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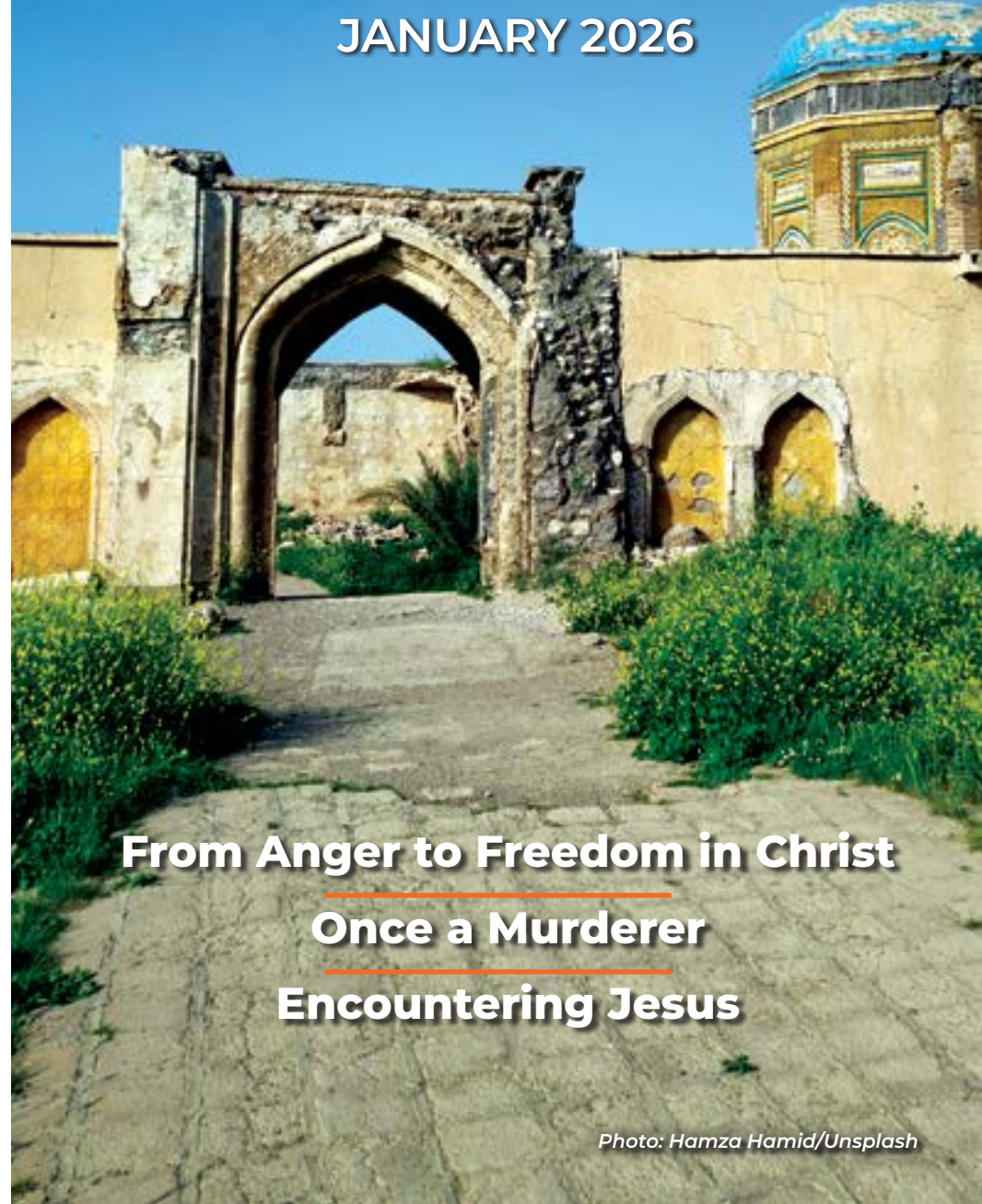
*Free Methodist World Missions makes disciples by mobilizing the global church and empowering international leaders
to establish transformational churches.*

From Anger to Freedom in Christ Once a Murderer Encountering Jesus

Photo: Hamza Hamid/Unsplash

FMWM HEARTBEAT

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From **ANGER** to *Freedom* in Christ

By An Impact Middle East Worker

In my home country, I worked in an import and export business and followed the Sufi path in Islam alongside my younger brother. I devoted myself to studying the Quran and Hadith, but I struggled with how God was described. Titles like “the deceiver,” “the avenger” and “the proud” disturbed me deeply. I couldn’t reconcile these attributes with the idea of a merciful and loving God, and the scholarly interpretations left me unsatisfied.

