



## Serving Christ and His Suffering Church

### Patrick Sookhdeo

1947 – 2026

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Well done, good  
and faithful  
servant ...  
Enter into the  
joy of your Lord  
Matthew 25:21 (NKJV)



*The trustees of TBF Trust would like to devote this issue of our newsletter to remembering with thankfulness the life of our beloved founder and chairman, Dr Patrick Sookhdeo. He was taken Home to glory on 18 May 2026. We rejoice that he is in the presence of the Lord he loved so dearly and served so faithfully.*

# Patrick Sookhdeo 1947-2026

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In more than half a century of full-time Christian work, Patrick and his wife Rosemary started many organisations, but the first was TBF Trust, a charity established in 1976. Originally called “In Contact Trust”, it provided a structure for the holistic grass-roots ministry in multicultural inner-city London which the young couple had begun the previous year. Later the focus of TBF Trust changed and it embraced other roles, including aid for persecuted Christians.

**You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide (John 15:16)**

Patrick grew up in Guyana, South America. It was a simple lifestyle and a remarkably diverse society. His Guyanese childhood embedded in Patrick the certainty that human beings of different races and faiths could live together in harmony and mutual respect: he had experienced it himself. As a young child, he was already concerned with the issue of suffering, for example reading books on the Holocaust. Although a Muslim, he developed a great love for the Christian cross, and he knew what it was for God to answer prayers in a miraculous way.

When Patrick was 12, he moved with his family to the UK. The Sookhdeos settled in London, initially in great poverty and facing blatant discrimination and racism, for this was before the 1968 Race Relations Act. Patrick and his brother

were the only non-white boys in their school. They were beaten up almost daily by their classmates.

The school attended by the Sookhdeo boys was not one whose pupils normally passed public exams, but both brothers pressed on with their studies after leaving school. Around this time, Patrick became a Christian. It was because of a sports injury that one Sunday he found himself – unusually – with nothing to do. He remembered the visit of a London City Missionary who had knocked on the door of the Sookhdeo family home, chatted with him about cricket and invited him to church services. Patrick began to attend the little church, expecting the worst because he believed that all Christians were hypocrites. But the elderly congregation bore lovingly with his hostile questions, and he found that their deeds matched their words. They gave him a Bible. For six months Patrick read Isaiah 53 and chapters 13 to 17 of John’s Gospel, praying for God to reveal Himself. His previous hatred for Jesus turned to love and he realised that he was a Christian.

Thus it was that, on the first day of his first job, Patrick placed his Bible on the desk assigned to him. The boss called him to the front and said, “Either that book goes or you go.” Patrick did not remove the Bible. He brought it again the next day and the next. After a week, he was still in his job, the Bible was still on his desk, and no more threats were made.

It was not only at work that Patrick faced opposition. Like most who leave Islam to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, Patrick suffered the pain of rejection by his family. He even endured a period of homelessness on the streets of London, when neither relatives nor Christians would help him. But many years later he had the joy of baptising his parents.

### **Do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5)**

Even as a very new believer, Patrick was active in sharing his faith. He gave out tracts daily at the underground train station on his way to and from work. Despite a stammer, he preached in the street, taking as his theme the title of whatever film was showing at the nearby cinema.

From 1967 to 1969 he attended London Bible College, where he met Rosemary who had come from New Zealand to study there. They married in 1969. Their desire to go overseas as missionaries was thwarted because their racially-mixed marriage was unacceptable to mission societies at that time. But Patrick was able to preach in churches and evangelistic events up and down the UK.

At one Brethren church where he spoke, Patrick met a retired accountant, Mr Moscrop, who became his beloved "Uncle Leslie", a mentor, benefactor and father-figure to the young Christian workers, Patrick and Rosemary. Although Mr Moscrop died in 1983, Patrick continued to remember him with deep fondness and admiration, to recall his advice and try to apply it for the rest of his life.

Many years later Patrick found another dear father in Christ (1 Corinthians 4:15). It was Patriarch

## **Gazing at each other**

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On His beloved face I gaze  
Wracked by anguish and sorrow,  
Yet those eyes full of tenderness  
Are fixed on me,

On me who caused the pain  
And shared in the cruelty  
Yet there is naught but love  
For a sinner such as me.

What was it that led You there,  
My Lord, to that cruel cross of hope  
To suffer such agony?  
True love, undying love for me.

