



NEWSLETTER

THE G-FORCE OF EASTER



In Christian history the letter 'G' symbolises the Holy Spirit – the presence of God, His light and power in a dark and wayward world.

It is therefore notable that the places to which Jesus went as He fulfilled the will of His Father on that first Easter each begin with the letter 'G'.

God's Spirit is present in Jesus' every word, His every step, His every action, as He fulfils the will of His Father as the promised Messiah. His very willingness to be 'Christ', the suffering servant, who through His life and death carries the sins of the world, gives every person the opportunity to shed the burden of individual sin and to make a new start in their lives with God's Spirit behind them. **Jesus became the G-force which changes the world!** He enables His followers, who put their trust in Him, to live within the gravity of this world whilst being pulled closer into the heart of God's love. (John 3:16)

It is that dynamic which is evermore a saving grace amidst a broken world – a populous who, left to our own devices, pursue self interest and pride at the expense of others and who often lived in defiance of the justice, morality, freedom and the outrageous love that God intends.

Gethsemane



Nestling at the foot of the Mount of Olives is an olive tree grove called, “Gethsemane.” The gospel writers describe this place as a “garden” (John 18:1). Gethsemane means “oil press” in Aramaic and a number of olive trees that are in that garden today are old enough to have witnessed the presence of Jesus and His disciples.

Soon after taking His last meal with His disciples Jesus enters the garden to pray. He

takes with Him Peter, James and John (those same disciples who had been with Him on mount Tabor, near Galilee, when He was transfigured with a spiritual radiance shared with Moses and Elijah) and He urges them to stay awake with Him as He prays.

It is in Gethsemane that Jesus surrenders His will and lays down His life. As He falls to His knees, He experiences overwhelming sadness and anguish, praying: **“My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me.”** He refers, of course, to the cup of suffering He faces. **“Yet, not as I will, but as You will.”** (Matthew 26:39)

In between rousing His sleeping disciples Jesus prays three times:

“My Father, if it is not possible, for this cup be taken from me unless I drink it; Your will be done.” (Matthew 26:42)

The agony of that prayer made His sweat seem as drops of blood.

He then instructs His disciples to get up and prepare themselves.

A few moments later He is arrested by a posse of chief priests and elders from the Sanhedrin.

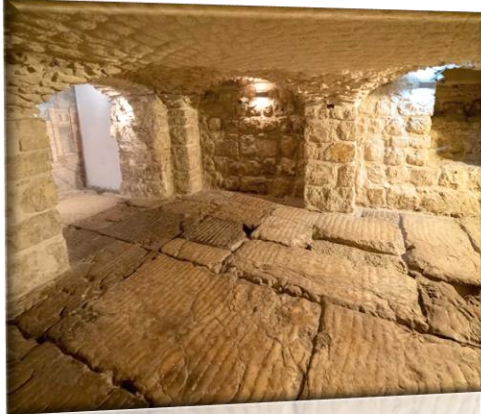
Gethsemane is the place of prayer and yielding to the will of God.

It was here that Jesus was betrayed by Judas with a kiss.

It was at Gethsemane that the ‘flesh’ was crucified.

Matthew 26: 36-56 Mark 14: 32-51 Luke 22: 39-53 John 18: 1-14

Gabbatha



Gabbatha is the Aramaic name for the place in Jerusalem (the *Lithostrōtos* in Greek or stone pavement) where Jesus is tried before Pilate, the Roman governor of Judaea, who sat on the judgement seat. Jesus is questioned on the claim that He is the 'king of the Jews' and remains silent at the charge laid before Him. Then, Pilate calls together the chief priests and the crowd and says: "You brought this man to me as one who was inciting the crowds but, like king Herod, I

could find no basis for a charge against Him. He doesn't deserve death." But the crowds' cry: "Release Barabbas!" - an offender who has incited insurrection and committed murder. And, though Pilate wants to release Jesus, the crowds just keep crying: "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Jesus is taken away and flogged.

Gabbatha is the place of being condemned by the world.

Jesus took the place of a condemned and wicked sinner.

It was here that the innocent stood in place of the **g**uilty.

