



NEWSLETTER



THE



WORD

became flesh

Rembrandt Harmenszoon van Rijn was a Dutch painter who lived in the 17th century in what is now the Netherlands. He is an unusual Christian hero. He loved the stories of the Bible, and would often paint himself in the scene of a Biblical story – himself identifying as a follower of Jesus or an onlooker in the crowd in the great events of the old and new testaments. He was ‘there’ at the birth and crucifixion of Jesus!!

The author and evangelist J. John writes: “What encourages me about Rembrandt is not simply his artistic brilliance; but in his artistry I find things that, as an evangelist, I admire. He values and shows us the nature of humanity.” “He shows us the Bible story”, but more, “he shows us grace. Rembrandt applied the Bible to himself.” In one of his last paintings, ‘The Return of the Prodigal Son’, Rembrandt “clearly identified with the son who has come home after a turbulent life and who receives the grace and forgiveness of the Father.”

Pray, that we, too, can identify with the Bible’s images and step into the story as we live our lives as followers of Jesus.

In spanning the Biblical story Rembrandt reminds us that the Lord Jesus Christ is “The Word”:

- present in creation at the beginning of time. **“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”** John 1v1.
- present in the birth of Jesus: **“The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.”** John 1 v14
- present as risen Lord at the right hand of God the Father until He returns: **“He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood and His name is the Word of God.”** Revelation 19 v13.

We sometimes forget that God is a God of continuity and consistency. **“Jesus Christ, (the Word), is the same yesterday and today and forever.”** Hebrews 13 v8.

As we celebrate birth of the Christ-child – God made flesh – His gift to this world to draw humanity back from sin and into His love, we should never forget that the same Jesus who walked this earth as a man, was there as part of the Godhead at the creation of the world and is still there as part of the God-head as the intercessor for our prayers and **“The same Lord, is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him.”** Romans 10 v12.

In this vein there is continuity through the birth, the ministry and the death of Jesus and His glorious resurrection. The same stars that were created at the birth of the world, shone down on the birth of the Christ-child and witnessed His suffering and death on the cross and His joyous resurrection!

A Star shone down



There was the gold from a worthy king.
There was the love that a shepherd boy did bring.
There was trust from the fisher-folk,
and faith from the lame,
with wholeness coming to the suffering.

***A star shone down on the place where the Saviour Jesus lay
And the Word from on high came clear;
A love profound cast its power on the shadow of the hour
To dispel all the doubt and fear.***

There was the fear of a tyrant's sword.
There was the life of a refugee abroad.
There was scoffing of the Pharisees,
and failure from the friends,
the garden and the cross which faced our Lord.

***A star shone down on the place where the Saviour Jesus lay
And the Word from on high came clear;
A love profound cast its power on the shadow of the hour
To dispel all the doubt and fear.***

There was a dawn with the mist of gloom.
There was the joy of the Saviour's empty tomb!
There was meeting on the seashore,
and a sharing on the road,
a living presence in the secret room.

***A star shone down on the place where the Saviour Jesus lay
And the Word from on high came clear;
A love profound cast its power on the shadow of the hour
To dispel all the doubt and fear.***

There was the sound of a rushing wind.
There are the flames of a new life from within.
There is speaking in the Spirit,
and the stillness of the Voice,
that brings forgiveness for each one who's sinned.

***A star shone down on the place where the Saviour Jesus lay
And the Word from on high came clear;
A love profound cast its power on the shadow of the hour
To dispel all the doubt and fear.***

There is the praise of a young child's voice.
There is the Church taking up the strain: "Rejoice!"
There is caring in community,
and sharing of our gifts,
the Christmas bells translating human joys!

Preaching Plan

The new Preaching Plan, January to March is now published. It includes our joint Covenant Service with St. Michael's and All Angels Brinkworth on 14th. January 2024 and it leads us through to a glorious celebration together at Easter.

Please use the new Freedom Church Wiltshire postcards as a way to invite others to join us in our worship week by week.



It is always lovely to welcome others into our worship.