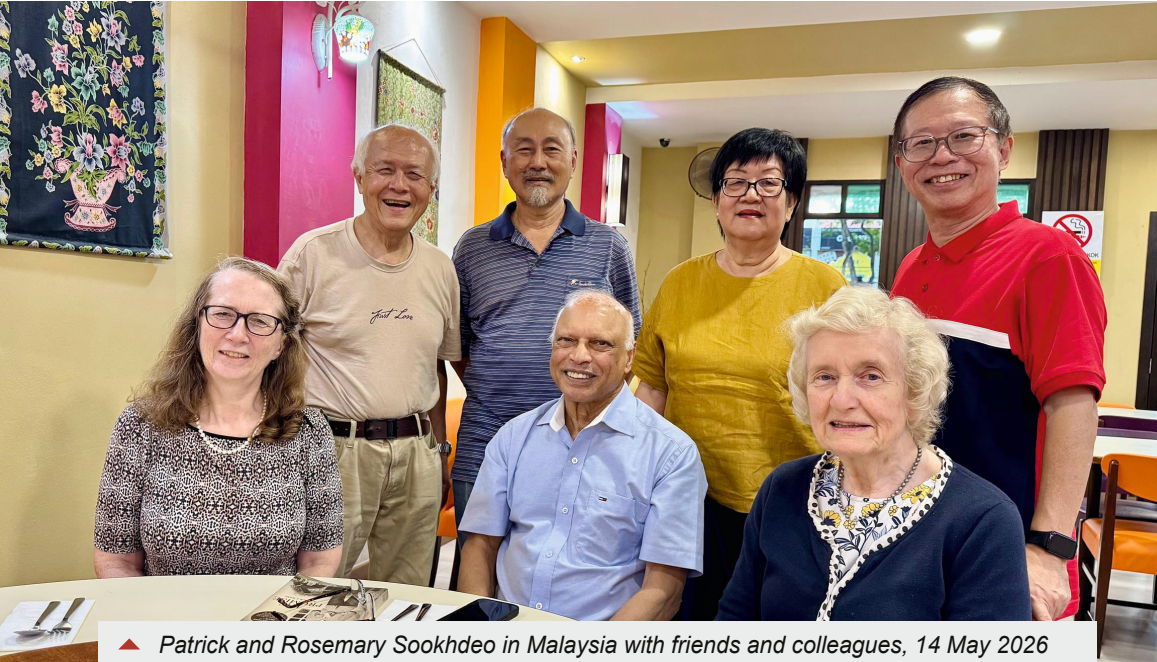
As you, my Beloved, gaze on me  
Your compassion captures my heart  
And rapture fills my soul  
For You, my precious Lord.

My Beloved's gaze, fall on me  
When I my last dying breath will take,  
By faith let me clasp Your dying form  
As your loving gaze  
welcomes me home.

■ Patrick Sookhdeo

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Source: *With the Eye of Faith: Meditations and Prayers*, Patrick Sookhdeo, Isaac Publishing, 2020, page 148, at [www.tinyurl.com/4xy6r9n4](http://www.tinyurl.com/4xy6r9n4)



▲ Patrick and Rosemary Sookhdeo in Malaysia with friends and colleagues, 14 May 2026

Zakka I, the Syriac Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East. For, with his roots in the Brethren assemblies, his eyes on Jesus and his mind filled with the Word of God, Patrick was always eager to learn and grow in the Lord. Over the years, he had contact with many churches and denominations. He was honoured by senior church roles in the Church of Pakistan and the Church of Nigeria. But one other Church was to take a very special place in his life. After a service conducted by Patriarch Zakka in Syriac (Aramaic, the language spoken by the Lord Jesus on earth), Patrick found to his astonishment that the Patriarch had made him a Cor Episcopos in the Syriac Orthodox Church. No one had expected it but, said Patriarch Zakka after the service, “the Holy Spirit told me to, so what else could I do?”

**We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10)**

The Lord blessed Patrick with a diverse human heritage and experience, which equipped him for his unique Christian ministry. His childhood made him Caribbean, his adulthood British. He identified through his mother’s forebears as a Pashtun from Pakistan, his father’s family were Hindus from across India, and DNA testing revealed that Patrick also had Nigerian ancestry. In Egypt he was taken for an Egyptian, in Ethiopia an Ethiopian. During the last week of his life, spent with Chinese Christians in Malaysia, Patrick said that he felt more at home there than anywhere else. He also felt a special bond of affection with Armenian Christians, who suffered so much in the genocide of the early 20th century. He treasured his relationship with their gracious Catholicos Karekin II.

Another unusual way in which the Lord equipped Patrick for ministry was his gift of being able to analyse events in geo-politics and society, to compare and contrast, to see patterns, and so to predict the next few years. Patrick often

said, "I am not a prophet." He meant he did not have a supernatural gift of prophecy. Yet it was surely a God-given natural gift, and one which he used freely and generously. His foresight enabled him to be a pioneer in many areas of Christian ministry. He was generous in advice to all who came to him. He also made his skills available to security and military.

