

# Prayer diary

3 January–1 May 2021



## Pray with us



*Enabling all ages to grow in faith*

Anna Chaplaincy  
Living Faith  
Messy Church  
Parenting for Faith

## Dear praying friends

These unambiguous words of Jesus are the foundation to our prayers for others. They are the assurance of God's blessing in response to our praying. And they are the reason for this *Prayer Diary*.

Of course God could just do good for anybody in this world whenever God wanted to. Doing good and showing love is who God is. But it is a love that never forces its goodness on us. God chooses to wait for us to ask for God's help. This is the mystery of divine deference, which lies at the heart of creation. God's choice is to allow us to choose.

And so we choose to pray, and we also pray together. This is why the BRF prayer requests for each week in this diary begin with the words 'pray with us': pray with us for our ministries, because we know that any success for BRF, however that may come, is dependent on there being an agreement through prayer between those of us on earth.

Thank you so much for joining us in prayer again in these coming months. That agreement with you in prayer has never felt more important than over this last year of the pandemic. The fact that BRF's work has continued to grow, and indeed to

flourish in new ways, at this time is because you have prayed with us.

As with all Christian charities, there remain challenging times ahead for BRF, but we are confident that your prayers with ours will reveal God's loving plans for the shape of BRF's future after this time of disruption. The pandemic has prompted some painful pruning and also rethinking in our ministries, but in order that we might go on to be more fruitful for the kingdom of God.

For this reason we invite you again to pray with us that we might discern God's voice and God's guidance in what should be the way forward for our 'fellowship of Bible reading and prayer'; and in whatever happens next, may God be glorified.

It has been a privilege to put this new *Prayer Diary* together, and I look forward to receiving your feedback and suggestions as to how we can use it to continue as prayer partners on behalf of BRF.

With thanks and prayers

Martyn Payne  
BRF volunteer prayer advocate

## Preparing to pray

Let us begin our prayer journey over these next months with thanksgiving:

***Lord, thank you that you are all we need.***

*You give us **forgiveness** for our inner well-being.*

*You give us **sabbath** for our work-life balance.*

*You give us **prayer** for our need of mindfulness.*

*You give us **the example of Jesus** for our fulfilment.*

*You give us **the power of the Spirit** for our lifestyle choices.*

*You give us **the love of the Creator** for our motivation.*

*Lord, you are the door that leads to life.*

**Amen**

# For BRF and its ministries in 2021

**Come to prayer, conscious of the reverence God deserves, while asking God that everything in your day may more and more lead you to divine praise and service.**

*Discovering the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*  
by Larry Warner (BRF, 2020)



## Thought for the week

If there is one thing that last year showed us,  
it was that life is unpredictable.  
Let us therefore anchor our lives  
this year  
in our God, who not only makes all  
things new,  
but who in Christ is the same yesterday,  
today and forever.

## Pray with us for

- Inspiration for Richard Fisher and his leadership of BRF following last year's Covid-19 challenges
- Renewed vision for the staff team returning to work after the Christmas break
- Wisdom for BRF's trustees as they fulfil their statutory duties and discern God's plans for BRF
- Readers beginning with new BRF Bible reading notes, that they might be encouraged and enriched in their times of intentionally listening to God
- BRF ministry teams meeting to pray and plan over new developments for 2021

Creator God,  
by whose Spirit we exist  
so that we might bear fruit for you,  
may we measure our lives this year  
not by what we achieve or possess,  
but by how much we give,  
how many we love  
and how often we hear  
your 'well done, good and faithful servant'. Amen

# For God's work through Messy Church



**Intercession is bringing people and situations to God, bringing God to people and situations, and doing all of it through prayer.**

*Prayer in the Making* by Lyndall Bywater (BRF, 2019)

## Thought for the week

Believing in the risen Lord Jesus means: there is a bigger picture than we can see, a greater story than we have been told and a deeper truth about life than we yet know; and that this life is not bounded by death and doesn't end with time but with eternity.

