

Open *Doors*

PRAYER DIARY | March/April 2021



**"I have come
that they
may have life,
and have it
to the full."**

JOHN 10:10

MARCH

Persecuted Women

Monday 1 March - Syria

When Sozan and her sister left Islam to follow Jesus, they faced such opposition from men in their community that they had to flee their town. "They said we had a bad reputation and that we should be killed. Our father should take care that this shame would be washed away," she says. Give thanks that Sozan and her family received food and shelter through a Centre of Hope. Pray for her continued protection and for strength as she serves the children in her new church (see Magazine p.9).

Tuesday 2 March - Syria

Many women have become the breadwinners for their families after their husbands were killed or went missing in the war. Some struggle with depression as well as making ends meet. Pray for Open Doors church partners providing practical and spiritual support for these women.

Wednesday 3 March

There have been sharp rises in domestic violence and 'honour' killings during the pandemic, exacerbated by lockdowns and economic hardship. Ask God to protect vulnerable Christian women facing persecution in their own homes, and pray for Open Doors partners trying to make contact with and support them.

Thursday 4 March - India

Lalita* was so badly beaten by her husband when he found her praying that she had to have five stitches in her head. Pray for her healing, that she will stay strong in her faith, and that her husband will come to know Jesus and repent of his behaviour.

Friday 5 March - Kyrgyzstan

Pray for Ayna*, whose husband Rasul* beats her and is threatening to divorce her because of her faith in Jesus. Her son Musa* (9) wants to protect his mother but doesn't know how. Ask God to protect Ayna and her children, and to soften Rasul's heart so that he turns to Jesus.

Saturday 6 March- Arabian Peninsula

Pray for a sister who has faced severe abuse from her family-in-law since accepting Christ. Ask God to strengthen her faith and pray that her husband will stop the abuse.



Sunday 7 March - Kenya

Praise God that Peninah (PICTURED), whose husband was killed by al-Shabaab militants, is recovering from trauma and is now equipped to provide for her son Steve (2), after receiving trauma care and dressmaking training through Open Doors (see Magazine p.14). "My faith would have collapsed,"

she says, "but the seminars and Open Doors partners encouraged me a lot."

Monday 8 March - International Women's Day

As part of the *See. Change.* campaign, Open Doors is asking the UK Government to recognise faith as a specific vulnerability in gender-based violence, and to respond with effective policy. Pray that many MPs will be moved to hold the government to account on this issue and work together to address the persecution of women for their faith.

Hope for the Middle East

Tuesday 9 March - Iraq

January's bomb attacks in Baghdad left at least 32 dead and over 100 wounded. Pray for God's comfort and healing for the injured and bereaved, and pray that so-called Islamic State will not regain a foothold in the country.

Wednesday 10 March - Iraq

Last year, Iraqi Christian activists started a campaign called 'Know your rights and speak up', to raise awareness of the challenges facing Christians in Iraq. Pray that the campaign will grab the attention of the authorities, and lead to a reduction in violations against religious freedom.

Thursday 11 March - Iraq

The high costs of Covid-19 tests and medical treatment deter many people from being tested early and getting

treatment, so many wait till their health deteriorates. Pray for strength and protection for medical staff working under great strain in hospitals that lack medical supplies, and ask God in His mercy to help the Iraqi government to bring the infection under control.

Friday 12 March - Iraq

Most schools remain closed due to the spread of Covid-19. For the second year, Iraq still can't find a way to provide online teaching and electronic devices for children in poorer, rural areas. Ask the Lord to intervene so that Iraq's children are not robbed of their education and their future.

Saturday 13 March - Palestinian Territories

Although Covid restrictions are preventing believers from meeting in person, church services and home groups continue online. Give thanks that this has enabled secret believers, who normally can't attend church services or meet with other believers, to join church groups and find fellowship online.

Sunday 14 March - Lebanon

Last year's explosion in the port of Beirut, coupled with the growing Covid-19 crisis, are having a devastating impact on Lebanon. Ask God to strengthen His people to be salt and light at this challenging time. "We believe that only Jesus can change the situation in this country," says one believer. "It's gone from bad to worse, but we know that Jesus is here with us!"

