

PERSONAL & CHURCH RENEWAL

Reaching out to God for a deeper awareness of his life in us

When we pray for renewal, what are we praying for? Isaiah 35 gives us a tremendous picture of life bursting out of barrenness. Here's a snippet:

*5 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened
and the ears of the deaf unstopped.*

*6 Then will the lame leap like a deer,
and the mute tongue shout for joy.*

*Water will gush forth in the wilderness
and streams in the desert.*

*7 The burning sand will become a pool,
the thirsty ground bubbling springs...*

*8 And a highway will be there;
it will be called the Way of Holiness;
it will be for those who walk on that Way.*

Find Isaiah 35 in your Bible: read it all through and use it as the basis for your prayers for renewal this month.

SALVATION

Praying for those we long to see come to faith

'You will be my witnesses'. These words of Jesus were part of our first Sunday sermon on the book of Acts. A witness is someone who gives an honest account of their experience and knowledge of Jesus. Wouldn't it be great if in 2017, we all moved forwards in our power to witness for Jesus?

Pray to be a witness:

Look in: what inside of you stops you sharing Jesus? Fear of rejection? Embarrassment? Talk to God about these things. Ask for his healing, help and strength to overcome them.

Look up: the power to be a witness actually comes from God (Acts 1:8). Develop the habit of asking for a greater infilling of the Spirit specifically so that you may be a more powerful witness.

Look out: who are the people on your frontline with whom you would most like to share your faith? Pray for them regularly by name.

HEALING

Seeking God's healing and wholeness for those with health problems

Pray for . . . All those known to us, in our fellowship, our neighbourhood and in our families, who are troubled by physical or mental illness

Pray for . . . Those in our community suffering financial hardship and insecurity

Pray for . . . All those known to us who have recently been bereaved.

following the way of Jesus

*loving God, one another
and the world*



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EDITORIAL

"Lay down your burdens and pick up your cross – you can't manage to carry both".

This interesting thought was shared in our Prayer Week. Burdens feel like they come from outside of us: the state of the world, the lives of our children (or elderly parents), the money in the bank (or lack of it), the need for a new job etc. However, what makes these external burdens feel unbearable is our internal reaction to them. Typically they cause us to fear loss: loss of reputation, loss of control, loss of spending power, loss of future dreams. It is fear that is the burden we cannot carry, not the circumstance itself.

In contrast, our cross is about a choice to walk with Jesus, trusting him with every step of the journey. The cross says, 'I'm out of answers, so I'm giving myself totally to you Jesus'. The cross is about deep trusting faith.

That's why we can't carry the burdens of our fears, whilst also carrying the cross of our faith. Fear is corrosive to faith, and faith is the antidote to fear.

So: what will you carry this year? Burden or cross? Fear or faith? You can't carry both.

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FRONTLINE MISSION

This month: Emergency Services

Each month we pray for an individual and for all those who share the same area of life and work. Their Frontline!

My name is Kate Stuart. I have been a frontline Police Officer with Gloucestershire Constabulary since 2008, I have served in both Dursley and Stroud. I joined the Police because I wanted to help people and try to make a difference.

My role is very varied and no two days are the same. I am often with people at the very worst times of their lives. Whilst I am unable to directly speak about my faith to members of the public I am able to demonstrate the love of Christ by showing compassion, kindness, patience, grace and understanding.

My colleagues know that I am a Christian and they sometimes ask me interesting and challenging questions.

As Police we are being stretched to our limits due to cutbacks to other public support services. When no one else can help the Police have to step in.

Please pray for:

- Energy and strength for all people serving in the emergency services
- For me to continue to show God's love through my attitude and actions
- To have God's wisdom when dealing with difficult situations

connect

February
2017



CHILDREN & YOUTH

Helping to grow a faith that lasts

Please pray for

- Basement Café (School years 7 to 9) as they have a weekend away at PGL Liddington on 24th to 26th February, that they will grow as a group, in personal confidence and in understanding of Jesus. For Mike, Mark and Vicki as they lead the group on the weekend.
- Manorbrook School, where a change in the pattern of the school day means that the existing Open the Book team can no longer lead assemblies, that a new way to present Jesus will be found.
- Danny & Jo Bonnett as they take on the leadership of X Stream (School years 3 to 6)



NATIONAL & GLOBAL ISSUES

Crying out to God for the deep needs of our nation and our world

Please pray for

- Yemen, where the continuing conflict has seen over 4000 civilians killed and nearly 3 million people made homeless
- Nigeria, where in the north-east of the country up to 14 million people of every religion face hunger, terror and poverty
- Our politicians, for wisdom, insight and integrity in these challenging times for international relations

WORLD MISSION *This Month: The Suffering Church*

*Touching the world through praying for our wider mission links
and for the persecuted Church*

The Church is suffering and in huge need in many places in the world. ELAM supports, trains and prays for Christians in Iran and amongst Farsi speaking people.