Matthew 27: 11-26 Mark 15: 1-15 Luke 23: 1-25 John 18: 28 - 19:16a

Golgotha



Golgotha is a hill like no other. Just outside of the city walls of Jerusalem, it came to be known as the "hill of the skull." The Greek word for Golgotha is "kranion." That's where the English word "cranium" or "skull" came from. (The Latin translation of Golgotha is "calvaria," which translates in English as "calvary." Hence, Golgotha is also referred to as Calvary).

What had begun when Jesus surrendered Himself to God's will in Gethsemane is fulfilled in His subsequent suffering and ultimate death at Golgotha.

He carries His cross beam (*the patibulum*) towards the barren hill until he falls under its weight, whereafter Simon of Cyrene is forced from the crowd to bear it behind Him. Jesus is taken with two criminals to the place of execution and to the cross – a punishment reserved for slaves, disgraced soldiers, and aliens under Rome's jurisdiction. Stripped of His clothing He is bound fast with outstretched arms and nailed firmly to the patibulum through His hands. This is then raised up high against the upright stanion (*the stipe*) and made fast some three metres from the ground. Then His feet are tightly bound or nailed to the stipe. While His mother, aunt and the disciple, John, look on, others mock, and soldiers cast lots for His seamless robe.

Through the agony He still reaches out to others: A cry for forgiveness for His executioners who 'know not what they are doing'; to His mother that she should be cared for; to the criminals on either side, assuring the one who professed fear of God that he would be with Him in Paradise.

Knowing that most of His closest friends had abandoned him out of fear as He awaits execution, He stands alone. And in His darkest moment, as He dies on the cross, Jesus feels abandoned:

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

"I thirst."

"It is finished."

"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

His work on earth is finished.

At that moment the heavy veil in the temple in Jerusalem is torn from top to bottom.

Golgotha is the place of death: when Jesus died every last shred of the sin that features in human nature was crucified.

The blood of Christ cleanses sin and the memory of sin.

The debt had been paid; the way back to God is now open for all who repent and trust in Him.

Matthew 27: 32-66	Mark 15: 16-32	Luke 23: 26-49	John 19: 16a-37
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The Garden Tomb



Close to the place of Jesus' crucifixion is the garden owned by a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea. He provides a newly cut tomb in this garden "where no corpse had been laid before" and it is here that Jesus's body is quickly laid before the evening sacrifice meal of the Passover Festival. It is not possible for the women to complete the cleansing and embalming of His body with spices and nard until the Sabbath is over and so it is on the first day of the week that they

come to fulfil that ritual.

To their amazement, the heavy stone which blocks the entrance and keeps wild animals at bay has been rolled away. The three women, confronted with something they were not expecting, are utterly confused. Was it a trick of the early morning light. The tomb was empty. The gospel of Mark suggests they were more than perplexed. They were frightened and fled!

Mary Magdalene ran to call Peter and John to see for themselves: "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put Him," she said.

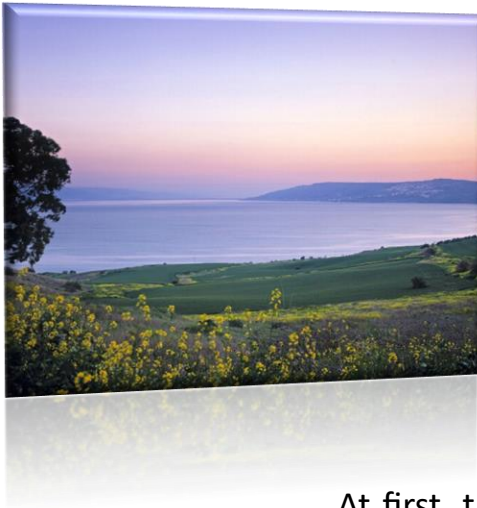
Not long after the disciples have themselves confirmed what the women are saying, Mary returns alone to the garden. Crying, she meets two angels seated where Jesus's body had been. They tell her the news that has rung down the ages since "He is not here – he has risen from the dead!"

Mary turns away and sees Jesus in the garden (though at first she does not recognise Him and thinks it is the gardener). In speaking He is made known to her; and sometime later He appears to the disciples who are in a room 'behind closed doors because of fear of the Jews'. There He tells them He will meet them again.

The **G**arden Tomb is the place of resurrection: the Risen Christ.

"For I know that my redeemer lives, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And . . . in my flesh shall I see God" (Job 19:25-26).

