Edna Petzen
The Arab world lies at the heart of the Muslim world. The vast majority have yet to hear the gospel. Arab World Ministries (AWM) dates back to the 1880s. The ministry originally brought together a number of different ministries and was named Arab World Ministries in 1987 to reflect the passion of reaching Muslims of the Arab world – wherever they may be found – with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Rebranded as AWM-Pioneers the ministry focuses on people groups who have little opportunity to hear and understand the gospel. With a few exceptions, many major towns and cities still have no Christian presence. Where there is a presence, the Church is often under pressure. AWM-Pioneers is about making disciples of Jesus Christ, seeing churches planted and transforming the Arab world.

AWM-Pioneers serve together in teams to seek the Lord’s vision and purpose for their ministry. Support from St Mildred’s goes directly to Mostafa and his family who work with muslims here in the UK and wider afield. Tom had arranged for Mostafa to visit St Mildred’s in April, but unfortunately this visit was cancelled due to the lockdown. Here’s an update from Mostafa on his ministry and life over the last few months.

**A message from Mostafa**

The only ministries that are still working as usual since March is the Detention Centre ministry and Bible study/ministry on Zoom. The number of detainees are very little as the number dropped from 950+ to 80 persons, but the need for Christian ministry is still needed strongly. Two of the Christian chaplains died from Coronavirus in the last two months, which was very sad news and a great loss.
I have just finished teaching the Bible Study on Zoom for our Arabic meeting. I finished the whole book of Genesis and the first 20 chapters of Exodus. It was great time and I learned much from it too. I used a combination of Christian and Jewish commentaries to deliver my teaching. This added a greater and wider view of the Biblical history and Spiritual learning.

My wife Mona is doing a lot of follow up and counselling on Zoom and WhatsApp, with converted women in England, North Africa, Egypt and Australia. She enjoys helping other women to go through their personal and faith issues.

**Health and family news**

These last five months have been very difficult for us. I started to lose weight for no reason and I lost more than 23 pounds in two months. I did all kinds of blood test, stool test, CT Scan on my bowels and finally MRI on the liver. Nothing is worrying until now except that I became a pre-diabetic which can be controlled in different ways including losing weight, which has happened already. The challenge is that our food depends on rice and bread every day.

Mona also had some health issues and had a tumour in her left ankle that needed to be removed, but the consultant is waiting till the pandemic is under control.

I had very bad car accident and I was lucky not to be killed and killing anyone else. It wasn’t my mistake but I had to do 10 sessions of physiotherapy.

The involvement of St Mildred’s church in our ministry till now is supporting us through prayers and finance. Because our ministry is among Arabic speaking people and in very restricted places and abroad, it means we don’t have photos to share, but we are active.

Thank you again for your email. We really appreciate your prayers and support over the years.

In Him, The Light of The World.
Mostafa and Mona
We are so grateful for your partnership in spreading the good news of Jesus in the Arab world even in these difficult days. We would like to invite you to take part in ASK 2020 – www.awm-pioneers.org/ask-2020/ - this October to partner with the global church in praying for the Middle East.

**What is ASK?**

ASK 2020 is a special time of prayer for the region. Believers around the world will be praying on the 9th and 10th October, with the hope of stimulating prayer for God’s anointing and to see Jesus glorified. If you are unable to use the materials on either of these dates please use them whenever you can.

**Why ASK?**

Morgan, our Regional Leader who had the initial vision for this prayer initiative, says that:

“Especially in the time of a global pandemic, in the midst of the understandable anxiety caused by COVID-19, we have an opportunity to pray God’s blessing on the nations of the Middle East. If we can remind people of God’s passion for this part of the world, that would be great. Maybe God wants to lift our eyes from the immediate situation all around us and give us a bigger perspective – His eternal perspective on the nations – and shape our thoughts and actions as a result.”

