



‘First and foremost there is prayer’



BRF volunteer prayer advocate Martyn Payne explains why prayer is still at the heart of BRF’s work

‘First and foremost there is prayer.’ Written by the Revd Leslie Mannering 100 years ago,

on the eve of the launch of what became The Bible Reading Fellowship, these words are a rallying call for all Christian mission and ministry.

Founded on prayer

As the congregation in his parish of St Matthew’s Brixton responded to the call, prayer became the foundation to the work of producing weekly Bible notes. A century later, this work has grown into today’s exciting range of ministries under the BRF banner. Prayer must remain the foundation for our work.

Abiding in him

Our Lord reminds us in John 15 that, if we do not abide in him, we cannot bear fruit. ‘Abiding in God through Christ’ is an apt description of prayer. Although often it is need that drives us to our knees, the heart of prayer is being in the presence of God. After all, God already knows what we need, but wants us to ask him anyway, because, amazingly, he longs that we should enjoy intimacy with him.

Pray with us

The emphasis on Bible reading and prayer is the lifeblood of BRF; and it is for

this reason that in recent years we have renewed the call to prayer. The Living Faith ministry has a range of resources that explore prayer, offering advice and encouragement about how to make it part of our everyday discipleship. In our seasonal prayer diary, I include quotes from these books to help us pray. Many of the new prayers published daily on social media also appear in the prayer diary. Some will be published later this year in a new volume, *The BRF Book of 100 Prayers*. Alongside these prayer resources, you can subscribe to a weekly prayer email from CEO Richard Fisher.

These prayer initiatives serve a double purpose: while keeping us all informed about particular needs, they also call us back to the heart of prayer or ‘abiding in Christ’. Only then can we pray according to his will, and be in tune with God’s kingdom purposes – for BRF, our own discipleship and God’s wider mission today.

All this reminds us afresh that ‘first and foremost there is prayer’. In this centenary year, we are so grateful for the army of pray-ers who have responded to this call. Because of them, BRF has indeed been fruitful and will remain so in the years to come.

Please continue to ‘pray with us’ for BRF.

Go to brf.org.uk/pray or call 01865 319700 for a copy of our prayer diary

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Pray with us...

God of grace,
surprise us in the ordinary of every day;
console us in the dilemmas we face;
inspire us when we don’t know what to do;
encourage us in the depths of our being,
that we might taste afresh
the joy of eternal life,
in the here and now.
Amen



Share a prayer

Our popular daily prayer posts on Facebook and Twitter make it easy to enjoy and share prayers with friends.

Our prayer ‘shareables’ are a great prompt to pause and pray as you go about your day. The thoughtful words and colourful designs cover a wide range of subjects and can easily be shared with friends, family and church groups. Why not check the post for today and send it to someone you’d like to encourage or tag them in a comment?

Find us at facebook.com/brfcharity and twitter.com/brfcharity

‘If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.’

JOHN 15:5 (NIV)



Sharing
the Story
since 1922



Hello from Julie and the fundraising team

I'd like to say a huge thank you

to everyone who has donated to our annual appeal. I continue to be amazed at the generosity of BRF's supporters! If you'd like to, there's still time to get involved – please visit brf.org.uk/appeal.

I'm delighted to reveal our new range of **Christmas cards**, now available at brfonline.org.uk/cards. (Postal order forms will be included in the September issue of BRF News.) Don't forget our range of cards for everyday and special occasions includes beautiful **wedding cards and birthday cards** in a variety of designs (see selection on the right).

Thank you to all who have bought cards to support our vital work.

Friends of BRF is a fabulous way to support our ministries through a regular monthly gift. We would love more people to get on board. Please go to brf.org.uk/friends or phone our friendly team on **01235 462305**.

Looking ahead, there's a significant opportunity in November to support Parenting for Faith through **The Big Give Christmas Challenge 2022**. We aim to equal the £20,000 we raised in 2021 for Anna Chaplaincy. To find out how your donation could go further through this match-funding campaign, please keep

an eye out for the November issue of BRF News.