I began to search what other religions said about God. I moved to Jordan and met a Salafi sheikh. I shifted from Sufism to strict Salafism, which led me into a mindset of hatred and fanaticism, even toward other Muslims. My upbringing in my home country, marked by sectarianism, only intensified my aggression and unnatural hatred.

I would share my doubts with the sheikh, doubts for which no one had been able to give me answers. I asked difficult questions:

- Who is better – the God or the Prophet of Islam?
- Why does God describe himself with attributes of arrogance, assault, violence and revenge?
- Where are mercy, forgiveness and accepted repentance with God?

I returned to searching. Eventually, I began exploring other religions and encountered the Bible. For the first time, I felt God’s love and my own worth.

The gospel revealed truths that challenged the distorted ideas I had learned about Christ and Christianity. I realized many of Islam’s claims about Jesus were not found in the Bible itself. Through the gospel, I came to understand the incarnation of Christ in a way that was both logical and spiritually fulfilling.


I left the circle of revenge, killing and fanaticism found in Islam and stepped into the light of love and forgiveness in Christ. God answered all the questions I had about Islam through the gospel. The God Who communicates with those who seek Him and connects with the thoughts of their hearts is the One worthy of following and believing in.

I felt like I was being transformed, and the scales fell from my eyes. I was freed from the slavery of hatred and sectarianism into a life of comfort, love and unconditional acceptance in Christ.

When I returned home and shared my newfound faith in Christ, my brother openly threatened me. I left home again and took my family to Egypt. There, we found a place to be discipled and eventually met Pastor “B,” who baptized our two daughters and began training me in ministry.

Now, we will return to our home country – but not as we left it. We left confused and lost, and we will return as believers and evangelists to plant churches.

Photo: Sara Calado/Unsplash.



Once a Murderer, Now a Child of God

By An Impact Middle East Worker

I was a rebellious young man who grew up in a house full of shouting and beatings. My father was violent, beating my mother brutally and insulting her in front of me. The anger kept building up in my heart until I finally exploded one day. In a moment of lost control, I got into a fight with my father. I pushed him violently; he fell and hit his head against the wall and died instantly.

I was arrested and sentenced to 20 years in prison. In a cold, silent cell, everything inside me began to wither. No one came to visit me – not my mother, not my friends. Only my inner voice screamed: “I’m a murderer! There is no forgiveness for me!”

The months passed slowly, and one day, Pastor “B” entered the prison to visit the inmates. He stopped beside me and smiled, saying, “The Lord loves you even here.” I laughed sarcastically: “Does He love a murderer? Does He love someone who killed his own father?” The pastor answered calmly: “Jesus forgave those who crucified Him and forgave Saul, who persecuted the church and killed believers. God’s heart is open to the repentant, no matter how great their sin.” The words were weighty on me, but I could not forget them.

That night, I sat in the corner of my cell and began to cry for the first time since entering prison. I lifted my eyes to heaven: “Lord, if there is a place for a murderer like me, forgive me. Take my broken life and change me.” After that, I felt a light starting to enter my life, as if I were being born again. And not only that, but I had a certainty inside me that I had become a son of Jesus Christ. Days passed, and I began to read the Bible. I learned about the love of Jesus and the grace of forgiveness.

Now, I share words of hope with my fellow inmates, and my cell has become a small church of prayer and peace. Thankfully, my mother also came to know the Lord and began visiting me in prison. The good news is that many people came to know the Lord through me, the weak one. And whenever someone asks, “Who are you?” I answer with a quiet smile, “I was a murderer ... and now I am a child of God.”

