

# Prayer diary

4 September–31 December 2022



## Pray with us



Anna Chaplaincy  
Living Faith  
Messy Church  
Parenting for Faith

*Enabling all ages to grow in faith*



One hundred years ago at the beginning of what became the Bible Reading Fellowship, our founder Leslie Mannering wrote this: 'The Spirit must have free play in the development of this movement and that is still our prayer today.'

The work of the third person of the Trinity in our prayer life is both a mystery and a necessity. We may think that we are the ones who shape our prayers and voice them in public or private, but in reality, it is God the Holy Spirit who inspires the words within us and, even before that, stirs our very will to pray in the first place. Just as God created us as bodies that must breathe to live, our spirits must pray to be truly alive. The Spirit makes possible this spiritual breathing, and the 'free play' of prayer is to let that happen more and more, both for the sake of our own discipleship and for the blessing of those for whom and with whom we pray.

The truth is that nothing during this century of BRF's ministry has been achieved without prayer. It's a humbling thought, especially when we may have felt it was us who were working hard! But the truth is that it always was, and is, God at work through us, and that only happens because someone, somewhere, prayed.

Going forward, this spiritual truth has not changed. Unless we continue to be a movement of Bible reading *and prayer*, then the next century is not worth beginning. This is why this prayer diary, along with social media prayer posts, the weekly prayer bulletin and so many BRF publications on prayer, are here to help

us to stay faithful in prayer for the work of our fellowship. Please continue to **pray with us**, so together we will rejoice over the great things the Lord will do.

With prayers for you



Martyn Payne  
BRF volunteer prayer advocate



Lord Jesus Christ,  
Lord of every far horizon  
and of every faithful heart,  
take our small service  
and weave it into your grand purpose.  
For your honour and glory we pray.  
Amen

John Proctor, *The People's Bible Commentary: Matthew*,  
BRF Centenary Classics (BRF, 2022)

# For God's blessing through BRF's ministries

**Prayer is central to the Christian life. Prayer expresses our dependence on God in response to what he is doing in our lives and is the spiritual energy of our relationship with God.**

James Lawrence, *Growing Leaders* (BRF, 2020)

## Thought for the week

Prayer is more powerful than we have yet dared to imagine, for, whenever two or three people agree about a prayer, then God is always present.



Messy Nativity, Jersey

## Pray with us for

- The different ministries of BRF which encourage intergenerational friendships and conversations for the growth of God's kingdom
- Anna Chaplains as they seek creative ways to connect the local church with the elderly in care homes and specialist dementia units
- The autumn Anna Chaplaincy online training course, which begins this month and takes place over six weeks on Saturday mornings
- This week's introduction to Anna Chaplaincy via Zoom for enquirers wishing to know more about this ministry and how to become an Anna Chaplain themselves
- Alex Burn, Julia Burton-Jones, Debbie Ducille, Marian Muskett and Debbie Thrower as they inspire and resource the work of Anna Chaplains across the UK

God of the youngest and the oldest,  
you rejoice in the first smile of a child  
and the last song of a grandparent.  
May each generation be blessed  
by meeting with you in the other,  
and by representing you to each other,  
in the all-age kingdom of God.  
Amen



# For the mission and ministry of Messy Church

**I noticed that the more I talked to God, the more I sensed God talking to me – sometimes in answers to prayer, sometimes through small signs of God’s presence and sometimes by showing me things God wanted me to do.**

Megan Vollmer, *The Upper Room*, Jan–Apr 2022

## Thought for the week

There are so many ways in which God wants to speak to us when we pray. Not just via a word in our head, but through the objects we focus on, the doodles we draw, the view from our window, the memories that return.



## Pray with us for

- Enthusiasm, energy and inspiration for Messy Church teams across the world
- The Messy Church Goes Wild roadshow this coming Saturday in Gloucester, where leaders and families can try out the new Messy Adventure activities
- Inspiration and vision for the BRF Messy Church national team meeting this week
- Churches using the *Get Messy!* magazine, asking that new families may come and hear the good news of Jesus
- Jane Butler, Aike Kennet-Brown and Sally O’Hare, for their daily walk with God

**Thank you, Father God, for your kingdom,  
where everything is being turned the right way up:  
where nobodies become somebodies,  
where the overlooked are noticed,  
where the marginalised take centre-stage  
and where the forgotten are remembered.  
Transform our lives in this upside-down world  
through the power of the cross of Christ,  
which turned defeat into victory,  
suffering into glory  
and an end into a new beginning. Amen**



# For those who lead the BRF family

**Our journey of prayer will be so much easier if we remember that it is an adventure, and that in true adventure, the outcome is uncertain.**

David Cole (ed.), *Celtic Prayer* (BRF, 2022)



## Thought for the week

Without God, we are nothing; without grace, we have nothing; without love, we become nothing; and without prayer, we achieve nothing.