*Names changed for security reasons

Give thanks for **ANSWERED PRAYER**



“Thank you for the love and support you have always given”

SUSAN ITHUNGU CONTINUES ON THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

A decade after her father imprisoned her in her own house for choosing to follow Jesus, Susan Ithungu from Uganda is growing stronger physically and spiritually every day, thanks to your long-term prayers and support.

Susan became a Christian when she was 10 years old. When her father, a practising Muslim witchdoctor, found out, he locked Susan in an airless, filthy room without food or water. In October 2010, after three months, neighbours alerted the authorities and she was rescued. Susan only

survived because her younger brother secretly gave her food and water.

“When they opened the door, I felt peace and I knew that God had sent me help,” Susan says.

She was critically malnourished and severely injured when she was admitted into a rural Ugandan hospital. What followed was an excruciatingly painful road to recovery. Thanks to you, Open Doors has stood with Susan as she has gone from hospital to hospital for operations, physiotherapy and trauma counselling.

Amazingly, Susan’s faith has not diminished over time, but has grown stronger and more resilient.

“I cannot leave Jesus,” she says. “I decided not to leave Him because He has given me eternal life and even if I died there [in that room], I was sure that I would go to Him. I thank God very much that I am still alive. He protected my life.”

“I thank God very much that I am still alive. He protected my life.”

Open Doors partners visited her and reported: “Susan remains ever-ambitious and says she still wants to become a doctor because she wants to help other people... She told us, ‘I forgive my father because he did not know what he was doing.’

“When asked how we can pray for her, Susan replied, ‘Please pray for my healing. I want to walk without the crutches. I am also thankful for the support from Open Doors.’”

Thanks to your prayers and support, Open Doors has been walking alongside Susan for over 10 years. Her caregiver

recently shared with Open Doors that Susan is doing well, despite the challenges of the pandemic. She had been going to school until Covid-19 struck and now she is waiting for schools to reopen. Her doctor says that they need to wait until she is 23 years old, when her bones have stopped growing, before they conduct any further surgery. Susan experiences on and off pain; however, she is strong enough to even help around the house.

Her carer says, “I thank God for Open Doors, for the love and support you have always given to Susan. I also thank you for your prayers for her quick recovery.”

PRAY

- For Susan’s continued physical recovery
- That she will be able to pursue her studies and realise her dream of becoming a doctor
- That her faith will continue to grow and that she will be rooted in God’s love.

BELOW Susan is able to pursue her dream of being a doctor thanks to your continued prayers



| Syria

Monday 15 March

It's 10 years since the start of Syria's devastating civil war, which has killed half a million people and displaced over 12 million. Ask the God who 'breaks the bow and shatters the spear' to bring this terrible war to an end so that His name is exalted in Syria and across the earth (Psalm 46:9-10).

Tuesday 16 March

Around 84 per cent of Syrians live below the poverty line and the price of basic goods continues to skyrocket. Pray that soaring inflation rates will fall, international restrictions will be lifted and the government will have wisdom to stabilise the economy, so people can afford basics like food and shelter.

Wednesday 17 March

Open Doors partners have started several new income-generating projects this year, to help struggling Christians to support themselves and their families. Pray that these projects will restore people's dignity and hope, and enable them to stay in the country.

Thursday 18 March

Many younger people have fled the country, leaving the elderly without caregivers. Pray for 20 elderly people being looked after by the local Orthodox church in Marmarita. With your support they are now receiving three good meals a day. Pray that this will bring them comfort and strength, and let them know they are not forgotten.

Friday 19 March

Give thanks that Open Doors was able to distribute 26,000 children's Bibles to children all over Syria through local churches and Centres of Hope. Pray that God's Word will strengthen His children with hope for the future.

Saturday 20 March

The government has yet to take serious action to address the spread of Covid-19. Pray for God's miraculous protection for doctors, nurses and other medical staff treating Covid patients with very limited resources.

Sunday 21 March

Pray for good health for our local partners and their families. Several are struggling with Covid-19 and others have family members with the virus. Pray for healing and protection so they can continue the good work.

| Myanmar

Monday 22 March

February's coup by the military put an end to a decade of civilian rule. Pray for a return to stable, democratic government, and that the rights of all Myanmar's people – especially ethnic and religious minorities – will be respected.