Galilee



Galilee is the familiar territory where Jesus shared His ministry with His disciples. The Sea of Galilee or Lake Tiberius is the lowest freshwater lake on earth and it became their fishing ground. Jesus has told His disciples to go the Galilee and wait for Him there; and while they are waiting Simon Peter decides to get back to fishing on the lake. He takes others with Him and after a fruitless night with little caught Jesus appears to them on the seashore.

At first, they do not recognise Him but He engages with them in a conversation about the failed night's catch. "Throw your net over the other side" says Jesus and you will find some fish. And, when they do so, the catch is stupendous in its number. At that moment John recognises Jesus and says "It is the Lord" and the disciples step into the water and greet Him on the beach where they breakfast together on fish they have caught. It was the third time Jesus had appeared to them and the miracle of His resurrection is realised.

Galilee is the place where Jesus manifested Himself: Manifesting Christ.

"After that He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep."

Matthew 28: 16-20 John 21: 1-14 Acts 1: 3-5 1 Corinthians 15: 3-8

There couldn't have been a Golgotha without a Gethsemane - for it is at Gethsemane that Jesus' self is crucified.

There couldn't have been a Golgotha without the unrighteousness of Gabatha - where the sin of betrayal is conflated with the sin of human power, selfishness, and pride.

There couldn't have been a Garden Tomb without a Golgotha -

for Jesus' selfless sacrifice to bear the failings of humanity is the setting in which God demonstrates resurrection power over death itself.

There couldn't have been a Galilee in which Jesus made himself manifest, demonstrating to His disciples that He really is empowering them to go out in the Spirit to bring ordinary men, women and children back to God, **without the G force that went before.**

And the story doesn't end there. Weeks later Jesus meets His disciples again in Bethany on the south-eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, about two miles from Jerusalem (Luke 24:50-51 & Acts 1:9).

From this mountain He ascends to:



and is seated at the right hand of God the Father. "And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven." (Lukw 24: 51)

Jesus "is at the right hand of God and interceding for us." (Romans 8:34) Jesus is our "advocate with the Father." (1 John 2:1).

Jesus "always lives to intercede" for us. (Hebrews 7:25).

Hallelujah!

Hallelujah!

Joyous Praise in **G**od's great Goodness!

Hallelujah!

Hallelujah!

R.A.Torrey, the nineteenth century theologian and preacher, wrote:

**"We must know the power of the blood of Jesus
if we are to know the power of God".**

Our knowing experientially the G-force of **His Word**;

the G-Force of **the Holy Spirit**

& the G-force of **Prayer** is dependent upon
our knowing the cleansing power of the blood of Christ in our lives.

To Him be the GLORY!

A word from our Pastor - With grateful thanks to God.



Just a few weeks ago we celebrated our two year anniversary as a Church. Two years during which we have had many opportunities to remember the goodness of God.

In addition, on Sunday the 25th February, we were able to announce that our application for a grant, from our mother church, towards employing a lay- pastor has been approved. Thank you to Andrew and Phil for their hard work in this.

Reflecting on the past two years my overriding sense of thankfulness is for the way that God has bound us together as a fellowship, having a very special relationship one with another. This can only be a gift of the Holy Spirit and is a gift that we must not waste. It is so easy to slip back into old ways of 'doing church' and of this we must be constantly aware.

I have a sense that we are only at the beginning of what God wants to do amongst us as we open ourselves up to him in our 'Times for God'. We must, with courage and boldness, allow Him to be at work in our midst, in the way that He would want to be and, as He was in the days of the early church.

I sense a great expectation for us as we pursue God's agenda for us into the future and as we seek to serve Him as servants of His Kingdom. To use some words of John Wesley, spoken at the end of his life; I am convinced that 'the best is yet to come'.

I pray that this will be so for us.

Yours in Christ.

Rev George. Pastor

Preaching Plan

The new Preaching Plan, April to June is now published. This includes a continuation of our “Going Deeper with Prayer” series and our celebration of Pentecost.

You will see that we have invited back a number of our preacher friends who have been with us in the past including Rev. Dr David Hull, lead pastor at Freedom Church Bristol, who will join us in

June. **Do please continue to use the new Freedom Church Wiltshire postcards** as a way to invite others to join us in our worship week by week. It has been so good to welcome visitors in recent days.