Thank you to everyone who supports BRF in so many ways: through prayers, donations, gifts in wills and spreading the word about our work. We are so grateful for all that you do.

Julie MacNaughton and the fundraising team



View our range of beautiful cards at brfonline.org.uk/cards

A beautiful 'thank you'

Thanks to a generous supporter, two Anna Chaplains have been gifted a centenary rose each for their gardens.



We were delighted when a very kind supporter offered to buy two BRF centenary roses as a 'thank you' to Anna Chaplains. BRF Vice President Ann Persson helped us randomly select two names and now both Anna Chaplains have had a wonderful surprise!



Stephanie was thrilled to hear she'd be receiving a BRF centenary rose. 'I love noticing what's coming and going in the garden,' she says. 'I'm just not very skilled at controlling how that happens!' Her rose is in a pot so it can move with her to her next parish.

Gardens open in rural Wales

A stream runs through the farmhouse garden in 'deepest Wales' belonging to Trina Lodge, an ordained priest and Anna Chaplain, who has two care homes on her patch.

'I had no thoughts that I would receive a rose,' says Trina. 'Then I got the call from Julie telling me to look out for it, and this amazing box arrived. It was beautifully packaged and so exciting to open it and see this very healthy looking, good sized plant. We're having an open garden next month to raise funds for our churches, and I was needing another rose for a little rose bed. It couldn't be more perfect!



One for me, two for you

Mike Wilkinson, a BRF trustee, bought three centenary roses – two for family members. His own rose has joined others in his garden in south-west London. 'I was excited to have something tangible and beautiful to commemorate BRF's centenary year,' he says. 'The rose has two big flowers on it and more buds on the way.'



A lasting pleasure

Further north, BRF head of fundraising, Julie, is thankful that 'My own centenary rose has survived a harsh Yorkshire winter and now the summer is here, it's great to see it in bloom.'

How to order your rose

Whether it's to say 'thank you', a wedding or anniversary present, or for your own garden, BRF centenary roses are available to order now.

■ Order via brfonline.org.uk/rose or use the leaflet enclosed.

Pot-à-porter

Stephanie Mawhinney, a curate in greater Manchester, was the second happy recipient. Since being ordained last year, she has set up a local team of three Anna Chaplains and ten Anna Friends.



Equip your church for effective older people's ministry

Churches are recognising the need to offer high-quality spiritual care to a rapidly growing older population. And God is calling compassionate and empathic people to this ministry. Now a new resource equips them with the knowledge and skills to provide a professional-standard service.

The *Spiritual Care Series* is an eight-session course and includes:

- two facilitator guides and six participants workbooks
- access to an online learning platform and the course videos
- DVD containing the course videos

The *Spiritual Care Series* offers a valuable and effective way for churches to **invest in the well-being of older people** in their community.

Find out more at annachaplaincy.org.uk/spiritual-care-series



Anna Chaplaincy seal of approval for new resources

Anna Chaplaincy local co-ordinator Pam Nobbs can't speak highly enough of the new *Spiritual Care Series* we're launching in the UK this year.

Pam was part of a group which road-tested the materials in Newcastle in 2018. 'We thought it was wonderful,' she says. 'It was such an excellent course and we all agreed how helpful it has been.'

Equipping churches for older people's ministry

The course consists of eight videos designed to inform and stimulate discussion and experiential learning. Created for churches and groups who want learn how better to minister to older people, it offers online access to further materials, with tests to monitor progress.

Pam was impressed by the high production values and the well-targeted 'totally relevant' content: 'It explored situations that all of us were likely to encounter at some point in our work with older people.'

Active listening

What stood out most for Pam was the emphasis on the importance of storytelling and the training in 'active listening'. 'Of course, the two are related,' she says. 'To really hear somebody's story is so powerful, both for the person speaking and the person listening.'

And for older people, it becomes even more relevant because they've got masses of story to tell.'