ENCOUNTERING Jesus

Photo: Nawras Ruhaima/Pixabay

By An Impact Middle East Worker

Last year, our newest and youngest team member, Nahla*, joined our social media ministry team working with an unreached people group (UPG) in the Middle East. Nahla is a young woman and a believer from this UPG. She is studying at the College of Business and working part time.

One day, a young man named Shehab* posted messages on our Facebook page, asking a question about the stories of the Old Testament. He had watched a video series our team translated and produced in this UPG's local dialect. Nahla initiated the conversation with him, providing him with more information about the Bible and Jesus; then, she asked if he would like to believe that Jesus died for him. He answered, "Yes, I saw Jesus in a dream. He was calling me." She kept talking with him to know if he genuinely believed. During this conversation, he told her he had experienced peace, love, hope and comfort. He also stopped committing his old sins. On the contrary, he started helping others. He told her, "Jesus is the LIGHT for me."

We are so happy about Shehab. Now, a seasoned staff member is following up with him and leading him on a journey of discipleship.

There are still many unreached people groups in the Middle East. Impact Middle East is working among some of these, and already, new believers are gathering in fellowships. Digital outreach is a common strategy, but more than this, Jesus Himself is appearing to many. In a recent study, over 80% of new believers from these challenging backgrounds reported experiencing supernatural dreams or visions.

Thank you for praying with us as God works through the church, through small groups studying the Bible, and through social media efforts. He is seeking out people from every tribe and tongue, and it is a privilege to join Him!

**Names have been changed to protect the local believers in a dangerous region of the Middle East.*

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JANUARY PRAYER GUIDE

01 > Thursday | Angola

Both Mozambique and Brazil initiated work in this Portuguese-speaking country. The Brazilian work is centered in the Malanje district and has become the primary FM work. Pray for Mission District Leader Rev. Sebastião Mateus de Sousa Malanje.

02 > Friday | Asia

"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:37-38, ESV). Pray for a new wave of young leaders across Asia, called and equipped for Spirit-filled ministry.

03 > Saturday | Bulgaria

Pray for training opportunities to help shape the next generation of leaders. Pray specifically for Pastor Lyubcho and Pastor Rossen as they continue to train new disciples and leaders through the St. John's Rooted Bible Training Courses.

04 > Sunday | Costa Rica

Pray for the development of healthy leaders, men and women with hearts to serve, wisdom from the Holy Spirit, strength to lead through challenges, and deep love for God and His people.

05 > Monday | Africa Area

Pray for steady improvements in communication efforts as the church planting and church development work in the Africa Area progresses. **Birthday: Mike Reynen**

06 > Tuesday | Jordan

Ask the Father to give Pastor "R" wisdom, discernment and compassion as he continues to faithfully serve, welcoming Jordanians, Iraqis, Syrians and others – sharing the love of Christ across cultures.

07 > Wednesday | Ecuador/Europe

Ecuador: Pray for Pastor José Rivadeneira as he encourages churches and groups in their efforts to become agents of God's restoration and holistic transformation within their communities. **Birthday: J.R. Crouse**

Europe: Larry and Katie Winckles now serve as FMWM U.S.-based partners, supporting the work in Hungary and Europe. Pray God will use them to develop key partnerships for prayer, service and resourcing.

Birthday: Larry Winckles (U.S.-Based Partner)

08 > Thursday | Guinea Bissau

Pray for the five churches in this nation as they continue to disciple children, young people and families. Pray some of the young people will be called to share the gospel beyond their local communities.

09 > Friday | Creative Access-MA

Pray that a small group in the capital city will grow in faith and fellowship and will begin to multiply.

10 > Saturday | Greece

Pray for Michael and Maria Long and the FMC in Greece as they embrace the opportunity to serve refugees and share the gospel with them.

11 > Sunday | Panama

Pray God will provide the necessary partnerships Brook and Susan Selby need to be deployed to Panama this year.

12 > Monday | Middle East

Many are deciding to follow Jesus. Pray those who are guiding and mentoring new believers will be strengthened and encouraged in their work.

13 > Tuesday | Latin America

David Lopez promotes church planting in 17 countries throughout Latin America and serves as the coordinator of the area's pillar for the Multiplication of Disciples, Groups and Churches. Pray God will give him wisdom and strength for the work.