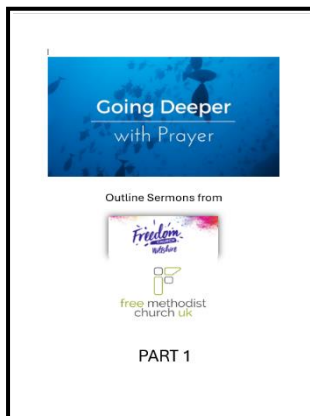
Prayer Resources

Each Sunday on the table at the back of the hall we have laid out resources on Prayer which we hope will be useful. To date, these have primarily been produced by our preachers. However, we would like to extend an invitation across the church: If you have used a prayer or prayer resource which you have found particularly helpful; or, if you have written a prayer which you would like to share please bring these with you and make them available to others on this table. If you would like copies made of any such items please talk to a member of the leadership team as we have printing facilities available.

We are all learning together as we pray – and we will never stop learning such is the graciousness of God and the wonder of all that there is to learn of His wisdom and His ways. Paul writes:

“I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.” Ephesians 1:16

Prayer Sermons



Since September we have been continuing our theme of 'Going Deeper with Prayer' in the services of worship led by our own preachers. We are grateful for the positive and helpful feedback we have had to the teaching and preaching on this important theme in our Christian lives.

As a help to we are producing summaries of our sermons in a booklet called 'Going Deeper with Prayer'. The first edition of this booklet will be available from Easter, and it is planned to produce a similar second edition in the summer.

These will be available on our Prayer Table for you to take copies both for yourself and other who you feel might benefit from using them.

Testimony to answered prayer

"I thank you for answering my prayer and giving me victory!"

-Psalm 118:21 NLT

We welcome the sharing of what God is saying to us in our 'Time for God' (Ministry time) in worship. It is an encouragement to us all when God enables this to happen.

In addition to this if you have had an experience of God answering prayer, please share it by asking the preacher if you can take a moment in worship time or by sharing it with a member of the leadership team who will relay it in our worship time together.

Prayers for Belarusian Churches

In the Revelation of John (the last book of our Bible) John saw the 7 churches of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) and God's encouragement and rebuke of those churches. There is no doubt that these would have been churches for which John in his latter years prayed.



Praying for other churches in their challenges, vulnerabilities and journeys with the Lord is a privilege.

We too are able to pray for the 7 churches of Belarus which we know. And, we thank God that they are praying for us.

Re-registration is a periodic requirement for all churches in Belarus and often comes with an order which is costly, especially for the small house churches with a low membership. They often cannot afford to make the recommended changes and improvements and so are threatened with closure.

All the churches are very active in mission; running children's holiday camps, craft, and bible clubs. These are very popular and often provide child-care and food for poor families. Children are often left to fend for themselves while both parents go to work in factories. The churches often ask us to pray that the young people they meet at the clubs and camps might become church members and take an active role in the life of the Church.

In Smorgan they await with excitement the arrival of Arina and Andrei's first baby.

In Zaslavl, Ira, (who is profoundly deaf) is hoping for new hearing aids and already some in our church have been prompted, through prayer, to contribute to the massive cost of these aids which will enable her to resume a normal life.

Health care is good in Belarus, but very different to the UK. Recently 6 of Sergey and Tanya's children went to stay in the sanatorium – our equivalent to a health farm.

There are many treatments and therapies available like sauna, massage and swimming. The children's health benefits greatly and they have school classes while they are there. Many children will go to these after a period of illness or, if they are fostered. Many will go there for respite care, so that the parents have a break. All basic health care is free, and better services can be bought including the flying doctor – who arrives by fast car or air!

The children who endure the greatest difficulties are those in the state orphanages, those with disabilities and the economically poor, particularly where alcoholism and drug addiction are ingrained in the parent's or grandparent's lives.

Dental treatment is free for children but for adults is very expensive. However it is relatively cheaper than the UK and, before the present political restrictions Europeans have sometimes travelled to Belarus for their dental treatment, especially implants and crowns.