## *Pray with us for*

- Messy Church pioneer Lucy Moore as she manages changes within her team and the direction of the work for 2021
- The new Messy Church volunteers coordinator, who should be starting work with BRF and the Messy team this month
- Messy Church team leaders still working out when and how best to restart their Messy Churches after a long period of not meeting
- Creativity and courage for teams as they listen to the Spirit of God
- The new volunteer programme and those contributing their skill and gifts

### **Messy Beatitudes**

**God's blessing is on and for:**

**those whose lives are messy;**

**those who are messed up by grief in this broken world;**

**those who recognise their own mess;**

**those who long to be free of the mess;**

**those who care for the messy;**

**those who experience release from the mess;**

**those who put themselves at risk to mend the mess between others;**

**those who are messed up by threats and hatred from others.**

# For BRF's work of enabling all ages to grow in faith

As we develop our 'prayer muscles', we have the example before us of the greatest athlete of all, Christ himself, who is not only the goal of the race, but is also our running companion; while all the time, the race is being run in the company of a crowd of supporters cheering us on.

*Journey to Contentment* by Sally Welch (BRF, 2020) (abridged)



## Thought for the week

Prayer is about God changing us. It isn't primarily about asking, but listening and therefore discovering what God wants us to be, to become and to do.

## *In this week of prayer for Christian unity, pray with us for*

- A shared vision of working together for the kingdom of God between the teams
- A renewed commitment to listening to and learning from each other
- A creative openness as to how BRF teams can support each other to enable all ages to grow in faith
- A greater interdependence of the giftedness of the BRF teams to inspire and stimulate each other to live out the gospel
- A humility and willingness among all Christians to work together and make Christ known in our day

Keeper of our steps,  
keeper of our senses,  
keeper of our souls,  
keep us as the apple of your eye;  
keep us in your perfect peace;  
keep us in our going out and our coming in;  
for you are the strong keep  
within the walls of our life. Amen

# For God's work through Parenting for Faith



**No rhythm of prayer is ever complete when it only concerns us and our issues. We are given the gift of prayer that we might use it to unleash blessing on the world around us. And each of us has a circle of people and situations we get to bless – family, friends, neighbours, work colleagues...**

*Prayer in the Making* by Lyndall Bywater  
(BRF, 2019)

## Thought for the week

Named or unnamed, God is here.  
Known or unknown, God is with us.  
Recognised or unrecognised, God is present.  
God owes us nothing, yet chooses to give us everything.

## Pray with us for

- Parenting the Faith pioneer Rachel Turner as she listens to God's Spirit about the priorities for this BRF ministry
- The rest of the Parenting for Faith team – Becky Sedgwick, Anna Hawken, Kate Irvine and Mary Douglas – in their local and national roles
- The regular podcasts from Parenting of Faith, that these will equip and inspire Christian parents to live out faith at home with confidence
- Parenting for Faith team meetings – for creative planning and discussion
- Plans for new publications, digital seminars, training and blogs



Open our eyes, gracious Lord, to see the infinite value of every soul, the supreme importance of every human life and the unique beauty of every individual, so that, without distraction or agenda, we might catch a glimpse of your likeness mirrored and your love at work in each person with whom we spend time this day. Amen

# For God's work through Anna Chaplaincy

**Prayer is not just a relationship with God; it is also a powerful weapon, which we have been given to use wisely as we work to bring in God's kingdom.**

*Prayer: A beginner's guide* by Jane Holloway  
(BRF, 2009)



## Thought for the week

Only what God does lasts.  
Only what God does in us and through us will endure.  
Only what God says to us is transformative.  
Only our life in Christ will go on into eternity.