Birthday: David Lopez (International Missionary)

14 > Wednesday | Creative Access-VN

Hieu and Ai are starting a house church in a major city. Ask the Father to help Hieu be a faithful shepherd and servant and care well for those God brings to them.

Birthday: Hieu (International Missionary)

15 > **Thursday** | **Belgium**

Pray for affiliate missionary Eric Casteel and his wife, Amy, as they seek to create safe spaces for young adults to ask questions and understand what it means to be a follower of Christ.

16 > **Friday** | **Peru**

Pray for the annual meeting in Peru, January 16-18 and for Thad Roller who will preside. Ask the Father to renew hearts and inspire leaders to greater depths in their own spiritual lives as they continue to share the good news of Jesus with others.

17 > **Saturday** | **Creative Access-BA**

In November, international missionary Rev. Dosseh Takpale conducted church-planting training in this mission district. Pray for these leaders as they seek to reach new people groups and plant new churches.

18 > **Sunday** | **Philippines**

Ask God to bless the church-planting work in Ilocos. Pray for a flourishing work that bears lasting fruit.

Birthday: Alan Bacus (International Missionary)

19 > **Monday** | **Haiti**

Please pray for political stability saturated with transformation and justice. Ask God to give wisdom to Bishop Desvariste as he leads the church to be light in the darkness.

20 > **Tuesday** | **Sri Lanka**

This growing work of 23 churches is under the Canadian General Conference. Pray for them as they partner with FMWM-Asia to train leaders and take the gospel to 25,000 villages that have no Christian presence.

21 > **Wednesday** | **Spain**

Praise the Lord for how He is moving in communities throughout Spain. Pray God will give wisdom to Raul and Abi Arana as they lead the work, and ask Him to raise local leaders to assist them. **Birthday: Abi Araña-Santana**

22 > **Thursday** | **ICCM**

ICCM sponsorship began in Zambia in 2025, with 10 children being sponsored. Additional support has been provided through the distribution of Wunders kits, food, school fees, uniforms, water filters and animals. Pray for the progress of this developing partnership with the FMC in Zambia.

23 > **Friday** | **Ghana**

Join the FMC in Ghana in praying for plans and resources necessary for multiple building projects, including a Free Methodist women's college.

24 > **Saturday** | **Middle East**

Several pastors and leaders will participate in a Middle East vision trip in the coming week. Pray they will gain a greater understanding of how God is working in this region and how their churches can partner with and learn from the church in the Middle East. **Birthday: Joanne**

25 > **Sunday** | **Set Free**

As churches participate in Freedom Sunday today, pray the worship, prayer, lament and learning that take place will catalyze a response in individuals and churches.

26 > **Monday** | **Hungary**

Please pray for pastor Péter Tóth as he seeks ways to strengthen the Budapest church fellowship, and for new leaders to be called to come alongside him.

Birthday: Katie Winckles (U.S.-Based Partner)

27 > **Tuesday** | **Creative Access-BG**

Pastors and other believers in this country face many obstacles. Pray for protection but also for courage and boldness to share the gospel despite opposition and challenges.

28 > **Wednesday** | **Togo**

Please pray for the leaders in Togo as they navigate the growth of their congregations and new church-planting efforts. Pray for possible entry points with the Kotokoli people, an unreached people group in a region where the FMC is active. **Birthday: Hendrik Smidderks**

29 > **Thursday** | **Creative Access-CA**

Keith is developing a course to train cross-cultural workers who will go out from Creative Access-CA. Pray this training will prepare workers well, allowing them to stay long term and serve effectively in cross-cultural settings.

Birthday: Keith

30 > **Friday** | **Middle East**

Pray the hearts and minds of believers will be filled with the certainty of knowing nothing can separate them from the love of Christ – not trouble, hardship, persecution, famine, nakedness, danger or the sword (Romans 8:35).

31 > **Saturday** | **Latin America**

Pray for Guy and Betsy Crawford as they minister to the missionary team in Latin America this year. Ask the Lord to give them wisdom as they encourage the team spiritually and give support in difficult situations.

Birthday: Guy Crawford