Add to these his compassionate and pastoral heart. Patrick loved caring for others. A TBF Trust staff member recalls how Patrick's eyes filled with tears as they spoke together about the plight of Christians in Pakistan. Add also his energy; his administrative skills; his ability to look at strategic overview and detailed tactics; his flexibility, creativity and boldness; his integrity and self-sacrifice. Ministry was not a 9-to-5 job for Patrick but a whole-life calling. He did not want a salary, preferring to "live by faith", that is, depending on God to provide for his needs through the gifts of other Christians.

With these skills, and prayerfully seeking the Lord's guidance all the time, Patrick was led through many areas of ministry. Early on there was race and his first book *All One in Christ*, published in 1974.

Then the focus moved to urban ministry, as Patrick and Rosemary planted churches, bringing evangelists and missionaries from outside the UK to work with In Contact in various British cities. The fruits of this included the multicultural congregation at St Andrew's, Plaistow, in east London, and a network of Tamil churches which now number more than 60 across the UK. There was also a training ministry, a Christian bookshop and ministries that provided practical care for the poor and vulnerable.

**And the King will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40)**

Through the 1980s Patrick was involved with the Lausanne Movement and the World Evangelical Alliance. This included developing a network of links with Christian leaders in Muslim-majority countries. From this came a pivotal conference in Cyprus in 1989 about the persecution of Christians.

At that time, religious liberty focused on the communist world, and little was known in the West about the suffering of Christians under Islam. Patrick therefore created the Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity to research and publicise the plight of Christians in Islamic contexts. He also tried to persuade existing Christian agencies to give practical help. But there was almost no interest. Eventually, therefore, in 1993, he and Rosemary started Barnabas Fund (now called Barnabas Aid) to raise funds for suffering Christians. From the beginning there was a particular concern for those who suffered because they had left another religion to follow Christ. Another early priority was leadership training.

Patrick's vision to help specifically Christians was unusual at the time, but he often quoted Jesus' words to His disciples: "Love one another as I have loved you" (John 13:34). He called this Jesus' fourth command to love, for we must love (1) God (2) our neighbours (3) our enemies (4) other Christians.

It was not only a Biblical command but also an effective methodology. In many parts of the world where Barnabas Fund sent assistance there was great suspicion of Christians helping non-Christians. But Christians helping



## A tribute from India

The Patrick I saw was indeed Christlike.

Godly brokenness inside, and divine bravery outside.

He was unique.

I am blessed to have been associated with him in following the Lord.

*Sam, a friend from India*

fellow-Christians was considered natural and proper.

Another aspect of Patrick's pioneering leadership was that Barnabas Fund gave grants to local Christian ministries or local churches to finance projects they themselves were running. It did not send in outsiders to do the work. This kept overheads low and, in sensitive contexts, avoided unwanted attention. Others have now adopted the same methodology, but it was unusual in 1993.

### **Keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:25 NIV)**

Despite leaving school with almost no qualifications, Patrick was accepted to study for a PhD at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies and gained his doctorate in 2000. Training other Christians and passing on his knowledge and skills had been part of Patrick's ministry since the early years of In Contact. Now he became increasingly involved in academia. In the last years of his life he was Executive Director of the Oxford Centre for Religion and Public Life (OCRPL), helping it expand its theological training to cover everything from grass-roots pastors to PhDs.


Patrick was the author, co-author or editor of more than 40 books plus numerous booklets and articles. The next book he hoped to write was to have been about the Sermon on the Mount.

His mind always teemed with new ideas. Many have been left unfinished or even unstarted, for his Homecall was sudden and unexpected. He threw all his energies into caring for others, especially persecuted Christians, while enduring his own share of persecution. But now he is enjoying his great reward in heaven (Matthew 5:11-12).

We mourn Patrick and we miss him deeply but we do not grieve as those who are without hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13). We rejoice at his wonderful work and legacy, praying that we may worthily continue it. We rejoice that he is at peace, troubled no more by the false accusations which caused him so much emotional pain during his earthly life or the bodily sickness of recent years.

Please pray for Rosemary Sookhdeo, their daughters and grand-children, colleagues, TBF Trust supporters and Patrick's wide network of friends around the world.

To God be the glory!

 *The board of trustees of TBF Trust  
June 2026*

*In the last years of his life, Patrick's thoughts dwelt much on the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5 to 7), the heart of Jesus' teaching. He thought especially about the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12), which he called the heart of the heart of Jesus' teaching.*

## Blessing in the wilderness

The Beatitudes tell us that a blessed happiness can come, amongst other sources, from poverty of spirit, mourning, and being persecuted and falsely accused. Such deep spiritual truths are like the cow's grass – they can only be absorbed, digested and appropriated by chewing them over in the Lord's presence through long meditation and prayer.