In Belarus, all children can access kindergarten from the age of 3, and most parents take advantage of this and go back to work. School starts at the age of 7, which seems very late to us! The schools operate a 3-tier system rather like our school some 50 years ago. Often the children from poorer families go to the lowest tier - but if they are able to work hard and score well in the regular test and exams – they can graduate higher. College is possible for all students, and they take this very seriously – there is training for many job roles that we do not have such as shop assistants and labourers. University is possible for those that are in the top tier – and all education is free.

Two visits to Wiltshire are planned in the near future: We hope to welcome Matvei with his wife Ani and daughter Abi and also Matvei's brother Tima with his wife Liza. They will of course come to our Church and share in our worship.

‘Thy Kingdom Come’: 9th – 19th May 2024

Thy Kingdom Come (TKC) is a global ecumenical prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray from Ascension to Pentecost for more people to come to know Jesus.

Since it began in May 2016, God has grown TKC from a dream of possibility into a movement which unites more than a million Christians in prayer, in nearly 90% of countries worldwide, across 85 different denominations and traditions- so that friends and family, neighbours and colleagues might come to faith in Jesus Christ.

Every person, household and church are encouraged to pray during the 11 days in their own way.

It is our hope & prayer, that those who have not yet heard the Good News of Jesus Christ and His love for the world, will hear it for themselves and respond and follow Him.

Specifically, we again invite **each and every** Christian across the globe to pray that God’s Spirit might work in the lives of 5 people who have not responded with their ‘Yes’ to God’s call.

Whether you have joined in ‘Thy Kingdom Come’ before or not, we invite you to take part & join in.

“In praying ‘Thy Kingdom Come’ we all commit to playing our part in the renewal of the nations and the transformation of communities.” Archbishop Justin Welby



Away Day – Thy Kingdom Come

On **Saturday 11th May** we have arranged to go to **‘The Orchard Room’ at Sundeley Hill Farm, Brinkworth** from 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. This is the venue we used in June last year for our time with Derek and Hilary Balsdon: ‘Listening to God’.

This year we hope to have an inspiring morning - there will be refreshments, a time of worship and prayer as well as a church family lunch together. Please earmark this in your diary.

Music Ministry

In the two years we have been together as FCW we have grown in many ways. Musically we have recently been very blessed by members of our congregation becoming part of the Music ministry and by visiting musicians. This has enriched our worship and I have very much enjoyed working with both musicians and singers. Our services have been enhanced by several solos which have been appreciated by us all.



Our congregation may be small but our singing has been heartfelt and strong. Whilst we have a preference for Wesley hymns with their powerful lyrics, and 1980s Mission Praise worship songs with memorable and singable tunes we are also fully embracing the more contemporary songs of Hillsong and Bethel music.

As we move forward, and we develop and grow our confidence in the Lord, I hope and pray that there will be more folk wishing to be involved in music so that we can share and rotate opportunities for different musicians to lead worship. It will be exciting to embrace new styles and new songs.

My songs of the month

Although I am trained as a professional musician, it is not always the technically challenging songs that speak to me.

Recently I sang 'Lay Your hands' a song by Rev. Carey Landry. Its words are simple but so profound:

***Lay Your hands gently upon us.
Let their touch render Your peace.
Let them bring Your forgiveness and healing.
Lay Your hands, gently lay Your hands.***

Whilst I was singing this I visualised and experienced the loving hands of Jesus wrapping around the congregation.

Similarly, I am moved by 'O rest in the Lord' (the aria sung by an angel in Mendelssohn's Elijah. It is derived from Psalm 37:

***O rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him,
Commit Thy way unto Him and trust in Him
And He shall give you Thy heart's desires.***

Both songs are not a part of our usual repertoire, but their words speak powerfully to us in the reassurance that they give. As we have been learning more about prayer for me the words have taken on a new significance. They clearly tell me that if we pray with conviction our prayer will be answered, but the lyrics also remind us that it is a two-way thing. The deal is that we wait patiently and trust in Him. These songs reflect the way I feel that, in God's hands, all will be well; when things are difficult - perhaps we are ill, perhaps someone close to us has died, whatever the circumstance – we should not aim to do things in our own strength but need to hand the problem or situation over in prayer. For it is then that God will take care of it.

Fiona

Annual Society Meeting

From this year we are following the tradition of the Free Methodist Church UK (FMCUK) and holding an Annual Society Meeting. This will take place at Pentecost on **Sunday 19th May 2024 at 12 noon** and will be an opportunity for us to share together on what God is doing with us and where He is leading us as a Church fellowship.

