



100 years of God's blessing



Richard Fisher, BRF's chief executive, looks forward to a special year of celebration for BRF, and looks back on a local act of faith that God has multiplied to touch millions of lives.

In January 2022 it will be exactly 100 years since Revd Leslie Mannering

offered the first monthly leaflet of Bible readings to his congregation at St Matthew's Church, Brixton. As he wrote in the parish magazine at the time, 'Why should we not have a great parochial Fellowship for the purpose of deepening the life of Prayer, Bible-reading and Holy Communion in each one of us? We will make the venture, believing that God calls us to this.'

God has certainly blessed that vision! We look back with immense gratitude: for all that he has made possible; for the many people – staff, trustees, writers, volunteers – who have played a part in BRF's ministry over the years; and for the countless individuals, groups and churches that have been impacted.

From local to global

Marking BRF's 75th anniversary in 1997, I wrote about a sense of continuing on a journey that had begun long before many of us were even born. Twenty-five years later that journey carries on still. Along the way, BRF has embraced new ideas, new technologies and new ministry opportunities, most notably Messy Church, Anna Chaplaincy and Parenting for Faith. I find it striking that all three,

now integral parts of BRF's wider ministry alongside Living Faith, started (just like BRF) in a single church, with the aim simply to address a particular local need. And in each case, again like BRF itself, they have grown into a national, if not international, ministry. There is so much for which we want to give thanks.

'The best is yet to be'

Who knows what the future holds? While the world around us has changed immeasurably since January 1922, the vision at the heart of BRF remains the same, reflected in our strapline: 'Enabling all ages to grow in faith.' It seems appropriate to quote Margery Sykes, BRF's first biographer back in 1958: 'And so the story of BRF goes on... into a future where big decisions of policy may have to be made, and through which, in the never-failing goodness of God, we may with humility and gratitude be assured that the "best is yet to be"'

To rephrase the words of Mannering: 'We shall continue the venture, believing that God calls us to this'.

We hope you'll want to support and be part of our centenary celebrations. Details are on our special leaflet 'Sharing the story since 1922' and at brf.org.uk/centenary

IN THIS ISSUE:

Easing the way back for vulnerable older people

Parenting teens for a life of faith

Our new Centenary Prayer

And much more...

Sharing the story

To mark our centenary we'll be sharing the story of BRF – from tiny local church initiative to a ministry with global reach!



Celebrate with us!

We'd love you to give thanks with us – whether you join our special online service next spring, watch (and share) our centenary video, buy a centenary rose or choose one of our special celebratory books.

Find out more at brf.org.uk/centenary

Do you feel BRF has made a difference in your life?

Please let us know! Maybe God has spoken to you through a book or Bible reflection at a significant time in your life. Perhaps you have a special memory from being involved in Anna Chaplaincy, Living Faith, Messy Church or Parenting for Faith. Whether long or short, from the recent or the distant past, please send your personal BRF story to testimonies@brf.org.uk or to the address on the back of this newsletter. Please entitle your note 'My BRF story'.



'I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident... that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion.'

PHILIPPIANS 1:4-6 (NIV)

Hello from Julie and the fundraising team

Thank you for all the ways you are raising funds to help us fulfil our vision to 'enable all ages to grow in faith'.



Special thanks to everyone who took the opportunity to remember BRF in making or updating their will during 'make a will month' in

October. This is an incredibly special way to support us, and we are most grateful.

Double your donation

As you'll see on the next page, this year there's a fantastic opportunity to have your donation to Anna Chaplaincy doubled, as BRF is taking part in **The Big Give Christmas Challenge!** Read the article to find out how you can help.

The BRF Centenary Rose



As we look towards 2022, I'm delighted to see orders for our Centenary Rose coming in. You can order via brf.org.uk/centenary or at the contact details below.

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Cards for Easter 2022

Thank you to everyone who has placed orders for greetings cards and gift wrap. Your feedback has been fantastic! For those looking ahead, we will once again have Easter cards available in early 2022.

On behalf of myself and the fundraising team, my very best wishes and thank you for all your support.

Make your money go further this Christmas

Please remember BRF as you buy your gifts and cards this Christmas. The money raised through the initiatives below all adds up, funding our mission to equip thousands of local Christians to grow in faith and help others do the same.

Christmas cards and gift wrap

It's not too late to order for Christmas. Please go to brfonline.org.uk/cards or contact our fundraising team on the details below.

Alternative Christmas gifts

In lieu of a Christmas gift or in memory of a loved one, why not make a donation to BRF or one of our ministries? Or you could pay for someone to become a Friend of BRF and gift a regular monthly donation to last throughout the year.