**How can you get involved?**

We’ve prepared some materials to help you pray for three nations of the Middle East – Lebanon, Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Each prayer PDF has some context, a testimony, three prayer points and a ‘next steps’ and can be used in whatever way you choose - as a fellowship (whether in person or online), in virtual prayer groups or in your personal prayer time. For more information and to access these resources please visit www.awm-pioneers.org/ask-2020/

Every blessing,

AWM-Pioneers
Covenant Home Trust

We wrote at some length about the background to Covenant in the August newsletter in tribute to Pat Botwright, (the founder and CEO) after the Lord called her home earlier this summer. Obviously things have changed and will continue to do so, but we have now received an update from Charles Otieno in Nairobi. Charles was cared for by Pat from 1993 (when he was 13) and he is now legal and security advisor to the President’s Office and advises the UN on constitutional reforms in Kenya and Somalia.

Covenant started on a small scale in 1993 with a few orphaned babies (at a time when AIDS accounted for many parental deaths). The work grew until a school building with dormitories for some 250 children and 50 adult staff was operating in the early 2000’s. Pat had to return to the UK through ill health in 2009, the school was transferred to a Canadian church and the work was much reduced in size.

By 2013 Pat was able to return to Kenya and the focus shifted to older children who had almost completed school and college education. New needs continued to arise, (the Kenyan Children’s Department referred various much younger children to them for one thing) and now in 2020 covenant cares for 34 children, the two youngest of whom are babies aged 12 and 15 months.

It has taken some time to sort out the finances since the bank cards were in Pat’s name and the UK bank was insisting on sight of a physical Kenyan death certificate in the UK before doing anything! (All subject to the vagaries of Covid!) Now things are normalising. Expenditure on rent, food and medical care has been reviewed and prioritised.
Schools are expected to re-open in January and budgets for fees and uniforms are being drawn up.

Other plans include contact with all sponsors and church supporters to encourage future prayer and funding. A new Chief Executive will need to be appointed and trustees with links to sponsors and churches will also be needed. In Kenya a caretaker management team will be formed and a Needs Assessment is under review. The Covenant constitution, programmes, initiatives and policies are all being revised and updated. Kenyan government policies regarding the care and education of children are frequently subject to update and review, and Covenant needs to be abreast of all this. A fully qualified Home Manager will be needed in Kenya who will need to liaise with the new CEO (whether the latter is based in the UK or Kenya), so the work develops and continues.

We have supported Covenant over the years on the basis of the Lord’s command to care for the "fatherless and the widow"- the children were fatherless and Pat was the widow! As Covenant moves into a new chapter we recall the words of Psalm 139:16 "ALL the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" and also Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you" declares the Lord "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Kay and David Nicholls

**Prayer points for Covenant Home Trust:**

- Pray that the Lord will continue to guide Charles and the team as they transition to life without Pat and seek to take the work she started forward. May the Lord guide and direct them and give them the grace and anointing to continue the work.

- Pray for God’s provision and for all their needs to be met in Him. May they also experience the same dynamic journey of faith that they saw in Pat evident in their own lives and ministry.
The Nehemiah Project provides a home and support for vulnerable men with a history of addiction. The home is abstinence-based where men can address the root causes of their addiction within a supportive environment. They operate first stage houses in Streatham and Croydon and second stage move-on accommodation in Clapham and Wandsworth.

Residents have a history of addiction which has severely affected them, their families and the wider community. The programme enables men to break this cycle of addiction, offending and homelessness, and provide the professional and life-changing support required to secure a new future.

The national average for remaining abstinent for one year is 30%; at Nehemiah 74% of residents remain abstinent. Nearly 50% of released prisoners reoffend within 12 months and for London prisons this figure increases to 60%. At Nehemiah, as far as known, only 5% of the men they have worked with in the last five years have reoffended.

In addition to the residential programme, the Nehemiah Project also run an employment and training programme for Nehemiah residents called Nehemiah Works, launched in March 2019. The programme provides pre-employment training, help with CV writing, job applications, interview skills and coaching, so that residents can live independently and lead more fulfilling lives, which will benefit both Residents themselves, and their families.

We are so grateful for the continued support from St Mildred’s, which really means a lot to us, especially at this challenging time.

St Mildred's have supported Nehemiah for many years, since 2006, and as one of the few regular churches who support our work, this makes a huge difference to the vulnerable men who we work with. Not only does the support help us financially, but it also helps our Residents to know that the church and its members are thinking of them and praying for them as they try to recover their lives.