The vision for our Church and a part-time pastor

Since our Church meeting on 1st October to discuss our vision and the appointment of a part-time pastor, the receipt of Covenant Forms has confirmed that we are able to go ahead and apply to the Free Methodist Church UK for grants to support the appointment of a part-time pastor. We are grateful to everyone for their prayers and support and to God for His leading and provision.

The wonderful news is that it looks likely, if we receive grant funding, we will be able to employ a pastor for 3 days per week, in excess of what we originally dreamed. God is good!

We now await the response of the Free Methodist Church, UK to our application; so please continue to pray that we might continue to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and to grow as His church.

Please continue to pray and to share with us what God is revealing to you.

Mission

Thanks you..... and thank God!

There's a wonderful verse in Proverbs 11 v24-25 which says: **"One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered."**

We have been truly blessed within our church by the generosity of spirit shown in prayer and in giving by our members. As you probably know we have been alternating our Mission giving every two months between local and overseas support. In the last 6 months we have been able to support the following:



Samaritan's Purse Christmas Shoe Box appeal 8 boxes sent
[Thanks to Elaine and Lou for organising this].



Christians against Poverty (CAP) £1,543



Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF) £ 150



Swindon Food Collective £ 300

Harvest



You share. We ship.



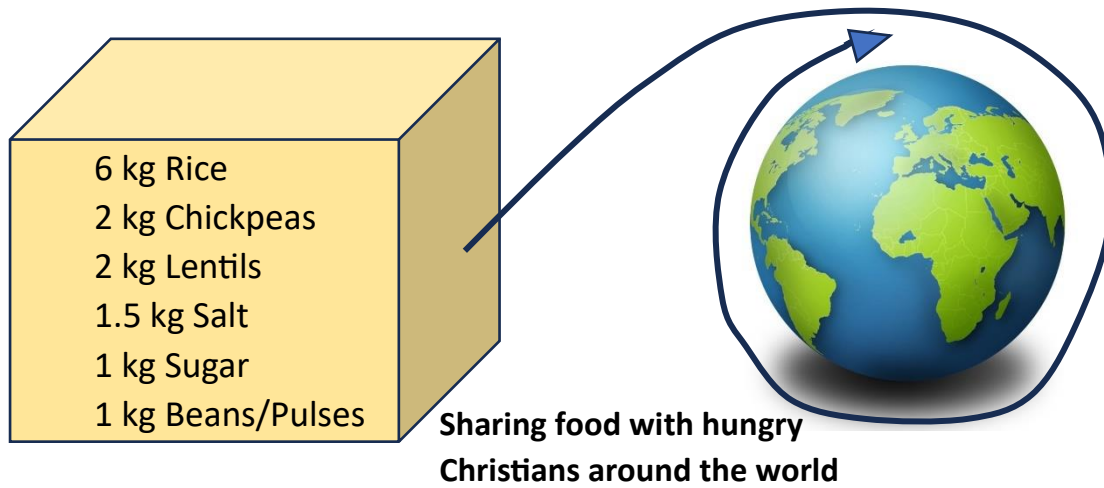
At Harvest we gave dried food to feed Christians through Barnabas Fund.

A total of 73.25 kilograms of food was given by our church:

- Rice (a mix of white, brown and basmati rice) 28.00 kilograms
- Sugar 15.00 kilograms
- Lentils 14.50 kilograms
- Chickpeas 4.50 kilograms
- Salt 7.25 kilograms
- Beans 1.00 kilograms
- Mixed lentils for soup 1.00 kilograms
- Pasta 2.00 kilograms

Several of our members were able to accept Barnabas Funds' invitation to go for a 'Taste and Share evening' on 22 October where they ate a meal made from the type of foods being shipped to our brothers and sisters who need them.

The boxes that go out each contain food which will feed a family of 4 for two weeks:



FCW Dry food giving



Single pallet of Boxes



Pallets being stacked ready for despatch to Ukraine



Our Glenys working to sort and prepare the food.

Christmas Appeal

As we again celebrate God’s grace in sending Jesus into this world we will, no doubt, this Christmas eat special food. As we do so, we recognise that many in the world and particularly on the African continent are on the verge of starvation.

