



Report 2021 • Report 2021 • Report 2021 • Report 2021

The Covid crisis meant that we were unable to provide food, clothing and other welfare support to many in need, as we have done in previous years, but we were able to continue to give some support to mostly African asylum seekers in mainland Italy and Sicily and to provide other support elsewhere.

The impact of the pandemic meant that our most important activity in the year was the continuing development of the *Bible Companion* app, available at <https://carelinks.net/>. This comprises a full Bible text including audio; deeper commentary on every verse; basic devotionals, an audio and a youth message on every chapter; a reading planner; a study course; and powerful search functionality. We believe that this app offers more features and resources than any other free Bible app. The initial aims of the app were both to increase the reach of the gospel message, given the widespread use of online sources, and to create long-term savings in postage costs for traditional paper-based publications so as to release more funds for pastoral and welfare work. The severe limitations that the pandemic placed on travelling to support those in need showed how valuable the app could be in enabling the message to reach many more people virtually.

Russian, Spanish, French and Farsi versions of the app had been launched on Android in the spring of 2020. In January 2021, an updated English-language version was launched, including a video talk and a three minute 'Christian Basics' video on every chapter of the New Testament along with a 'dark mode' to aid reading in darkness. At the same time, the French, Russian, Farsi and Spanish versions were launched on Apple/iOS for the first time.

By May 2021, the app had been downloaded a total of 1.3 million times. About 17,000 of those who have downloaded the app use it every day, many of them more than once. At least 72,000 people use it every 48 hours. The app has been particularly well-used in countries such as Afghanistan and Iran which are challenging for anyone wishing to consider Christianity, and also (for example) in Francophone West and Central Africa, and South America, where it is now possible to reach people in very remote areas that would have been effectively inaccessible to physical evangelism, given our resources.

Alongside the development of the app, we have launched a 'Virtual Church' (www.virtualchurch.cc) which is a gateway to both pastoral support and to regular online communion services hosted in Europe, Canada and New Zealand. The Zoom platform has been used to provide support from round the world to those wishing

to learn more about the message of the Bible and, in many cases, to be baptised.

These new platforms now work alongside our longer-standing YouTube channel, where our videos have now been viewed more than two million times.

One of the most important outcomes of this work is that several hundred individuals in at least 47 countries, supported by us, committed themselves to Jesus Christ during the year, many of them through baptism.