She also valued the content on 'the actual process of ageing, whether physical, mental or spiritual ageing'. 'It was helpful to understand more about the process,' she says, 'and the definition of spirituality. It's such a slippery word!'

Universally relevant

'The other great thing about the course,' says Pam, 'is that it's relevant to people in all denominations, all religions even, and people of no religion.' Pam's group was facilitated by Donald Mowat, a retired psychiatrist specialising in old age, and included Methodists, Baptists, Anglicans and a community church member.

During lockdown, Pam went on to lead the *Spiritual Care Series* course on Zoom with Margaret Weaver, an Anna Chaplain in Morpeth, and she's now looking forward to offering an 'in person' course in the coming months.

Find out more at annachaplaincy.org.uk/spiritual-care-series



‘The natural world is shouting about God!’

A useful new book helps all ages connect with God as they experience the natural world close up.

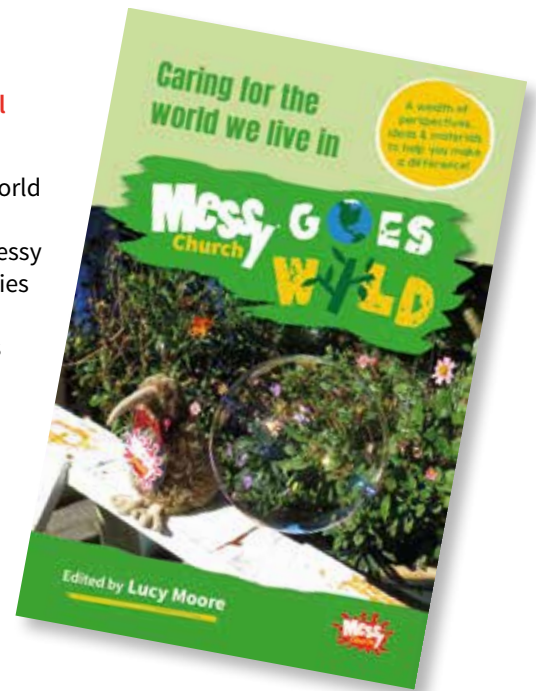
With relevance far beyond the world of Messy Church, *Messy Church Goes Wild* is the latest book from this dynamic ministry. It spearheads a whole strand of activities designed to help these inclusive, intergenerational church communities become more sustainable, reduce their carbon footprint and connect with the environment. Why? Because by interacting with nature in creative, Christ-centred and innovative ways, we are participating in God’s own love for his creation.

Worshipping Jesus through his creation

In her introduction, Lucy Moore describes how the beauty, diversity and

interconnectedness of the natural world reflect the glory of its creator. ‘[It] is shouting about God!’ she says. ‘In Messy Church we want to make opportunities where more people are able to hear these shouts and to respond in ways that draw them closer to Jesus. I want to find out more about what it means to worship the risen Jesus, in and through the creativity of creation. This book is just the start. In it, you’ll find plenty of thought-provoking and informed passion to help us ... become more the people God calls us to be towards the planet.’

Read sample pages for free at brfonline.org.uk/mcgw



In search of the great outdoors – and its maker!

The new *Messy Church Goes Wild* book spearheads a collection of initiatives to foster a love for, and good stewardship of, the environment – including twelve ‘Messy Adventures’...

Fun activities with a strong scientific focus, fascinating information, discussion questions and creative ways to respond in worship – that’s what’s on the menu in each of the new Messy Adventures. Created with the help of scientific experts, these aim to give Messy Church leaders in rural or urban settings the confidence to take their families outside. Revd Margaret Gallagher’s Messy Church team in Leeds tried them out as an extra half-term activity.

Exploring, discovering, reflecting, resolving

‘We started with *Wild and rocky!*, which aims to get up close and personal with soil, mud, sand, rocks and stones, to explore themes like being in a hard place, the hugeness of numbers of grains of sand or the age of rocks, and the miraculous richness of soil, despite its dull, everyday appearance. We picked the *On the move* option with a half-mile walk to a country park, stopping along the way to look at various things. It was great to chat to the families as we walked. When we arrived, we shared the

creation story, talked about how God formed us from the dust of the ground, and carried out soil experiments. Back in the church garden we played the ‘traffic light game’, considering what’s good, what we should stop and what we should continue to do to protect God’s creation. We also made bug houses and finished with a snack.’