The blessing described in the Beatitudes is gained during our time as believers on earth, which is an in-between time. We have left Egypt, the land of oppression and bondage, and crossed the Red Sea, our conversion and baptism, but we have not yet entered the Promised Land, heaven. We are in the wilderness, a place of wandering, a dangerous place fraught with conflict, with gruelling hardships and suffering, and with many doubts and temptations. The soul journeying through this life will experience not only sin and failure but also faith and joy, not only periods of deep darkness but also mountain-top experiences. John Bunyan wrote brilliantly of this in his 1678 book

Pilgrim's Progress. But if we view the negative experiences with the eye of faith, we make them positives. We discover, like Bunyan's Christian, that the lions are chained. We realise, like Bunyan's Mr Valiant-for-Truth, that our scars are badges of honour, a precious witness to the spiritual battles we have fought in the wilderness, through which our faith has been strengthened and purified. We come to understand that the struggles of our wilderness journey are a blessing that enable us to grow in the knowledge of God and to still our restless hearts; they can, indeed, bring us the bliss of the Beatitudes...

May God bless us all as we follow in the steps of our Lord Jesus, journeying together to our heavenly Home, learning from one another and from His Spirit, and may He satisfy our longings with that vision of Himself.

■ Patrick Sookhdeo

Source: *With the Eye of Faith: Meditations and Prayers*, Patrick Sookhdeo, Isaac Publishing, 2020, pages xiv-xv, at [www.tinyurl.com/4xy6r9n4](http://www.tinyurl.com/4xy6r9n4)



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*Front cover image: The Very Rev. Cor Episcopos Professor Patrick Sookhdeo, Ph.D., D.D.*

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from The ESV Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version)

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# “ TRIBUTES

See also

[rememberingpatricksookhdeo.org](http://rememberingpatricksookhdeo.org)

“Some losses cannot be easily expressed, and some bonds of brotherhood leave a mark upon the soul. Our dear brother Patrick was such a man. His faith, courage, clarity, love for the Lord, and deep commitment to the Body of Christ will remain with us. His voice, his witness, and his example will not be forgotten. Patrick fought the good fight. He stood his ground. He remained faithful even when faithfulness was costly. He carried the truth of the Gospel with courage and humility. He loved Jesus, the Word of God, and the people of God. In a very special way, I will always remember his love and concern for believers from Muslim backgrounds. He stood with us, encouraged us, strengthened us, and gave dignity and attention to many of us whom many others overlooked.” *Bishop Yassir Eric, presiding bishop over the Anglican Church’s Global Ekkios diocese for Muslim Background Believers, Trustee of OCRPL*

“What an exceptional intellect the world has lost! Nonetheless, we express gratitude to God for loaning him to the world and the contribution he has made to this world. We have all benefited from Dr. Patrick. We are what we are today because of what God allowed him to do for us.” *Rev. Dr Lydia Kitayimbwa, Church of Uganda Chaplain of Makerere University, Trustee of OCRPL*

“I have been richly blessed and my ministry had been deeply affected by the work of OCRPL and Dr. Sookhdeo. I am grateful for a life used to open my eyes and bring awareness to many of us in the Caribbean.” *Pastor Cranston Knowles, Abundant Life Bible Church, The Bahamas*

“His faithful dedication, compassionate service, and unwavering commitment to Christ’s mission in the Middle East touched countless lives and brought hope to many during difficult times... We remain grateful for his life, his humble service, and the enduring legacy of faith and love he leaves behind.” *Rosangela Jarjour, General Secretary, Fellowship of Middle East Evangelical Churches, Lebanon*

“He was a man of deep faith, truth, sincerity, kindness, courage, transparency, and accountability. Throughout his life, he extended his hands of love and service to churches around the world and to suffering humanity in areas of distress and persecution. Living with little for himself, he sacrificed his health, comfort, and personal interests so that millions might experience dignity, healing, hope, and a better future.” *Dr. Theophilose Kuriakose Metropolitan, President & Resident Metropolitan of Malankara Syrian Orthodox Theological Seminary, India*

“His commitment to evangelism, healing, justice, and the defence of vulnerable believers leaves behind a legacy that will continue to inspire generations... He often called for the WCC to get involved in peace initiatives and human rights issues believing that we have the credibility and ability to make a difference to create a better world filled with peace, harmony and love.” *Rev. Prof. Dr Jerry Pillay, General Secretary, World Council of Churches*

“An incredible man of God, a blessing to Christianity and mankind. May his gentle soul rest in perfect peace.” *Rev. Fred George, Nigeria, Methodist pastor and PhD student with OCRPL*