Prior to that meeting, and guided by the FMCUK, the leadership team has appointed a **Nominating Task Group** (comprising two members of the leadership team and one from the wider membership) who will hold individual conversations with all our members. In this they will explore the composition of the leadership team, the individual giftings within our church and the possible positions of responsibility for ministry and mission in the church from the beginning of our next Church year (from September).

This task group will bring proposals to the Annual Society Meeting for prayer and discussion, allowing us time between then and September to plan our way forward. Please pray for the work of this group and that, through the Holy Spirit, our Annual Society Meeting will be a time of great blessing.

Please make attendance at the Annual Society Meeting a priority so that we can ensure that we not only continue to walk in the footsteps of Jesus but do so together and aware of how we each contribute to the life of our church.

A part-time Pastor for our Church

We rejoice in God's bounty having received the news that Kingdom Builders, the charitable Trust of the Free Methodist Church UK (FMCUK), have awarded us the grant for which we applied towards the employment of a Part-time Pastor.

In these coming days we will work with FMCUK by praying, advertising and, in His grace, seeking to appoint His chosen person to this role.

Please share your views, and the guidance you receive from the Holy Spirit, on the person we should be looking for. A good way of doing this would be as part of your discussion with a member of the Nominating Task Group (See: Annual Society Meeting above).

Mission

We were able to report in our Christmas newsletter that, through the generous giving of members nearly £2,000 in the Autumn was given in support of **Christians against Poverty (CAP), Missionary Aviation**

Fellowship (MAF), and the Swindon Food Collective in addition to the **Harvest dry foods collection through Barnabas Fund** and the **Samaritan's Purse Christmas Shoe Boxes.**

Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 "Each one must give as s/he has decided in his/her heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

Christmas Appeal

The Christmas Appeal raised £287.50 towards supplying ePAP which is a special maize-based porridge fortified with vitamins, minerals and protein. Two months of daily ePap is enough to cure diseases caused by a nutrient-deficient diet.

Our contribution will make a difference because it will provide 80 young children in Zimbabwe with a daily supply for 2 months.



Latest Mission Support



For our Mission support leading up to Easter we are not asking folk to give beyond the weekly collection or planned commitment. This is, in part, because we recognise that many have already made an extra commitment towards the Pastor's

fund which we pray will be the basis for our employment of a part-time, paid minister from later this year.

Instead, after prayer, the leadership team has decided that we should give 10 per cent of the general giving of our church for this period. Consequently, between now and Easter, we will make a donation from our Mission Fund to Premier Radio which broadcasts the good news of Jesus to homes across the UK and which is reliant on supporters' giving.

Local Mission



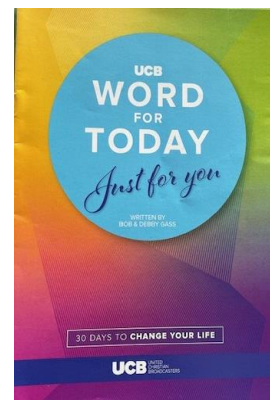
We all have the opportunity to be involved in local mission through the people we meet and the encounters we have. Sometimes it is difficult to know how to turn a conversation into an opportunity to share our experience of Jesus. Two things help in this and the first is Prayer. It is God who can create these opportunities to witness and that's why we reflect on such times as "God given".

Ask the Holy Spirit to enable a moment in which your sharing of Jesus will be of help to the person you are meeting, naming them specifically, and God will do the rest.

The second problem we have is knowing exactly what to say. In this we are reminded of Jesus' guidance to His disciples:

"do not worry about how you will speak or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will give you the words at the time as to what you should say." Luke 12:12

To help in this, and thanks to a proposal from John Smith, we are making available an introduction pack during the summer months which will comprise the Freedom Church Wiltshire card and the United Christian Broadcasters' booklet "Word for Today".



A good way forward is to give this to those we encounter; and also invite them to come and join us on a particular Sunday as we meet.

May the joy of Easter fill your heart!

George Elizabeth Lou Mike Phil Andrew Fiona

Leadership Team, Freedom Church Wiltshire

March 2024

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Frontispiece: 'The Crucifixion of Jesus' Balage Balogu, Baltimore DC

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