Tuesday 23 March

"The military government of the past has always been protective of their Buddhist culture and tradition," says Open Doors partner, Brother Lwin*. "We are expecting restrictions on the church to happen once again, though

we are unsure of the extent and the form it will take as of yet." Ask the Lord to intervene to protect the freedoms the church has gained over the last decade.

Wednesday 24 March

Ask the Holy Spirit to give church leaders wisdom and courage as they pastor their members through the crisis. "The churches are praying," says one pastor. "We are calm, but scared at the same time."

| Covid Crisis – Asia

Thursday 25 March – India

India's economy has been badly hit by the pandemic. Millions of people have lost their jobs, and many, including Christians, are struggling to survive. Ask God to protect Open Doors local partners delivering relief aid to those in need.

Friday 26 March – Nepal

At the time of writing, Covid cases are increasing in Nepal. Pray for wisdom for Nepal's leaders as they try to get the pandemic under control. Pray for Open Doors partners providing aid to those in most need, and ask God to use His church to reach out with love and hope during the crisis.

Saturday 27 March – Bhutan

Christians are not allowed to gather for any occasion because of the pandemic, and vigilante groups are patrolling villages and towns to enforce restrictions. Pray that Christians will be wise and careful in their actions in these difficult times, and pray for

God's protection and provision.

Sunday 28 March – Sri Lanka

Many pastors and church workers have faced great difficulties during the pandemic, as they were unable to hold services and collect offerings to support their work. Pray for God's provision and presence in their lives as they continue to serve the Lord amidst financial difficulties.

Monday 29 March – Philippines

Covid-19 restrictions have made it extremely difficult and expensive to move around the country, or even between islands. This makes Open Doors' ministry to believers from Muslim backgrounds even more challenging. Pray that the pandemic will be brought under control so the government can ease restrictions.

Tuesday 30 March – Vietnam

Give thanks that Open Doors partners have been able to reach 1,208 Christian families in Vietnam with relief aid, thanks to your prayers and support. Church leader Thao* says, "On behalf of all the Christians here, I would like to thank all the supporters. We are so grateful for the help."

Wednesday 31 March – Laos

Laos is one of the poorest countries in Asia. Covid-19 has left many jobless and struggling to provide for their own needs. Churches and pastors are greatly affected by this. Pray for God's provision and peace.

*Names changed for security reasons



**On the margins,
but not abandoned**



LEFT, ABOVE Thank you for providing a home for Hiwot and her children

YOUR PRAYERS AND GIFTS ARE COMFORTING WIDOWS LIKE HIWOT

Hiwot* from Ethiopia (PICTURED ABOVE) has suffered through many trials in her life, including a difficult marriage and debilitating ill-health. On top of these things, she has been pushed to the margins of her community because of her Christian faith, receiving no support during the hard times. But thanks to your prayers and support, Hiwot has experienced the love and care of Christians from around the world who have strengthened her and provided for her in her struggles.

Hiwot became a Christian later in life. Sometime

afterwards, her husband died after becoming very ill. Her marriage had not been easy; her husband drank and smoked all the time and didn't work. But despite this, Hiwot prayed that he would accept Jesus – and he did. "I told him we should be together in the house of the Lord. And then on his death bed he received Jesus," she says happily.

Not long after his death, Hiwot became ill and could no longer provide for her eight children. "I begged God, 'Please give us something to eat.' I had nothing to give my children," she says. Praise God, He answered her prayer! Through local partners, Open

Doors was able to assist Hiwot and her children with food aid and clothing.

"I also thank all of you that have helped me"

Thankfully, Hiwot has since recovered, but her community are no closer to accepting her. Last year, people from her village burnt down her house while the whole family was inside. She suspects her conversion and baptism were the reason for the attack: "This is because of my faith. It could be my neighbours. I had trouble before, and I still have trouble today with them because of my faith."

Hiwot and her children were suddenly homeless. But thanks to your prayers and support, Open Doors was once again able to come to

her aid. With help from her church, they secured land and bought all the building materials to build a house. In less than three weeks, Hiwot and her children had a new home!

"Blessed be the name of the Lord," she says. "I also thank all of you that have helped me.... I am calling a blessing on you all. Open Doors stood by my side and through the Lord, you have been there for me."

PRAY

- Praise God that He has been faithful to Hiwot as she has remained faithful to Him
- For God's continued protection and blessing on Hiwot and her family
- For Open Doors partners in Ethiopia as they continue to provide aid to Hiwot and other believers like her.