Raise funds for free when you shop online

When you're doing your Christmas shopping, don't forget to use **Give as You Live** and **Amazon Smile**.



You can find more information on these ways to raise money for us at no cost to you at brf.org.uk/give



What can I do today to make a difference to someone else?

That's a question Jane Butcher, BRF's volunteer advocate lead, has asked herself since the beginning of the pandemic.

Others may be asking similar questions, as we consider what it means to engage in community. For many, volunteering enables them to do this. For some of our BRF volunteers, it is second nature:

'I was brought up in a small church where everyone pitched in – and volunteering was just part of what it meant to belong.'

'Volunteering is a tradition in my family.'

For others, a new season of life has enabled new opportunities:

'Volunteering has changed my life since retiring from work. I have met some wonderful people and discovered that I missed my true vocation in life.'

At BRF we have numerous volunteer opportunities, including becoming a local church champion – sharing the work of BRF with your local church – or a BRF networker – sharing more widely.

Whether you've always volunteered or you'd like to step out and try something new, why not consider it?

To find out about volunteering with BRF, go to brf.org.uk/volunteer



Dementia groups – lifeline for the vulnerable

Many older people feel that the lack of social interaction and stimulation during the pandemic has had a detrimental effect on their cognitive abilities. Restarting groups for those living with dementia has been especially crucial, says **Julia Burton-Jones**, BRF's Anna Chaplaincy churches lead.

Across the country, Anna Chaplains are involved in groups and activities designed to offer support and friendship to people living with dementia and their families. Called a dementia café, a memory café or perhaps a forget-me-not group, the focus is on overcoming isolation: enabling people to establish friendships with others in a similar situation, while finding out what other help is available locally.

A tough time for all

Under Covid-19, life has been extremely difficult for people with dementia and their families. Often the groups and activities on which they had relied were paused. For the person with dementia, lack of companionship and stimulation often prompted a decline in cognitive ability. For the carer, diminished support caused physical and emotional exhaustion. Out of concern for the well-being of those they supported, Anna Chaplains kept in touch through regular phone calls or doorstep visits.

Careful planning

With the easing of restrictions, many Anna Chaplains and their churches have planned a safe reopening of groups and activities. Rochester diocese held Zoom meetings to support churches in their planning. Participants shared approaches to risk assessment and working with other local organisations, and health and social care professionals were on hand to give guidance.

The joy of meeting up

One of the first groups to start again in the diocese was the companion café at St Werburgh's Church in Hoo. This had formerly been an Alzheimer's Society dementia café, with Anna



Chaplain Margaret Hollands taking on leadership (with the support of the local Alzheimer's Society) just as the pandemic began. After the first session back in June, Margaret had only been expecting a handful of guests:

‘Lack of companionship and stimulation often prompted a decline in cognitive ability’

‘We had 21 people plus six helpers. There was such a buzz round the church, even though tables and chairs were placed to ensure social distancing. We had a lot of new people. Everyone was so pleased to be able to meet old friends and make new ones – the feedback has been very positive.’

Partners in care

The national focus on ‘social prescribing’ in overcoming loneliness has brought closer links between churches and care providers in supporting people with dementia and their carers. Anna Chaplaincy is enabling great partnership work in an area of pressing need.

Coming soon...

The Spiritual Care Series: a new eight-week training course for churches who want to equip members with skills to come alongside older people and provide spiritual support. This excellent introductory course complements and adds to the range of training courses and materials offered by BRF's Anna Chaplaincy for Older People.

Double your donation to Anna Chaplaincy!

Donate through **The Big Give Christmas Challenge 2021** and your gift will be doubled, through this national initiative that raises millions of pounds for charities each year.

We're excited that this year Anna Chaplaincy for Older People is an approved beneficiary for **The Big Give Christmas Challenge**, a nationwide initiative enabling charities to receive match funding. We're aiming to raise £20,000 to train, equip and nurture Anna Chaplains across the UK in their vital work to combat the loneliness many old people face.



The Big Give Christmas Challenge takes place for **one week** from **30 November to 7 December**.

During this time, all donations made through The Big Give website to Anna Chaplaincy **will be doubled through match funding – up to £10,000**.

Every gift makes a difference

Please take part to support our Anna Chaplaincy for Older People ministry. Even a small donation will have an impact, as it will be doubled by The Big Give. Just go to the website below and search for ‘Anna Chaplaincy’. Thank you.

Please make your donation to Anna Chaplaincy for Older People between **noon on Tuesday 30 November and noon on Tuesday 7 December** at donate.thebiggive.org.uk

Spiritually parenting your teen (when all they do is grunt!)



