

If you escaped the darkest place on earth... what would make you go back?

Joo Min was born and raised in North Korea. In school, Joo Min was taught that North Korea was the greatest country in the world, and that the ruling Kim family were to be gratefully obeyed and even worshipped. She did hear about Christians – and how they were to be feared.



Despite what she was taught about life being wonderful in North Korea, Joo Min's actual experience didn't match up. Her family was desperately short of food and she became one of tens of thousands of North Koreans who crossed the border looking for sources of food and income. While it's illegal for North Koreans to leave the country, the authorities are less vigilant in stopping them during periods of severe food insecurity.

At first, after reaching the other side of the river, Joo Min wasn't sure what to do. Soon, she met someone who said they could help her, and take her to a safe place. The fieldworker took Joo Min to one of the safe houses for North Korean refugees run by Open Doors underground networks, where she found herself part of a community of people who'd made the same difficult journey as her. At the safe houses, these local fieldworkers provide food and help people find jobs. More than that – they tell people about Jesus.

Even with the extreme risks, Joo Min couldn't help wanting to know more about Jesus. The Christians she met weren't like the sadistic missionaries in her North Korean textbook: they were kind, loving and offered her help without asking anything in return.

After a long period of biblical teaching and persecution survival training from Open Doors fieldworkers, Joo Min felt the prompting of the Holy Spirit. And that's what brought Joo Min back to the border, and to the dangerous crossing into North Korea. Today, Joo Min is still serving as a leader in the underground church.

Joo Min's story is a little different from many stories you'll read from countries on the Open Doors World Watch List. She hasn't been attacked or imprisoned – but she risks extreme persecution every day.

Please pray

- ✝ For God's strength and inspiration for believers from North Korea and other countries where Christians face extreme persecution
- ✝ For Open Doors fieldworkers at safe houses to receive God's wisdom and protection as they carry out His work
- ✝ That the darkest places on earth in which to follow Jesus would be filled with His light.

**Joo Min's story is taken from accounts of two North Korean believers. As the real people are currently living and ministering in North Korea, some details have been combined or omitted to protect their identities.*

Ringstone in Aveland News Sheet



5 January 2025
Epiphany

Collect for this Sunday

O God, who by the leading of a star manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: mercifully grant that we, who know you now by faith, may at last behold your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen**

Psalm 72.10-15:

Prayer for Guidance and Support for the King

May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles
render him tribute,
may the kings of Sheba and Seba
bring gifts.

**May all kings fall down before him,
all nations give him service.**

For he delivers the needy when they call,
the poor and those who have no helper.

**He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.**

From oppression and violence he redeems their life;
and precious is their blood in his sight.

Long may he live!

May gold of Sheba be given to him.

**May prayer be made for him continually,
and blessings invoked for him all day long.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning, is now and for evermore, Amen**

Readings for this Sunday

Isaiah 60.1-6

Ephesians 3.1-12

Matthew 2.1-12



Post Communion Prayer for this Sunday

Lord God, the bright splendour whom the nations seek: may we who with the wise men have been drawn by your light discern the glory of your presence in your Son, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

Please pray for...

Eben Atkinson, Sheila Bates, Margaret Brumby, Marie Rose Cubacub, Christine Evans, Sue Grainge, Annie Hall, Clive Hall, Robert Hitchens, Jane Knight, Judy Long, Imogen Matthews, Pat Reid, John Rowntree, Maggie Sharman, Ivan Spencer, Amanda Thomson, Clive Walker, Kevin Whitfield, King Charles III, and for any others whom we name in the silence of our hearts.

We give thanks for those on the road to recovery.

We remember Astrid Kuhn, Carol Godfrey, Jo Honniball and the souls of all the faithful departed. May they rest in peace and rise in glory; and we pray for those who mourn their loss.

We pray for Nick Walker and Catherine Holden, who are getting married at Morton on 18 January

Funeral anniversaries: Shirley Dawson, Peter Chubbuck (1 year); Evelyn Bates, Margaret King, Arthur Branch, Caroline Creasey, Patricia Gray (2 years)

Sunday and regular weekday Services in the Group

| | | | |
|-------------|-------|----------------|------------------|
| 5 January | 11am | Eucharist | Morton |
| | 3pm | Evening Prayer | Haconby |
| 12 January | 9am | Eucharist | Haconby |
| | 3pm | Evening Prayer | Morton |
| 19 January | 11am | Eucharist | Morton |
| 22 December | 11am | Eucharist | Kirkby Underwood |
| | 3pm | Evening Prayer | Morton |
| Wednesday | 10 am | See below | Morton |

From 1 January, the Wednesday service will be Morning Prayer.

Do you know anyone who is unable to get to church but who would like to receive Holy Communion? Contact Revd Neil on 01778 219626

Safeguarding & Contact Information

Safeguarding: We take your welfare and safety very seriously!

Revd Neil (Rector): revdneil@yahoo.com, 01778 219626 or

Janice Hill (Group Safeguarding Officer): janicethreetun s@hotmail.co.uk,
01778 440733 and 07972 211936

Group Administrator and for entries to news sheet (by Tuesday please)

Sue O'Riordan: ringstoneoffice@gmail.com

Plough Sunday Service—12 January

Rippingale's Plough Sunday service will be held on Sunday 12 January at later time of 12.15pm

Reverend Ian Walters will be leading the service



From today's Gospel reading

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews?"

Reflection:

The Magi were people on a quest, looking for more in their lives. If they had been satisfied with the way things were, they would have stayed put. Change began for them because God made the first move and showed them a light in their darkness. They didn't have to follow that light, they could have chosen to stay put, satisfied with the status quo. But they picked up and began a journey that eventually took them to Christ.

So, we ask ourselves:

- ✚ Am I hearing a call to a deeper and more personal relationship with Christ?
- ✚ What steps do I need to take to begin to move in that direction?

.Can you help?



Here is a list of items that are running low, but feel free to donate any in-date, non-perishable food at any of our

Donation Points

| | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| Milk (UHT cartons) | Fruit juice / squash | Coffee |
| Tinned meat | Jam | Deserts |
| Custard | Snacks—pot nodules, rice etc | |
| Laundry powder / liquid | Washing up liquid | Toothbrushes |
| Toilet roll | Razors and shaving foam | |

There is a collection box in St John the Baptist Church, on the left at the back of the church. Please be as generous as possible.