Nehemiah had to isolate our two first stage houses two weeks before lockdown measures began due to a suspected case of Covid-19. Staff supported Residents remotely through daily phone calls and online Zoom group sessions. Our priority was to protect the health of our Residents many who have underlying health issues. We were fortunate in that the majority of our Residents had completed the recovery programme or were close to completion when we had to lockdown. In fact, two men have moved on positively into their own flats during this time. We introduced a rent deposit scheme as an incentive to help our Residents remain focused on their recovery whilst in lockdown.

Nehemiah’s staff returned to our houses on
15 June and six new Residents joined us at Streatham. The Residents are already halfway through the recovery programme and will graduate at the beginning of October.

There is a lot going on at the charity and we feel that we will come out of this challenging time much more resilient. We have not had to furlough any staff as we delayed the recruitment of two vacant positions which helped to save costs. Nehemiah, has however, been impacted financially, both in terms of income from grants, individuals and churches and from reduced Housing Benefit.

Please can we ask the church to pray for our Residents who face the daily battle with their addiction, to give them the strength to remain abstinent, for themselves and their families. Not everyone is strong enough to resist temptation and when tough circumstances arise, many people struggle to cope. When men join Nehemiah, they have often lost everything. Their families, livelihoods, dignity and often hope. Please pray for restoration in the lives of the men we support.

Please could I ask you also pray for Nehemiah as the charity tries to recover from the financial impact that Covid-19 has brought. We are trying our best to make sure we can operate as normally as possible and are grateful that we are able to open a fifth house – a move-on house at Croydon in the coming weeks and also refurbish our main house at Streatham, from monies raised last year.”

Thank you once again, Lois

**Marcus’s story**

“I never thought that my life would start again just one mile or so away from Brixton prison. The turning point for me was becoming clean in prison, this was a massive achievement for me. “

After 20 years of addiction, Marcus came to Nehemiah to recover his life. “The first two weeks at Nehemiah were really difficult for me. I didn't think I could do it as I couldn't remember having a clean life. The 12-week recovery programme really helped me in all areas of my life. It felt like I was part of a family, and sharing and supporting each other helped me to recover.

“I recently got married to a beautiful Christian lady, who I met 11 months ago. I would never have thought in my wildest dreams that I could have turned my life around.”
Open Doors was founded in 1955 by Andrew van der Bijl (Brother Andrew) after he had visited Poland (then behind the Iron Curtain) and sensed God saying to him: "Awake and strengthen what remains and is about to die!" (Rev 3:2). So for many years he visited many communist countries (where believers faced prison, torture and even death) carrying Bibles (at first in a suitcase, later in a blue VW Beetle whose engine he eventually wore out after covering more than a million miles!)

He began also to raise awareness for prayer support across the west. He visited Moscow and Prague (after the 1968 Russian invasion). He visited China and organised the landing by sea of 1 million Bibles one night in 1981. In 1988 (under Glasnost) he arranged for a similar number of Bibles to reach Russia. As the Communist regimes began to disintegrate Open Doors began to focus on the Muslim world (from the 1990’s onwards). Now they serve in more than 70 countries where persecution is still common (obviously a good deal of secrecy covers the detail of their exact operations). Brother Andrew is now 92 and (somewhat) retired!

During 2019, Open Doors spent £12.6m including:

- £654,000 distributing 1.87m Bibles.
- £3.3m providing leadership and discipleship training and trauma counselling to 3.8m people.
- £4m towards poverty relief and community development to 720,000 people.
- £790,000 on advocacy, legal support and training along with raising political awareness in the UK and Ireland.

Apart from financial commitment, almost 100,000 are known to be committed to regular prayer support. In recent years there has been an increasing focus on the needs of women and children - who are not always well-respected in the developing world, and for whom faith in Jesus only makes things worse. Open Doors have always sought to serve "where the need is greatest". Precisely how many Christians suffer serious persecution is impossible to know - but it is certain that during the 20th Century more Christians died for their faith than in all the previous 19 centuries put together - and things have only intensified since. Some ask why Open Doors is such a big organisation? Sadly it has to be big in order to address the needs that arise when the Kingdom of Light challenges a world of deep spiritual darkness.