*Name changed for security reasons

| Easter

Thursday 1 April – Maundy Thursday

As the church worldwide prepares to celebrate Easter, pray for believers who cannot meet in person, either due to Covid restrictions or because it is dangerous or illegal to worship together in public. Pray for creative ways to connect with one another safely, and pray that they will know the peace and presence of the risen Christ.

Friday 2 April – Good Friday

“When I am lifted up, I will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32). As we take time today to worship our crucified Saviour, pray that His name will be lifted high around the world and that many will be drawn to His saving love.

Saturday 3 April

Pray for safety for Christians taking part in Easter celebrations this weekend. Remember also those bereaved or injured in the Easter bomb attacks in Sri Lanka in 2019 and in Pakistan in 2016. Pray for God’s continued comfort and healing.

Sunday 4 April – Easter Day

“Christ Jesus who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.” (Romans 8:34) Join with our persecuted family in giving thanks that neither trouble, hardship,

persecution, famine, danger or sword can separate us from the love of Christ.

| Persecuted Women

Monday 5 April

The vision of Open Doors’ *See. Change.* campaign is that every woman persecuted for her faith and gender is seen, valued and empowered to reach her God-given potential. Pray for Open Doors partners across the world working to restore hope and dignity to our sisters through relief aid, trauma care, livelihood skills and biblical training.

Tuesday 6 April – Bangladesh

Pray for women attending women’s discipleship classes, supported by Open Doors. Many people have come to the Lord and been baptised through these classes. Pray that the students will be able to apply what they learn in their churches and communities.

Wednesday 7 April – Maldives

The Maldives government has reiterated its commitment to empowering girls and women and combatting gender-based violence. The Child and Family Protection Service has also stated it is endeavouring to inspire higher self-esteem and value in girls, develop every woman as a capable individual, and increase women’s inclusion in senior posts. Praise God for this huge step forward in women’s rights and pray for those

implementing these initiatives to bring about real change.

Thursday 8 April - Ethiopia

Give thanks that widow and mother of four Manayesh, whose neighbours vandalised her house and took her oxen when she accepted Jesus, has been able to start a small but successful sheep farm with a loan from Open Doors partners. “Because of the support, I have been changed and have found value,” she says. Pray with her that her community will accept her. “With God, they can change,” she says.

Friday 9 April – Tanzania

Aisha* (18) secretly converted to Christianity after graduating from high school. She was selected to attend a college, but when her family learnt of her conversion, they rejected her and stopped paying her college fees. Pray for the Lord’s encouragement, and His provision so she can continue her studies.

Saturday 10 April – Libya

Emna* is being threatened by her husband because of her faith in Jesus. Pray for protection over her life, and pray that her husband will become curious about what she has found in this ‘Jesus’, so that he may find new life too.

Sunday 11 April - Iraq

Violence against women has increased during lockdown. Pray for Iraqi human rights and women’s activists who have launched a social media and activism campaign to stop the violations against women. Pray that this will successfully

raise awareness and lead to the adoption of laws that protect women’s rights.

| Ramadan

Monday 12 April

For many Muslims, Ramadan is a time of heightened spiritual awareness. As many spend more time in prayer and meditation, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to them that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life.

Tuesday 13 April

Pray for wisdom and boldness for Christians in Muslim-majority areas looking for ways to share the love of Christ with their Muslim neighbours during Ramadan. Pray that many Muslims will begin their journey towards Jesus as a result of their witness.

Wednesday 14 April

Ramadan is a lonely time for many believers from Muslim backgrounds (BMBs), especially those who must keep their faith secret. Many feel intimidated because they are not fasting. Pray that isolated believers will know the Lord’s comfort and be strengthened in their faith.

Thursday 15 April

“There are strong spiritual forces that fight against BMBs to make them suffer and bring them back to Islam,” says an Open Doors expert. Pray for spiritual protection for BMBs so they will not be tempted to deny their faith in Jesus.