## *Pray with us for*

- Anna Chaplaincy pioneer Debbie Thrower in her writing, advocacy and development plans for this BRF ministry in the year ahead
- Anna Chaplain coordinators Julia Burton-Jones, Alex Burn and Wendy Hopkins in their own ministries and as they support Debbie
- The Anna Chaplaincy network, that each volunteer will be inspired with ideas for the challenge of working within a care system under pressure
- Local churches as they consider the best way to celebrate and support older people
- A better awareness of the importance of older people this Candlemas

**God of all comfort,  
strengtheners within,  
inspirer beyond  
and supporter alongside,  
you uphold us in mind, body and spirit  
with your wrap-around care.  
Help us in our turn  
to pass on that sure and certain comfort to others,  
in the name of Christ our Lord.**

# For God's work through Living Faith

**Prayer requires us to be attentive and to turn our attention in the right direction... We must lay aside too many words, be prepared to turn our hearts upwards and seek a heavenly perspective.**

*When you Pray* by Joanna Collicutt (BRF, 2019)



## Thought for the week

At the cross, Jesus shows us that God's love doesn't give up, doesn't run out, doesn't give in and doesn't run away, but that it stays till the bitter end, comes out the other side and is still the same today.

## *Pray with us for*

- God's blessing on the readers of this year's BRF Lent book, *Opening Our Lives* by Trystan Owain Hughes
- God's blessing on the readers of *New Daylight, Day by Day with God, Guidelines Bible Reflections for Older People* and *The Upper Room*
- Olivia Warburton, head of content creation, planning future publications and overseeing design and production of Living Faith resources
- BRF's digital communications team Adrian Serecut, who films and edits video content, and Stuart Holley, who maintains and develops BRF's websites
- The editors of BRF's Bible reading notes – Sally Welch, Helen Paynter, Jackie Harris, Daniele Och and Eley McAinsh – as they plan themes for future issues



Lord of all life and love,  
walk with us throughout our pilgrimage on earth,  
teaching us daily  
how to bless others through service,  
how to find strength in weakness  
and how to experience growth by letting go,  
for your name's sake. Amen



# For God's work through Holy Habits

Let me encourage you to experiment with different prayer postures (kneeling, lying face down or face up, standing, arms raised, head bowed and so on). Prayer postures can be an aid in helping us move from head to heart as we come before God.

*Discovering the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*  
by Larry Warner (BRF, 2020)

## Thought for the week

Through prayer we open ourselves to change: we are the ones who come to see something different about others, experience something new in our situation or are given fresh insights into our circumstances.

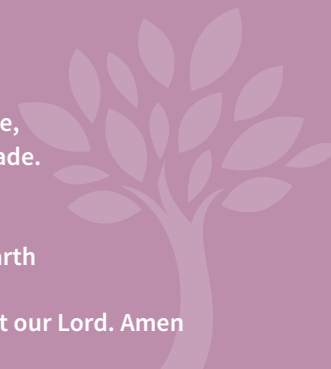


## Pray with us for

- The family of BRF readers and supporters as they start this year's Lenten journey
- God's blessing on those using BRF's Holy Habits resources to help them follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ
- Andrew Roberts, founder and pioneer of Holy Habits, as he inspires others
- Churches experimenting with creative ways to deliver BRF's discipleship courses
- Ourselves as we take up the cross afresh and follow Jesus as Lord on the downward path to glory

### A prayer for Lent

Creator God and Saviour,  
who chose in love to make this world,  
inviting us to share in its care, renewal and nurture,  
forgive us for the many wrong choices we have made.  
This Lent we choose again to join with you  
in the reconciling and healing of all things,  
as by your Spirit you both renew the face of the earth  
and also restore us in your image,  
through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



# For the charity and its fundraising initiatives

**Lord, take me where you want me to go;  
let me meet who you want me to meet;  
tell me what you want me to say; and  
keep me out of your way.**

A prayer of Father Mychal Judge, chaplain to the New York Fire Brigade, quoted in *Franciscan Footprints* by Helen Julian (BRF, 2020)

## Thought for the week

Underpin everything with prayer. Pray for the people that we're reaching. Pray for the Bible reading notes and other resources as they go out. Pray for those delivering BRF's amazing ministries.



Julie MacNaughton,  
BRF's head of  
fundraising

## Pray with us for

- Julie MacNaughton, head of fundraising, and the new initiatives she is pioneering
- BRF's fundraising team as they develop relationships with trusts, organisations and individual supporters to help fund BRF's work
- Creative ideas to raise the finances needed for BRF's ministries, so that they are sustainable and bear fruit for God
- A positive response to BRF's occasional campaigns and regular appeals for support from readers and supporters
- Our own discipline of giving in response to Christ, who though he was rich, for our sake became poor, thereby making many rich (see 2 Corinthians 8:9).