Becky Sedgwick, BRF's Parenting for Faith local coordinator, offers three great tips for anyone with teens in their life.

As a child, my daughter had loved church. Now she was becoming a teenager, I began to worry. Would she end up with a faith that stuck? What was she hearing from her peers? Did she pray? How could I help her really know and connect with God? I desperately wanted her to, but felt powerless to influence her.

Parenting a teen can feel very different from parenting younger children, but the tools and skills we teach at Parenting for Faith work just as well for both age groups. Here are three tips:

1 Be confident: research tells us that parents are still hugely influential for teens. You are the expert in your child, and they need you to help them navigate this brave new world and learn how to 'do life' with God, as a grown up.

'God has promised to give wisdom to those who ask'

2 Stay connected: deliberately create time to be together. Put up with those late night conversations or find other ways to prioritise them and hear them.

3 Be courageous: Being the parent of a teen means letting them go – and maybe letting go of our expectations as we discover who our child is growing to be. You're not alone: church is there to help.

Remember that God loves your teenager even more than you do and longs for them to love him back. God has promised to give wisdom to those who ask. As parents of teens we need that!

Read the full article at parentingforfaith.org/post/three-cs-teen

Find more tips on parenting teens for faith at parentingforfaith.org/topics/teenagers

Surviving Christmas stress!



The festive period can be stressful, but Parenting for Faith have made sure no one has to face the challenges alone.

Christmas often brings all sorts of issues for families, from awkward questions from the children to problems with finances. We've dug into past **Parenting for Faith podcast** episodes to unearth some great ways to minimise the headaches and maximise the joy! Whether it's resisting the pressure to meet expectations (episode 52), gift-buying on a budget (episode 92), dealing with 'Father Christmas' (episode 93), the historical accuracy of Herod (episode 54) or exploring how the Nativity characters found and met Jesus (episode 53), support is at hand.

Browse past episodes at parentingforfaith.org/podcast



Celebrate the 'Messy' joy of Christmas

The wonderful Messy Church community is collaborating across international borders to bring Christmas cheer to the world of social media, with the Messy Church Advent Calendar.

Each day throughout Advent, a new post will appear featuring a joyful song, video clip or image from a Messy Church somewhere in the world, to celebrate Jesus bringing joy to the whole world at Christmas.

To follow the Messy Church Advent Calendar, find 'Messy Church – BRF' on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.



Messy Church shout-out!



As mission support officer for children and young people, **Aike Kennett-Brown** supports Messy Churches in Southwark diocese. She's also a volunteer member of three BRF Messy Church support teams.

Aike organises a biannual Messy Cathedral event, making her a skilled member of the Specialists team. As a Trainer, she delivers our popular Masterclasses, and as an Alongsider, coaches leaders in developing their Messy Church or working through a challenge. Passionate about equipping others in their ministry, Aike offers a huge amount of time, practical and prayerful support, and advice to BRF's Messy Church team. We are extremely grateful. Thank you, Aike!

A centenary celebration of BRF's Bible reading heritage

Olivia Warburton, BRF's Living Faith lead, introduces a beautiful book of Bible reflections, published for our centenary year, for you to use and treasure.

The BRF Book of 365 Bible Reflections is a celebration.

It celebrates BRF's long history of encouraging Bible reading and everyday faith since 1922. Even more than that, it's a celebration of the Bible itself and how it continues to speak into people's lives today.

Something for everyone

The BRF Book of 365 Bible Reflections offers a Bible reading and reflection for every day of the year. It's designed for people at all stages of faith and for both those who already know something of BRF's work and those who don't.

Our vision was to have each reflection written by a different contributor, and so we 'shared the story' (our overarching centenary theme) among a large team of writers. You'll find contributions from the archbishops of Canterbury and York and many other authors, supporters and well-wishers from all areas of BRF's work and across a wide range of traditions. The result is a glorious collection of different perspectives on God's word, and we are hugely grateful to everyone who has contributed their time and talents to this project.

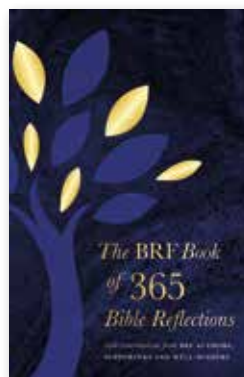
'A glorious collection of different perspectives on God's word'

For every occasion

The readings and reflections span the breadth of the Bible narrative, journeying through the Old and New Testaments. There is also material for seasons of the church year, alongside sections on particular themes, such as family and old age. The final section is inspired by the five marks of mission adopted by the Anglican Communion: tell, teach, tend, transform and treasure. Through this framework, our writers explore how we should live our lives and how the word of God can shape us and make a difference in our own lives – and, through us, in the lives of others.