Margaret says members of the wider community have been offering to help. ‘We’ve been approached to ask if we’d like to take one of our Messy Adventures to a local allotment.’ Her Messy Church team are planning to take another wander back to the country park: ‘It will be interesting to explore the areas we visited before and see how they look at different times of the year. We’re planning to tackle *Wild and wiggly* to discover more about God and the importance of minibeasts in the circle of life. We’ll remind ourselves that God the creator saw all that he had made and it was good – even creepy crawlies!’

Find out more at messychurch.org.uk/goeswild

‘Made for the sea’

The first Messy Church conference since 2019 was a great time of fellowship and equipping, says ministry lead Aike Kennett-Brown.

The worship song that Andy Flannagan taught us – ‘We’re not made for the harbour, we’re made for the sea’ – reflects two aspects of the conference. The ‘safe harbour’ it provided allowed tired leaders to be refreshed and new leaders to be inspired as they seek to engage families in a post-lockdown world. And the encouragement to be outward-focussed in our ministries was mirrored in the Communion celebration, where over 100 leaders were commissioned to ‘be Jesus’ and make a difference for God’s kingdom in their different contexts and countries.



‘Why has nobody told me this before?’

Health problems forced Erica to give up work. But while she was off work, God was very much at work – in her life, in her church, in her career and in her family.



‘For about 20 years I’ve been involved in drawing alongside families: in my secular job, in church life and as a volunteer,’ says Erica. Having read the book *Parenting Children for a Life of Faith*, and followed the ministry’s podcast, she was ‘hungry for more’. Taking a leap of faith, she invested in the BRF/Cliff College Parenting for Faith certificate course. It was a turning point: ‘God changed my mindset and approach! With Parenting for Faith, children’s

work is all about cheering parents and grandparents on from the sidelines in their role to disciple children! I thought, *This is so right. Why has nobody told me this before?*’

Families as disciple-makers

‘I love that the Parenting for Faith approach equips families to disciple their own children for a lifelong journey with God,’ Erica explains. And the families in the group she facilitated for the online course felt the same: ‘They were so committed, especially when their children started participating confidently in prayers at church!’

Erica, too, was learning to do things differently: this felt very much like God’s work – she needed to take a step back. ‘It wasn’t about giving advice; it was about affirming, saying, “What would work for your individual family?”’

Investment rewarded

During the pandemic, Erica had helped her church develop an online family time. The culture in the church was gradually changing as she introduced what she’d

‘This felt very much like God’s work’

been learning: ‘Whole families worked together on video contributions – for example, using “Chat and Catch” for the online prayer time.’ The training was bearing fruit for Erica too: with her academic learning combined with this practical experience, she was able to step formally into the role of children’s and families pastor when in-person gatherings picked up again.

Bringing mum home to Jesus

Not only that, the communication tips she was picking up through Parenting for Faith gave

Erica new confidence in sharing her faith, including with her 91-year-old mum (not then a Christian). ‘I could use what I was learning each week to speak to her,’ says Erica. ‘And at the end of her life, she asked to go home to the arms of Jesus.’

Explore the Parenting for Faith Key Tools at parentingforfaith.org/tools

Restored, refreshed

Fifty children’s, youth and family leaders returned home energised and equipped to support their churches...



... after three days resting, recharging, sharing and learning at Parenting for Faith’s The Forge Gathering in May, in Devon. They tell us that our resources are really making a difference! November’s Forge gathering will be in Scotland.

Find out more at parentingforfaith.org/theforge

Meet us at New Wine

There’ll be a chance to meet the Parenting for Faith team at this summer’s New Wine: United conference in July. You can find them in the marketplace, at their daily slots in the families venue and at the afternoon seminars in the 5–7s venue.



