

MAY 2023

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 1:8 (NIV)

Dear Friends,

We were exceptionally blessed to receive some very generous gifts during March – words escape me to thank you for your bigheartedness!

In April I had the wonderful opportunity to travel to Nepal and India. In Kathmandu in Nepal, I had a very blessed meeting with 11 lawyers from **Advocates Nepal**. It was wonderful to reconnect with Kailashman Sashankar, the Chair of Advocates Nepal, and Buddha Ghising, one of the founder members of the organization. We missed our faithful brother Ganesh, who passed away from Covid in 2021. In a country where it is not easy to be a Christian, I was touched and encouraged by how the older members of Advocates Nepal mentor the many younger lawyers and teach them how to integrate their faith with their profession. I was particularly moved by the sincere prayers these lawyers prayed for me and for one another!

The annual **Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP) Consultation** also took place in Kathmandu in April. The consultation brings together the leaders of the many organisations across the globe who focus on religious liberty. The RLP seeks to work together more intentionally in addressing public advocacy, assistance, research, and in raising the awareness of religious restrictions globally. For me it was an invaluable opportunity to build relationships and explore collaborative efforts. Many of the presentations focused on South Asia – a region where religious liberty is extremely delicate and certainly cannot be taken for granted.

India is home to 1.408 billion people – 17% of the world's population. In recent years there has been a marked increase in the frequency and intensity of violence and discrimination being experienced by non-Hindu religious communities in India. These continued intimidations range from hostile narratives, unmerited arrests to violent attacks. Several states in India have now **adopted anti-conversion laws, or very strict guidelines regulating conversion**. Accusations of illegal proselytization are the order of the day and often lead to mob violence against churches and pastors. Christians increasingly experience social exclusion in their communities, discrimination in the workplace, and have false accusations and rumors spread about them. While in India, I was privileged to meet with many friends and allies who have either themselves experienced incidents of religious persecution or are lawyers who have intervened in cases of religious persecution. Please pray with me for these very brave brothers and sisters and especially for the lawyers who boldly contest these cases from the charge offices in hostile police stations right to the Supreme court.

Growing up in South Africa, I, like many of you, always celebrated Easter with all the frills and treats of Easter eggs, the Easter bunny, special Easter sales in the shops and, if we weren't on holiday somewhere, a church service on Easter Sunday.

In the past two years, I believe by God's divine direction, my Easter celebrations have taken on a very different and much more authentic shape. Last year, Deon and I were in Eastern Europe at Easter, meeting many Ukrainian refugees and this year I was in Delhi, India. On both occasions, for the Christians I was worshipping with, the adornments and special treats of Easter had been replaced by a sincere clinging to Jesus our Savior.

For the **Christians in India**, the resurrection of the Lord forms the very basis and reason for the sacrifices which they are prepared to make in the face of stark persecution. Many of them did not know whether they or their pastor would be arrested on Easter Sunday and charged with committing so-called “forced conversions”. I got teary when we sung *“Because He lives, I can face tomorrow, because He lives, all fear is gone; Because I know He holds the future, and life is worth the living, just because He lives!”*

In Chennai in India, I visited the team from Ruahtech who assists us with our website. These wonderful young people have developed an amazing application called “**I’m Safe**”. This is a new app developed as a solution for women who want to stay safe when alone at night or even during the day. When activated, the app sends out information about your location to your trusted circle while capturing vital information in the background and can be used anywhere in the world. Advocates International is proud to be associated with this caring team who are genuinely interested in protecting women in vulnerable situations such as domestic violence. I want to encourage you to download the app for yourself and tell your daughters and friends about it.

Save Ukraine is a rescue network who coordinates organizations, volunteers, individuals, and legal entities to save children and families affected by the war in the Ukraine. They are currently focusing on the children who have been abducted and find themselves in Russia. Save Ukraine not only attempts to identify these children and their whereabouts, but also arrange missions to take them back to the Ukraine. They then help these children, and their families heal from the physical and emotional trauma they have suffered. We salute these brave men and women who do this dangerous work without a regard for their own safety. Our lawyers in Eastern Europe are assisting as far as possible. We intend to facilitate a special online prayer meeting for the work of Save Ukraine and will let you have the details as soon as the meeting has been arranged.

We are so excited about the 15th biennial **Convocation of Advocates Africa** which is being held from 25 – 30 July on the shores of the beautiful Lake Victoria in Entebbe, Uganda! The theme of the convocation is “*Positioning the Christian lawyer to thrive through a volatile and ambiguous world*”. Advocates Africa and the Ugandan Christian Lawyers Fellowship are lining up an excellent program with amazing speakers. Those of you who have attended an AA convocation will be able to testify that it promises to be the fun event of the year on the Advocates International calendar! The link for the convocation website is <https://ugandachristianlawyers.org/15th-biennial-convocation/> .

Just before Jesus was taken up in heaven, he appeared to his apostles and told them that **when** the Holy Spirit comes upon them, they **will** receive power and be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and **to the ends of the earth**. The ends of the known earth at the time, were Spain in the West, Ethiopia in the South, and India in the East. It has always struck me that Jesus didn’t say “if” the Holy Spirit comes upon them but “when”.

In the week after Resurrection Sunday, as it is called in India, I had the privilege to be in Chennai. I visited the tomb of the apostle Thomas who was killed there by being stabbed with a spear. Clearly Thomas was obedient to the point of death to be Jesus’ witness “to the ends of the earth”.

Now more than ever before, God is calling us as lawyers to be His witnesses in our own cities, regions, continents and to the ends of the earth. He does not leave us to our own devices though but promises us that His Holy Spirit will come upon us, and that we will receive the power which will make us able and bold to be His witnesses in the legal profession!

Warmly in Christ



Teresa Conradie

President and CEO, Advocates International



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