Many Christians in Iran are paying a high price for their faith in Jesus. They have lost jobs, homes or even custody of children. Some have been physically abused. Scores are rejected by friends and family. And some are unjustly detained in Iran's notorious prison system. Your prayers are vital. Prayer strengthens our brothers and sisters and reminds them that they are not forgotten.

"I sense the fragrance of your prayers as a cool breeze on my heart and it strengthens me from afar." *Imprisoned Christian, Farshid Fathi, Letter from prison*

Please consider standing in solidarity and love through prayer with the prisoners listed below. They have all been imprisoned on false political charges relating to their Christian faith; usually they are convicted of 'undermining national security' through attending or organising house church meetings, or sharing their faith.

Christians serving court-issued sentences:

Maryam (Nasim) Naghash Zargaran (f)- house church member, in Evin prison since 15 July 2013. Serving 4 years

Ebrahim Firouzi (m) - house church member, in Evin prison since August 2013. Serving a one year sentence, to

be followed by two years exile to a border town. In March 2015 he was sentenced to a further five years.

Behnam Irani (m) - house church leader (Church of Iran denomination), in Ghezel Hesar prison, Karaj, since May 2011. Serving a six year sentence. In September 2014 he was given a further six year sentence; this was overturned at appeal on 9 December 2014.

Vruir Avanesian (m) - currently under house arrest. Ordained pastor of Armenian ethnicity, arrested at Christmas 2012; released after a few weeks on bail then tried and sentenced to 3.5 years in December 2013.

For more info on organisations focused on the suffering church visit: elam.com; open-doorsuk.org; csw.org.uk

TBC MISSION

This month: Sports outreach

Soaking our many outreach activities in prayer

On a regular basis, we have various sporting activities associated with TBC (details appear in the newsletter each week). These exist to provide fun and recreation but also as an opportunity to meet with folk who wouldn't normally be connected to the church. The football team has been a major part of this outreach for many years. It is ably managed by Chris Beddoes and with the support of the chairman Dave Finney. The team has had significant success in recent years winning all trophies available – Division 1 title, Division 2 title, Bristol Churches Cup, Shield and Solomon Fair Play trophy, winning it four times (which is a Bristol Churches League record). The Club also enters Gloucestershire FA Cup competitions and won the Minor Cup in 2014 and 2016. The 'Baps' will play in the Intermediate Cup for season 2016-17. Playing against non-church teams is of huge importance – witnessing to players who don't touch Church in any way through conduct on the field of play. They are playing the semi-final of the GFA Intermediate Cup at GFA HQ, Almondsbury, on Wednesday 8 February, 7.30 kick off. **WHY NOT COME AND SUPPORT!**



Please Pray

For all of those taking part in sports ministry that what they do will both have fun and have opportunities for faith sharing.

For those players with the Baps that do not know Christ – that they will want to know more about Jesus Christ and are ultimately saved

That more players 'come through the ranks' at TBC – more home-grown Christian players are required!

For more Christians to join the Club; for Christian leaders to arise to help take the Club forward

LOCAL & UK MISSION *This month: Paul & Michelle Green*

Soaking our many outreach activities in prayer

Rev (Major) Paul Green

Paul serves as a Padre in the army and he has just moved to 1 Regiment RLC, Bicester. He says: "It has been a very difficult decision to make, but for family reasons Michelle will remain living in our home in the Forest of Dean and I will return home at weekends as often as I am able."

Please pray

- Moving and working unaccompanied will inevitably bring added stresses on family life. Pray for Michelle and I as a couple as we begin this new chapter in our lives.

- My new post comes with the responsibility of four units – a total of 2000 soldiers! It will be very busy.

- Please pray for the quick establishment of good relationships with key personalities.

- 2017 will be the high readiness year. That means that I (and the units that I am serving with) will be on a constant 48 hours notice to deploy in reaction to any major world events. Please pray for the added stress and tension such 'readiness' brings to army life and relationships.