Barnabas Aid works to provide hope and aid for the persecuted Church, from Christians, to Christians, through Christians and is working in Zimbabwe to distribute a new food which has been developed by the ePap Foundation to economically provide nutrition to those in need.

In the period leading up to Christmas we are hoping to support this project.



“I would feel weak. Sometimes I would sleep in class. Sometimes I could not concentrate,” explained Dudu, a young Christian girl in Zimbabwe, as she spoke to Barnabas Aid about her experience of malnutrition.

Dudu’s story is just one example of Christian children who are too weak from hunger to study. Many poor, vulnerable and elderly believers are becoming sick from lack of food as a result of successive droughts and failing crops.

“They would give me some crumbs and it would be like there’s something in my stomach that’s bad,” said Dudu.

ePap 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.

“The porridge has changed their lives,” said one of the church leaders in Zimbabwe. “Those who are sick are much stronger than they would otherwise be without it,” said another.

A child of seven or over needs a daily 50g (dry weight) serving of ePap.

Infants aged one to six need half that ration.



- £ 3.60 could provide enough ePap for a child aged six or under for two months.
- £14.40 could provide enough ePap for two older children or for two weak or elderly adults for two months. Or for four younger children.
- £28.80 could provide enough ePap for eight younger children for two months.

If you are able to give there will be envelopes on the church table each week leading up to Christmas day. Please give only what you are able and use your resources only after you have asked God is this is what he wants you to do.



Prayers for Belarusian Churches

Please continue to pray for our seven partner churches in Belarus.



At this time pray particularly that **those churches which have problems registering with the authorities for worship** will not come under pressure.

Pray also for **adequate heating and clothing** as they experience the very low tempratures of a Belarusian winter.

Pray for their strength in the Lord and give thanks for their trust of Him asking that in the ever changing circumstances they face **He will take away any fear** and that they will look to Him for their protection.

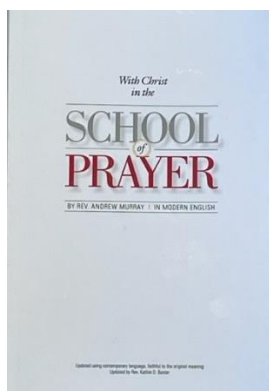
Sound Equipment for Worship



We recognise how important it is for us all in worship to hear what is being said both in our worship and praise and in our listening to God.

The leadership team have recognised that some of the equipment we are using for worship is second hand and on loan to us. We have therefore invested in a a new state of the art speaker (as shown) and have determined to buy new cables so that the projection and sound controls can be operated from the back rather than the front of the halls in which we meet. We hope this will be in place by Christmas and should provide more comfortable and effective hearing for us all.

Learning together to Pray



We thank God for giving George the inspiration that we should all learn more together about effective prayer and so allow God to further enrich us. Thank you for your feedback and personal experiences as we have focused on 'prayer' in our worship themes.

As a leadership team we have each been reading Rev. Andrew Murray's book: "With Christ in the School of Prayer". Andrew Murray was a South African writer, teacher and Christian pastor who wrote this book over a hundred

years ago. Because it is Bible based and has been translated in modern English it is a good read, set in short chapters and with great insights into its theme of 'prayer' and how we pray.

We would like to give a copy of this book to each of our congregation who would like to receive one and read it. Please let George know if you would like one. **Please also bring prayer resources** you have found helpful to put on our Prayer Resources Table as we meet each Sunday. In this way we can learn from one another and 'build each other up'.

Forthcoming times of Worship

Please use our FCW cards to invite others to join us in our worship times. The poster attached to the back of this letter is for you to display in your house or car window, first to advertise our Carol Service and then to reverse to advertise Covenant in the new year.



A Prayer:

Your nativity, O Christ our God,
has shone upon the world with the light of knowledge.
For, through it, those who adored the stars,
through a star, were led to You, the Sun of Righteousness,
and to know You, the Dayspring from on high,
O Lord, glory to You.



A Very Happy CHRISTMAS

George Elizabeth Lou Mike Phil Andrew Fiona
Leadership Team, Freedom Church Wiltshire
December 2023