Our hope is that this book will resource people's spiritual journeys and enable all ages to grow in faith.

Proceeds from the sale of this book will go to support BRF's Living Faith ministry.



Browse sample pages at brfonline.org.uk/365-bible-reflections



Christmas and New Year office opening hours

To allow our staff to enjoy the Christmas break with friends and families, our phone lines and office will close for the Christmas period at midday on Friday 24 December and reopen on Tuesday 4 January 2022 at 9.30 am.

Ordering a gift for Christmas?



In case of seasonal postage delays, we suggest placing any orders for Christmas by 10 December, either by phone (on 01865 319700) or via brfonline.org.uk.

Online orders made over the Christmas period will be fulfilled in early January 2022, and we will respond to any email/telephone queries when our office reopens. Thank you for your understanding.



Celebrating Christmas

On 18 November you're invited to join us for an evening to pause, reflect and celebrate all things Advent and Christmas.

Advent can be a particularly busy time of year, so we're taking some time out just ahead of the season to slow down, unwind and make room to reflect. Join us to bring in the season with music from Lou Fellingham, crafts with Katie Norman and some thought-provoking sessions with authors Amy Boucher Pye and Jo Swinney.

Tickets cost £10 and are available from brfonline.org.uk/products/celebrating-christmas

Join us in our Centenary Prayer

At BRF we're acutely conscious that our survival and growth over 100 years is testament to God's provision and guidance. To mark this momentous anniversary, we asked **Martyn Payne**, our volunteer prayer advocate, to write a special Centenary Prayer. Here he tells us how he went about it.



So how do you set about writing a special prayer?

I realise that not everyone is a fan of the 'set prayer', but I think most of us appreciate using, from time to time, a prayer that helps us to pray. The words of the Lord's Prayer are a case in point, and you will have other favourites that have helped you on your Christian journey. There's no doubt that well-constructed and thoughtful words, particularly those composed for corporate use on special occasions, can be like a good poem that simply and succinctly captures what everyone wants to say to God. Producing such a prayer to mark BRF's centenary was understandably a challenge which called for input from others within the BRF family, and most importantly the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit.

Looking back with thanks and looking forward with vision

Early in 2020, I led a workshop online with BRF trustees and some of its managers, as we considered what would make a good centenary prayer. In a few carefully chosen words, how could we look back with thanks for God's faithfulness and look forward with vision and hope? How should we celebrate BRF's publications and varied ministries; acknowledge its many initiatives and priorities; and point to its rootedness in the Bible? At the same time, how could we make sure this prayer was accessible for all to use, both in community and in times of personal devotion? I was glad of the wise input from trustees and staff that day. They articulated a helpful framework as I set out on this task.

Eventually three prayers emerged, of varying lengths, detail and imagery, and a fourth one, which drew on the best of the first three. These went back to BRF's trustees and managers earlier this year, and so eventually, with minor alterations, a centenary prayer was born!

A prayer for everyone

We do hope you like this prayer and will use it, either as it is, or perhaps as a pattern for your own personal prayers, as you give thanks for how God, through BRF, has blessed you with its publications and ministries.

The Centenary Prayer offers us all a framework for our celebrations in 2022. One example of this will be found in the next BRF prayer diary. From January to April each page takes one line or phrase of this new prayer and uses that to stimulate further thoughts and quotes on prayer, as well as offering focused biddings for your praying. It is written as a prayerful reflection on the Centenary Prayer itself!

Let the words echo inside us

And like all community prayers, it is best said slowly and with a brief, deliberate pause between the lines. This keeps the focus solely on God and lets the words echo inside us, so they can inspire ever greater praise, thankfulness and faith.

We invite you to pray this new prayer with us.

The BRF Centenary Prayer

Gracious God,
we rejoice in this centenary year
that you have grown BRF
from a local network of Bible readers
into a worldwide family of ministries.
Thank you for your faithfulness
in nurturing small beginnings
into surprising blessings.
We rejoice that, from the youngest to the oldest,
so many have encountered your word
and grown as disciples of Christ.
Keep us humble in your service,
ambitious for your glory
and open to new opportunities.
For your name's sake
Amen

To download our seasonal prayer diary and discover other ways to support BRF in prayer, please go to brf.org.uk/pray. To receive a printed copy of the current prayer diary, please contact us (see below).

STOP PRESS! We're delighted to announce that all being well, the BBC's *Songs of Praise* will feature BRF's centenary in a transmission in January 2022.



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