Go to parentingforfaith.org/meet-team to see the team

The Parenting for Faith certificate course

Available online and in person, this BRF/Cliff College training course is ideal for children’s, youth and family leaders like Erica.

‘I worried about it being too academic,’ says Erica, ‘but you can do it at your own level and it didn’t take up as much time as I thought. There was so much support – from monthly meetings where you got prayed for, to the Facebook group. There were twelve weeks of videos, and another twelve weeks if you wanted to get the certificate by doing an assessment – such as an essay, a portfolio or reflective writing.’ You can start the online option at any time, and the next in-person course starts in October 2022.

Find out more at parentingforfaith.org/certificate



Hope for a young widow

At our centenary service of thanksgiving, Canon Dr George Lings, vice president of BRF, gave a moving address.

He described how, when a tragic accident left his mother to raise three young boys on her own, her BRF Bible readings enabled her to go on.

‘In her grief and despair, one day God met her. Ancient words came alive, spoke to her, changed her life; gave her hope, strength and fortitude to carry on. From then on, encountering God through the Bible became a daily discipline. She was a beneficiary. So was I. Thank you, God. Thank you, BRF.’



The service is still available to enjoy.

Watch the service at brf.org.uk/centenary

Nurturing a living faith – then and now

A centenary memory

We’ve been delighted to receive many touching letters and emails from all over the world in response to our request to hear your ‘centenary stories’.



One of the most intriguing was from Jill Elliot in Queanbeyan, Australia. Jill told us that she began working with BRF in London in January 1973, just after our 50th anniversary service in St Paul’s Cathedral, in the presence of Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother. ‘I believe the way in which God pointed me to the headquarters of BRF to be quite a miracle,’ she wrote. ‘Within two weeks of my arrival in England, I was welcomed into the BRF family.’

Find out more about our history: brf.org.uk/centenary-brochure

Women of the Bible unveiled

Iris Jenkins, our digital marketing officer, was on a mission before she went on maternity leave at Easter.



The task: to complete a series of eight arresting videos based on the best-selling book by Clare and Micah Hayns, *Unveiled: Women of the Old Testament and the choices they made*. Filmed at Christ Church, Oxford, and in Micah’s studio by Adrian Serecut, our award-winning media producer, these short films are visually stunning, theologically thought-provoking and spiritually inspiring.

Watch the videos and download additional study material at brf.org.uk/unveiled

Guidelines for a post-pandemic world

Our *Guidelines* Bible reading notes, for those who want in-depth study, has new editors from this month.

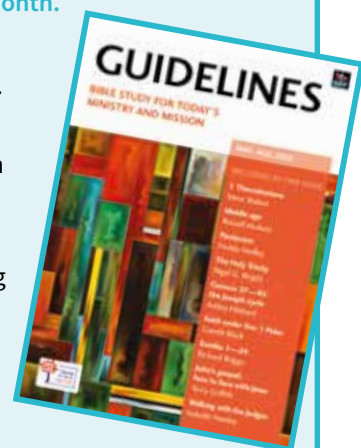
Following Helen Paynter’s departure due to increasing academic commitments, the series will now be edited by Olivia Warburton, BRF’s head of content creation, and Rachel Tranter, our editorial manager.

‘When Helen Paynter stepped down, bringing the editorship in-house seemed a natural transition,’ explains Olivia. ‘Rachel and I are passionate about *Guidelines*’ distinctive offering of Bible study, which informs, and hopefully stretches, readers while remaining firmly applied to living out faith day to day. We’re relishing being involved right from the start of each issue.’

‘Editing *Guidelines* is always such a pleasure – and a challenge,’ adds Rachel. ‘All the contributors bring something unique to the table, and it’s great to work with them to produce such a high-quality series. Looking to the future, I’m excited to expand our pool of writers to include more diversity and to commission up-to-date themes with relevance to our modern, post-pandemic world.’

Interested in trying out *Guidelines*?

Go to brfonline.org.uk/collections/guidelines or call us on 01865 319700



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