In recent years North Korea has been considered to be the most dangerous and hostile place to be a Christian. One believer from there recently sent this message:

"We realise that you pour out physical and Spiritual blessings upon us. Please know that every small or big thing that you do for us is like a beautiful song in the ear of our Heavenly God. We want our next generation to spread what you have started for us."

David Nicholls
An update from our programme officer at Open Doors:

The sudden rapid spread of covid-19 throughout Asia caused many governments to impose lockdowns, which had huge implications for the local people, especially for the poor such as day labourers, migrant workers and factory employees. “Everyone suffered, not just the Christians,” says ‘brother John’, the Open Doors director for Asia. “But within days and even only hours after the start of the lockdowns, we received cries for help. Our teams were inundated with phone calls and text messages. It quickly became clear that the Covid-19 crisis amplified already existing discrimination and persecution. For instance, Indian government agencies brought aid to villages, but the local Hindu authorities refused to share the aid with Christians. This has led to harrowing situations.”

Because of support like yours, local partners have distributed essential survival kits to more than 163,000 persecuted Christians in Asia since the covid-19 crisis began. All of them were at risk of malnutrition or even dying of starvation after lockdown restrictions prevented them from working, and many were denied government aid because of their faith. “We will continue to provide urgent aid and relief where we can,” says ‘brother John’.

Your financial support could have helped provide emergency survival kits to support 280 persecuted Christians in Asia.

The contents of survival kits differ from country to country, but all of them contain vital food and sanitation items, such as soap and face masks.

The distribution work is not without risk, as local partner Rachel (pseudonym) from Myanmar explains. “Providing groceries to the Christians in need is not only difficult but also risky. For instance, the government is watchful to see if people are supplying food to insurgent groups. This creates danger to us as we can be arrested on the suspicion of aiding these rebels. Also, the insurgent groups are extremist Buddhists and very much against the Christians receiving any extra help. They monitor if pastors are bringing in food for the church members. But even local neighbours can be opposed to Christians receiving support.”

“As long as countries are in lockdown situations and their economies are barely functioning, we need to help the ignored persecuted believers in Asia,” ‘brother John’ says. “We will continue with urgent aid and relief, but at the same time we’re starting phase two in a number of countries. Phase two means we will develop projects so that believers can earn some money by themselves. For example, in one region we’re setting up new tailoring classes, while in another we’re helping believers to start farming and in other places we support them in setting up shops.

The ramifications of Covid-19 will be felt long after the crisis is over. That’s why we need to start with phase two now. We hope that Christians around the world continue to stand with us and help the Persecuted Church survive.”
Prayer points for Open Doors:

- Praise God for the successful aid distribution! Thank God for keeping our partners safe as well as the beneficiaries.

- Pray that God will open doors of opportunities for these families and others who grapple from the impacts of this pandemic.

- Pray for God to strengthen even more the faith of these believers. May they continue to walk in His light and may they also become the light in their communities especially to their oppressors.

Tearfund is a Christian charity working with people around the world, including the UK, to fight poverty, disease and disasters. Many will remember that my visit to Tanzania last year was through Tearfund, so it's a charity that's close to my heart.

Since 2018 St Mildred’s church has been supporting a partner programme that links churches to Tearfund partners abroad. United Mission to Nepal (UMN) has been the focus on our support. Here’s a summary of the work of UMN and its impact in Nepal.

The beauty of Nepal can mask some of the struggles of the country, with many living in dire poverty. UMN has tried to change this and make a difference.

In 1990 only 64% of children in Nepal were enrolled in primary schools; in 2013 that number had grown to 95.3%. Corruption unfortunately is reported to affect every sphere of society, not just politics but also sport, education, and business. The government’s development activities are limited and the majority of the population live in miserable conditions as they lack the power and resources for a better life.
For 60 years UMN have been reaching out to the poor and vulnerable in Nepal, particularly those suffering from stigmatising illnesses like HIV/AIDS. They help churches in Nepal to think differently about the society around them, and give them the ability to reach out to those who are the most vulnerable: the young, the elderly, and the sick.