O Lord of eternal and unimaginable wealth,  
who did not cling to the riches of heaven  
but emptied yourself and became poor,  
grant that we, in our prosperity,  
may hold all that we have in an open hand  
and be quick to enrich others  
in response to your generosity.  
Amen

# For God's work through Messy Church



**Christian prayer always has an exit sign: we step out of life, we go in to encounter the living God and then he sends us back out into the world. If you never want to be given a job to do, a mountain to climb or a person to care for, then avoid Christian prayer at all costs.**

*Prayer in the Making* by Lyndall Bywater (BRF, 2019)

## Thought for the week

Follow Jesus, find God.  
Recognise Jesus, receive God.  
Encounter Jesus, experience God.  
Ask Jesus, activate God.

## *Pray with us for*

- Messy Church leaders, who over the past year have had to develop new approaches and models of working for their regular gatherings
- Messy Church teams as they plan together their meetings this month focusing on the mystery and the power of the cross of Christ
- Good relationships between Messy and traditional churches, so that they both work hand-in-hand for the sake of the gospel
- Messy Church special events – maybe outdoors, in schools or at local community centres – as they seek to reconnect with the many who know so little about what Christians believe
- Lucy and the wider team of BRF Messy Church volunteers as they promote new initiatives, publications and partnerships in this country and globally

**Lord, may I be the answer to someone's prayer today.  
Lord, help me to receive the answers to someone else's prayer for me today.  
Lord, use me as the answer to my own prayers today.  
Lord, let me encourage others with the stories of answered prayer every day. Amen**

# For God's work through BRF

**Prayer is a deep conversation with God, beginning with communion and leading to transformation.**

*Creating a Life with God* by Daniel Wolpert (BRF, 2014)



## Thought for the week

In Christ,  
we are not just forgiven but heaven-bound;  
we are not just blessed but safe forever;  
we are not just loved for now but cherished for eternity;  
knowing that Jesus is praying for us,  
with us, in us,  
now, everywhere and always.

## *Pray with us for*

- The staff team at BRF – some part-time and some working from home – that they will have a strong sense of belonging to the BRF family
- Maddie Jane and Jenny Smith supporting the BRF ministry teams, and Claire Proudman and Kirsty Yu in supporter services
- BRF's content creation team – Alison Beek, Rachel Tranter, Daniele Och, Adrian Serecut, Stuart Holley and Felicity Howlett – and those working in the BRF finance team – Sheila Stevens and Lisa Bell
- Those working in the marketing and communications team – Iris Jenkins, Judith Moore, Debbie Clayden and Eley McAinsh
- John Chapman and Tabitha Griffiths, who maintain the office systems

Dear Lord,  
strengthen us to serve you in response to your love,  
by giving freely to others without keeping a record,  
by working hard for others without counting the cost  
and by being a blessing to others without knowing it,  
eager to do your will for your name's sake.  
Amen

# For God's work through Parenting for Faith

**To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.**

Martin Luther, quoted in *Journey to Contentment* by Sally Welch (BRF, 2020)

## Thought for the week

***Where are you, Lord?***

In the voice on the phone; in the smile across the street; in the kindness of strangers; in the courage of carers; in the laughter online; in the colours of spring; in the stories of hope; in the instinct to pray; in the wisdom of people; in the words of The Book.

***Child, here I am.***



## *Pray with us for*

- Inspiration for the Parenting for Faith team as they plan new online resources to support Christian parents in the home
- In the week we celebrate Mothering Sunday, all those mothers, godmothers, grandmothers, aunties and carers who nurture faith in the young
- Strategic national relationships between Parenting for Faith and other similar organisations, such as Care for the Family and the Church of England's Faith at Home initiative
- Rachel Turner, Becky Sedgwick, Anna Hawken, Kate Irvine and Mary Douglas as they travel and engage with churches and online groups
- Churches to catch the vision of the importance of growing faith in the home and the vital role parents and carers play as models and teachers of faith

Never-failing God,  
keep us when we grow weary,  
cheer when we become despondent,  
hold us when we lose heart  
and help us to keep looking to Jesus,  
the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. Amen



# As we remember the lockdown a year ago

Over this last year, Covid-19 has propelled us into new ways of interacting with each other and our surroundings. We have been confronted with questions we should have been asking all along. Pandemic life certainly brought us face to face with the big issue of what kind of world we really want to live in.