*Name changed for security reasons



Old traditions, new opportunities

HOW NAIDA FROM CENTRAL ASIA IS REACHING HER MUSLIM FRIENDS AND FAMILY THROUGH RAMADAN

For many Christians from Muslim backgrounds, choosing to follow Jesus means leaving behind the practices of Islam – often at the risk of exclusion and discrimination from relatives and friends. But Naida*, a believer from Central Asia, knew that Muslim festivals like Ramadan were her only chance to share Jesus with her family and friends. The question was, how?

Naida, now in her 70s, first heard about Jesus through her children. She was angry and upset, thinking that they had fallen in with a sect. But she also feared for her children's safety – she knew they could be beaten or even killed by their Muslim relatives.

"Because of my fear, I became the main source of

persecution for my children," she says. "I tried to stop them visiting church and forced them to stay at home. I threw away their Christian books and Bibles, talked to them with a lot with threats and even beatings... I didn't know that God protected them; now I feel so sorry about that. I can see that Jesus came to save our family through my children and I am so grateful."

"I can see that Jesus came to save our family through my children and I am so grateful"

Eventually, Naida came to know the Lord herself when He healed her after a period of ill-health. Her children prayed with her, and that's when she chose to invite Jesus into her life. "Since

then, my life has completely changed," she says.

For several years after becoming a Christian, Naida didn't celebrate Ramadan – a festival which used to mean so much to her. This made her relatives angry, and Naida became concerned. While she felt that Christians couldn't follow Muslim traditions, it was important for her to reach her Muslim sisters and brothers, cousins and other relatives with God's love.

After a lot of prayer, study and advice from her pastor, Naida decided to celebrate Ramadan again, but this time in a completely new way. Now, during the festival, Naida cooks different traditional dishes and invites her Muslim sisters, brothers, cousins and neighbours. In this way, she shows them her respect for their religious traditions and values, and at the same time she is able to share the gospel.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, Naida couldn't celebrate Ramadan in the same way in 2020, but she prepared the table

anyway and invited her Muslim neighbour Galia*. They celebrated Ramadan and spoke about Jesus together. Praise God for Naida's courage!

PRAY

- That God would keep using Naida to courageously share the gospel with her friends and relatives
- That God would encourage and protect secret believers during the month of Ramadan
- For Open Doors partners in Central Asia as they strengthen more believers like Naida.

*Names changed for security reasons.



Please pray for believers to be bold like Naida this Ramadan (IMAGES ARE ILLUSTRATIVE)

| Ramadan

Friday 16 April – Africa

“We see increased fear among Christians during Ramadan,” says a church leader in Kenya. “People have started staying home, no longer moving around as freely as before. This is also affecting church attendance as many stay away for fear of attacks.” Pray for physical protection for Christians and churches during Ramadan.

Saturday 17 April – Africa

Ask the Holy Spirit to be at work among Islamic extremist groups like Boko Haram in Nigeria, al-Shabaab in Somalia and ex-Seleka in Central African Republic. Pray that Jesus will be revealed to them in dreams and visions during Ramadan, and that their hearts will be changed by His love.

Sunday 18 April – Africa

There is an urgent need for Christians who can stand by believers from Muslim backgrounds (BMBs), to disciple them and model the Christian life to them. Pray that churches will be places where BMBs are warmly welcomed and receive the love and care they need – especially during Ramadan.

Monday 19 April – Africa

Open Doors provides training for church leaders in caring for BMBs. Pray that these courses will bear fruit and that new believers will be given the practical care and discipleship support they need to grow in their faith.

Tuesday 20 April – Indonesia

Slamet was rejected by his family when he became a believer, but he still plans to visit them this Ramadan because he wants them to know about Jesus. Pray for courage and protection as he shares the good news and ask the Holy Spirit to prepare the hearts of his children and relatives to receive the seed of the gospel.

Wednesday 21 April – Bangladesh

Many BMBs still live among their Muslim relatives. Pray for the children of believers who may feel envious seeing their Muslim family members and friends breaking their fast together with joy. Pray for wisdom for parents to be able to explain the reason why they no longer take part in the fast and go to the mosque together.

Thursday 22 April – Malaysia

Believers from Muslim backgrounds often visit their families during Ramadan, but these visits can be incredibly difficult, as not every family member supports their decision to follow Christ. Pray for wisdom for these believers and ask God to use them to open the hearts of their families to the love of Jesus.

Friday 23 April – Brunei

Ramadan is observed strictly among Muslims and non-Muslims in Brunei. Non-Muslims can only eat in secret. “We can’t eat or drink whenever we want,” shares one young Christian. “We must wait for break time or after we reach home.