They have done this through a process called Sangsangai, an adaptation of what is more commonly known as Umoja or the Church and Community Mobilisation Process. Umoja means ‘togetherness’ or ‘unity’ in Swahili, and the process has revolutionised communities in many countries where Tearfund works. UMN has been using the approach in Nepal.

The first stage of the project was rooted in Bible studies, exploring God’s message to the church about looking after the poor. They also talk about the gifts that God has given to His people, seeking to break the dependency on outside help. This approach strengthens churches, raising up new and effective leaders who are able to read and interpret the Bible and make decisions independently.

The second stage of the project, looked at the community around them with fresh eyes, identifying the resources that they already have, and the most present needs of the people around them. The church supported by UMN and trained facilitators educated, equipped, and mobilised the community to make a difference.

In the last update of the project UMN had trained 1,743 churches and had started to reach out to Bible colleges and denominations, influencing the whole church in Nepal to change their approach to helping the poorest in their communities.

Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the challenges it has created, Tearfund has reviewed their work to make sure they can direct support to wherever the need is greatest. In future, our support will be more widely used across their partner programme and not just on the UMN project.
Prayer points for Tearfund:

· Praise God for all that He continues to do through the global church. May the church be His hands and feet to minister His love, comfort, provision and will at this time of so much change and uncertainty.

· Pray for Tearfund and all their partner churches throughout the work. As they review their work as a result of the pandemic, may the Lord give them wisdom to guide and direct the work, and may His provision be sufficient to meet all their needs.

Development Fund Tithe

In addition to our commitment of the tithe from the general funds to mission, many will remember that we also made a commitment to tithe from the gifts made to the Development Fund. An excerpt from the original communication states:

‘A tithe of 10% will be set aside annually on all sums paid into the Development Fund. This will include gifts to the Development Fund, the recovery of tax relief on these gifts and the accrual of interest within the Development Fund.

This tithe will be placed in a separate “Development Fund Tithe Account” and allocated separately from the title of general church income. Distribution of money from the Development Fund Tithe Account will be at the PCC’s discretion, but with the expectation that the money might be applied towards a suitable mission project(s) requiring capital funding.’

The tithe from the Development Fund is currently c.£204,146. We are grateful to all who have given and continue to give to the Development Fund.

To date, we have supported the Starfish Christian Trust with £7,800 (as two separate gifts in 2018 and more recently in 2020) from this fund and are keen to identify another larger project to support.

Please pray for the mission committee as we take on this important task of identifying the right project and ministry to support with this gift. May the Lord give us wisdom.
Starfish Christian Trust was established in 2012 to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ, by all means, to all people in all parts of the world. There are four trustees drawn from a variety of backgrounds and no paid staff. Our very own Jan is one of the trustees of the charity.

St Mildred’s has recently supported the building of a Boy’s Dormitory near Rajamundry, India. Here’s an update from Jan on the project and the wider work of the Trust.

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**Building of Boy’s Dormitory**

Some of you may remember an article in a newsletter last year that reported how money tithed from the St Mildred’s church building project, had helped build a church in Gitega, Burundi (the church is thriving by the way and recently hosted a regional conference of pastors). When, recently, I approached the PCC again on behalf of the same charity (but for different recipients), Edna asked if I would write a short article about Starfish Christian Trust and how St Mildred’s has been supporting Christians in Africa and India with them.

Starfish Christian Trust was started in 2012 under the name of Woodland Christian Trust (the name was changed as people were confusing them with a well-known tree loving charity). It was primarily formed to consolidate the work that the current administrator had been doing for over 20 years at that time, as well as some overseas projects that were supported by some of the other trustees. Charitable status brought some extra headaches but also important benefits; wider recognition/acceptance, better accountability (both of which make fund-raising easier), and Gift Aid! Although a small charity by most measures, it has achieved a great deal of good, and it is easy to believe and see that, in certain cases, the Lord has multiplied what has been given beyond all expectations.