Olivia Warburton, [brf.org.uk](http://brf.org.uk)



## Thought for the week

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.  
And what does the Lord require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God.

MICAH 6:8

## Pray with us for

- Anna Chaplains who work alongside care homes, many of which are still struggling to come to terms with what happened and with so many deaths
- Families supported through Messy Church and Parenting for Faith who live with the memories of loved ones who suffered or died from the coronavirus
- BRF's Living Faith ministry helping us to constructively reflect on last year
- Church leaders continuing to discern what the Spirit is saying as a result of the national and local lockdowns regarding future ministry and mission
- BRF supporters and advocates in their ministries and vocations

Father God,  
when the news is bleak, steady us;  
when the pain is bitter, surround us;  
when the days blur, sustain us;  
when despair burdens, still us.  
In our weakness, make us strong;  
in our lowness, lift us up,  
confident that our Redeemer  
ever lives and prays for us. Amen

# For our discipleship journey in Holy Week



**Seek to enter each prayer experience this week, expectation-free and desiring simply to ‘show up’, presenting yourself as a living sacrifice, ‘holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship’ (Romans 12:1).**

*Discovering the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*  
by Larry Warner (BRF, 2020)

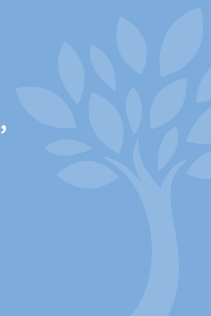
## Thought for the week

It is a holy and pain-bearing God who on the cross experienced desolation and despair, who is walking with us through this present darkness and granting us a glimpse of the glory to come.

## *In Holy Week pray with us for*

- Those we know who shed silent tears as Christ did when all around cried hosanna, that they might be comforted by the scriptures this day
- Those who are faithful in the BRF ‘house of prayer’ despite the many distractions and temptations in ‘the temple courts’ of life
- Those who choose to give of their best for BRF, like the perfume poured at the feet of Jesus, and are not put off by those who might see it as a waste
- Those who break bread and remember Jesus, who was broken for us
- Those who feel abandoned, alone and in a very dark place, that they may know that Jesus is there with them, giving voice to their cries

Suffering Lord,  
just as you chose on the cross  
to share our pain and embrace our dying,  
may we accompany those we care for at the end of their days,  
with the assurance of  
separation ending,  
shadows scattering  
and a more glorious story beginning  
through your resurrection love. Amen



# On the journey of hope this Easter Week



**If there is anywhere on earth, a lover of God who is always kept safe, I know nothing of it, for it was not shown to me. But this was shown: that in**

**falling and rising again we are always kept in that same precious love.**

Julian of Norwich, quoted in *Journey to Contentment* by Sally Welch (BRF, 2020)

## Thought for the week

On the first day of creation,  
God said, 'Let there be light!'  
On the first day of resurrection,  
the Father said, 'Let there be Jesus!'  
Rejoice, therefore, that the darkness is  
passing, as the dayspring from on high  
dawns upon us.  
Hallelujah!

## Pray with us for

- Those rereading the resurrection stories, that they may be encouraged and blessed
- Those coming to the end of this year's BRF Lent and Easter books
- The editors of BRF's Bible reading notes – Sally Welch, Helen Paynter, Jackie Harris, Daniele Och and Eley McAinsh – as they work on future Lent and Easter readings
- BRF's contribution in the faithful proclamation and exploration of the good news of the resurrection through our publications and online resources
- All who are hearing for the first time that 'Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!' and who rejoice this week with the many voices proclaiming this truth.