Sometimes I sneak food into my schoolbag and munch on snacks when no one is watching. Pray that the Muslims in my country will be more considerate to non-Muslims on the restrictions during Ramadan. Pray that our ministers will take this matter into consideration.”

Saturday 24 April – Maldives

Ramadan is one of the most sacred times of the year here. Eating or drinking in public, even if you are a tourist, is frowned upon, and most restaurants are closed during the daytime. Marketplaces are packed as people prepare for breaking of fast meals. Pray that as families fast and have meals together, they will sincerely seek God and find Jesus.

| Colombia

Sunday 25 April

Church leaders who actively share the gospel and speak out against corruption and violence are often targeted by guerrillas and other criminal groups. Pray for protection for those facing threats of violence and for courage to continue sharing Jesus, no matter the cost.

Monday 26 April

Pastor Perea leads ten congregations along the Atrato River in Chocó, a region where many paramilitary groups are active. Ask God to protect and strengthen Perea, his family and his church community as they follow Jesus in this challenging environment.

Tuesday 27 April

Pray for plans to extend the Children’s Centre and increase its capacity to take in young people at risk from guerrilla groups and drug cartels. Ask the Lord to provide new teachers and tutors with the right skills and spiritual maturity to care for these vulnerable young people.

Wednesday 28 April

The Covid-19 pandemic is presenting new challenges to the staff and students at the Children’s Centre. Pray for wisdom in implementing measures around social distancing and self-isolation, and pray that staff will find ways to provide online learning for those unable to return to the centre after holidays.

Thursday 29 April

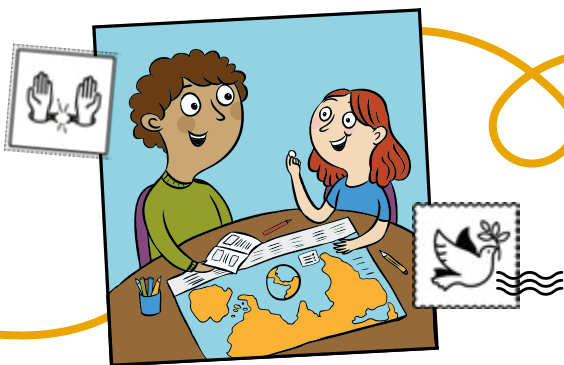
Fredy works among the Wounan indigenous people of San Juan River, Chocó, and is translating biblical resources for children into the language of the Wounan tribe. Ask the Lord to bless his work and to provide the resources needed to print and distribute the materials to the Wounan people.

Friday 30 April

The Open Doors Colombia team has recently relocated its office. Pray for the swift completion of the new office, and in particular for a good internet provider and service. Pray that these changes will not interfere with the work of serving the persecuted church.



Joy and laughter at the Children's Centre



Pray your way around the world!

HELP CHILDREN TO PRAY FOR THE PERSECUTED CHURCH WITH OUR **WORLD WATCH LIST 2021 RESOURCES**

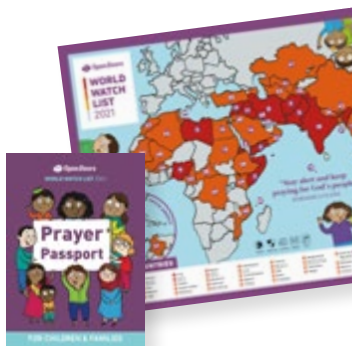
While physical travel might be on hold due to Covid-19 restrictions, children can pray their way around the top 50 countries on the World Watch List using their very own Prayer Passport and map!

The Passport contains plenty of activities, prayer points, Bible verses, stickers and flags to colour in. It also comes with a full-colour map, so that each week children can place a sticker on the country they are praying for. See how many countries you can travel to this year!

The Prayer Passport and map are free to order from our

website, where you can find lots of other all-age resources to inspire you in your faith and to help you pray for your persecuted church family.

Go to opendoorsuk.org/wwl or phone our Inspire team on 01993 460015 to order a copy.



Open Doors, PO Box 6, Witney,
OX29 6WG
T 01993 460015
E inspire@opendoorsuk.org

FIND US ON:

opendoorsuk.org



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