The name comes from the well-known story of the Boy and the Starfish, where a small boy finds himself surrounded by thousands of starfish washed up on the shore, and begins to throw them back into the water. When challenged that he was wasting his time, as there were simply too many stranded starfish for him to make a difference, the boy picked up another starfish, threw it back
into the water, and said (probably with a cheeky grin), “Well, I made a difference to that one!”

Starfish have over the years thrown many thousand starfish back into the sea. Perhaps the biggest achievement was being the catalyst for the rescue of some 5000 people from the slavery of the brick kilns in Pakistan. Although this work has had to cease in Pakistan (when their contact was forced to flee Pakistan under a fatwa issued by the Taliban) they have been able to move their rescue work to India, seeing dozens of children from various slave situations in India. For all those rescued, in both countries, they ensure that they have both physical and spiritual support from the local churches to help keep them from being dragged back into physical and spiritual penury.

The rescue of slave children in India has led to a large growth in Starfish’s support for the Hope Ministry in India. They have been the conduit for a lot of the work carried out or supported by Starfish in India. One example is paying for the drilling of more than a dozen fresh water wells in Indian villages, where the Hindu population deny the (often newly converted) Christians fresh water in the hope they will revert to Hinduism. In actual fact, the reverse has happened, as the love of Jesus is revealed to Hindus, by the newly planted churches freely offering fresh water to all. Starfish run a small sponsorship scheme for children in The Hope Ministry Children’s Home. Several visits have been made by the charity’s administrator and, on his last trip, he visited the Light Children’s Home which had taken about 30 of the children Starfish had rescued from slavery (the home is also run as a Christian work but is separate from Hope Ministry but they support one another). Although girls and boys are housed in two separate rooms, the Indian Government are unhappy that they are housed in the same building and have instructed that, unless a separate dormitory for the boys be constructed, they would have to leave. Starfish contacted the PCC at St Mildred’s who kindly agreed to fund the construction. Work has already begun and I am looking forward to presenting a full report of the completed work, which you have funded, shortly.

As mentioned in the opening paragraph, St Mildred’s Church also partnered with Starfish to build a solid church for the ministry of Pastor Joseph in Gitega, Burundi. Members of St Mildred’s Church have also attended fund-raising quiz nights (and, you’ll be glad to hear, have been amongst the victors on the last two occasions).

Some other notable projects and people (starfish) that Starfish have helped include; a Community Based Organisation in Webuye, Kenya, taking teenage girls off of the streets (often out of prostitution). Also in Kenya, Starfish gives occasional help to an orphanage in Kakamega (building toilet facilities). In the Philippines, Starfish supports a pastor/evangelist who is living a sacrificial life, serving her community, both Christian and non, with both Christian ministry and practical support.
In the Democratic Republic of Congo, another ministry is regularly supported with both general support and practical church building.

The charity considers many applications and is often a conduit for much larger church funds in America (and London ☝).

An ever present feature of the work is personal knowledge of the brothers and sisters who are delivering ‘on the ground’ in countries where Christians risk more than ridicule. Starfish works hard to ensure that money given by faithful brothers and sisters in the UK and the US, ends up blessing brothers and sisters in poorer countries. Partly with that in mind, Starfish like to keep regular, face-to-face, contact with the people and projects that it supports and, with the developing connection between St Mildred’s and the charity, it would be delighted if members of our church here could visit either of the projects being supported by us. For details, speak to me (Jan) and we can plan something together.

Jan Wiszniewski

**Prayer points for Starfish:**

- In the last few weeks we’ve heard that some of the workers installing the septic tank tested positive of Covid-19. Unfortunately the infection spread to 11 children and the home is in quarantine. This means that all work has also had to stop. Pray for God’s healing and protection on all, and for a quick recovery for those who are unwell.

- Pray also that the strong rains will cease and the risk of floods in the area will be reduced.

- We give thanks to God that He watches over us - may He continue to watch over the team working on this project and the children being cared for. That the building works will start again soon so that the much needed accommodation will be available and open for use.

- Pray also for the wider work of Starfish as they seek to make Jesus known through their projects and ministries.