**Death-defeating,  
darkness-chasing  
door-opening God,  
may the truth of the resurrection  
light up our world this day,  
helping us to live differently,  
love fearlessly  
and lean faithfully on Jesus  
for whatever lies ahead. Amen**



# For God's work through Anna Chaplaincy

Praying 'in the name of Jesus' means to pray 'in accordance with his nature', and this is the essence of the Christian life.

*When You Pray* by Joanna Collicutt (BRF, 2019)



## Thought for the week

Whatever we are experiencing, God is with us;  
 wherever we go, God is close beside us;  
 however we feel, God is moved within us;  
 and when death comes, God will offer Jesus on our behalf.  
 God is our forever, and for all things,  
 God of love.

## *Pray with us for*

- Inspiration and perseverance for those who have been appointed as Anna Chaplains to work among older people in their communities
- A greater awareness of the resources and support material for older people
- Debbie Thrower, Alex Burn, Julia Burton-Jones and Wendy Hopkins as they plan together future initiatives and support for the growing Anna Chaplaincy network
- Those who work in the care sector seeking to support the spiritual welfare of residents and their families
- God's promise of 'bearing fruit in old-age' to be the experience for all older people

Lord God, who in Christ  
 experienced helplessness and vulnerability,  
 surround with your comfort  
 those who at this time are struggling,  
 with broken minds and failing health.  
 Though they may not remember, who or where they are,  
 you are the God who always remembers.  
 Please hold their memories in safekeeping  
 until they are whole again,  
 at home with you in heaven. Amen

# For the BRF trustees and senior managers

**Prayer is never about persuading God, but it is sometimes about partnering with him in seeing a difficult situation resolved.**

*Prayer in the Making* by Lyndall Bywater (BRF, 2019)

## Thought for the week


Prayer helps us to have the strength to deal with what we will face when we get up from our knees.

Timothy Bavin OSB, quoted in *Life with St Benedict* by Richard Frost (BRF, 2019)



## Pray with us for

- Richard Fisher, BRF's chief executive, that God will give him 'a spirit of knowledge, understanding and wise counsel'
- BRF's trustees, who advise and steer the work and responsibilities of the charity
- BRF's senior managers – Olivia Warburton, Sara Sheerin, Jay Elliot, Julie MacNaughton and Karen Laister – as they work with Richard and the trustees
- For all BRF managers who have responsibilities for others in their teams, that they will encourage initiative and creativity, while offering prayer and pastoral support
- Plans for next year's BRF centenary programme, to mark this milestone



Long-suffering, promise-keeping God,  
you always act at the right time,  
because your purposes are rooted in eternity.  
Grant us a faith that can wait  
and a patience that can trust  
in your big-picture plans  
for the detail of our lives;  
through Christ,  
whose coming and saving was prepared  
before the world began. Amen

# For God's work through Holy Habits



**I am pleased that you teach sacred theology to the brothers, providing that you do not extinguish the spirit of prayer and devotion during study of this kind.**

Francis of Assisi, quoted in *Franciscan Footprints* by Helen Julian (BRF, 2020)

## Thought for the week

Let our words this day  
be helpful and kind,  
be holy and creative,  
be healing and compassionate,  
seasoned with salt and a blessing to all.

## *Pray with us for*

- BRF's intentional focus on discipleship in all its programmes, with the aim of enabling all ages to grow in their faith
- A fresh understanding of how to apply insights from Acts 2:42–47 for today's church
- Churches who are using Holy Habits for developing whole-church discipleship
- For leaders in churches as they consider the best way to develop discipleship after the disruptions of 2020
- For Andrew Roberts and BRF as together they consider new publications, online resources and seminars to help make disciples of all nations

Shepherding God,  
whose flock we are,  
led gently by still waters,  
accompanied in the shadow of death  
and carried lovingly in your arms,  
may we hear you call us by name,  
as patiently you count us home  
and become our living door  
through the darkness of this night. Amen



# The BRF prayer

Almighty God,  
you have taught us that your word is a lamp for our feet  
and a light for our path. Help us, and all who prayerfully read your word,  
to deepen our fellowship with you and with each other through your love.  
And in so doing may we come to know you more fully, love you more truly  
and follow more faithfully in the steps of your Son Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forevermore.  
Amen

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