## *Pray with us for*

- A collaborative ministry between the BRF council and senior management team
- Wisdom and grace for Rt Revd Colin Fletcher, Chair of BRF Trustees; and for Canon Dr Christina Baxter, Vice Chair (*pictured*)
- Other members of the BRF council, including Andrew Barton, Alistair Booth, Paul Cox, Paul Goodliffe, Sarah Hayes, Julian Hills, Andrew Howard, Jane Whittington and Mike Wilkinson
- The council meeting this week, asking that God's Holy Spirit will inspire conversations and guide decisions for the glory of God
- The re-issue of *Companions on the Bethlehem Road* by Rachel Boulding, praying it will reach new audiences



Forgive us, Lord,  
for looking at this world, each other and ourselves  
through the broken lens of self-interest.  
Grant us a new vision and teach us your values  
so that we might find true wealth and fulfilment,  
true joy and purpose, in the light of your love,  
of which both angels and babes sing above the heavens  
for all eternity. Amen

# For family life and Parenting for Faith's ministry

**We pray because it is natural to pray, but we easily distort our praying by seeking effectiveness and sensation, subtly analysing what we get from this technique. Maybe prayer is much more like joining in a dance.**

Penny Warren, *Celtic Prayer* (BRF, 2022)

## Thought for the week

Your prayers are joining the invisible network of God's grace at work in our fallen world, to bring about what is good, just, true and beautiful.



## Pray with us for

- The new cohort of learners who have started the Cliff College Certificate in Parenting for Faith this month
- The new online Parenting for Faith course, asking that parents will be better resourced to share their faith with their children
- All Christian parents who tread the difficult line of helping their children to engage positively with 'the world' without being shaped by its negative values
- For Rachel Turner's new book *Parenting Teens for a Life of Faith*, asking that many parents will benefit from its wisdom
- Iona Gray, Anna Hawken, Kate Irvine and Becky Sedgwick as they inspire others with this ministry for our time

Father, as we turn the pages of the Bible,  
with its timeless stories of your love,  
turn our attention to your timely word for us, this day.  
And also, Lord, may our children,  
who may not always name you, but do know you,  
teach us who do name you, to know you better.  
Amen



# For God–given funding to BRF to enable its work

I've also realised the importance of corporate prayer. I certainly find it easier to intercede when I am praying with others. Some church traditions have corporate prayer as part of the daily rhythm, and this is a helpful balance to an occasional over-emphasis on personal prayer.

James Lawrence, *Growing Leaders* (BRF, 2020)

## Thought for the week

Prayer is a precious gift; it is our anytime, any place, any circumstance direct line to God, and all because of what Jesus has done for us.



Course attendees for Certificate in Ministry Among Older People (2018)

## Pray with us

- October is 'Make a Will' month. Pray for the fundraising team, and for solicitors and supporters who are preparing to make or update their will
- Give thanks for all those who support BRF so generously and ask for God's blessing on plans for the Big Give Christmas Challenge later this year
- Also give thanks for the Centenary Rose appeal in BRF's celebration year and for the new contacts and supporters made as result of the centenary events
- Pray for new Friends of BRF, who have pledged to give regularly to our work
- Pray for David Cowen, Jane Dutton, Matthew Duval, Julie MacNaughton, Judith Moore and Alice Willington in the BRF fundraising team

Compassionate God,  
as the nations are shaken,  
raise up champions of goodness, peace and love  
who will be your hands and feet,  
your eyes and ears,  
your words and your wisdom,  
in the heart of our darkness.  
Lord, we believe you are with us.  
Amen



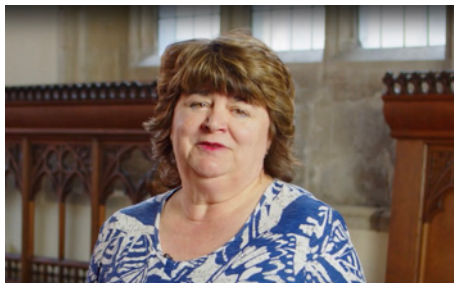
# For BRF staff working in Abingdon or from home

Prayer changes us as we wait and hope. We become more aware of the needs of others, more aware of the presence of God... more aware of God, even in the silence of unanswered prayer.

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

## Thought for the week

Prayer is not what we do in the pauses between working, but rather work itself, that gives our doing meaning and direction.



Julie MacNaughton, head of fundraising at BRF

## Pray with us for

- Those who work in the office in Abingdon, that they might feel encouraged and supported in their ministry
- Those continuing to work from home who miss the dynamics and inspiration that come from in-person meetings. Pray for Sara Sheerin, head of people and culture, as she supports members of the BRF team and helps develop their skills
- The finance and operations team led by Jay Elliott and supported by John Chapman, Tabitha Griffiths and Kirsty Yu
- The supporter services team, including Lisa Bell, Maria Kemaie, Claire Proudman and Taura Wood. May they be inspired by God's love for them
- The marketing and communications team, including Trevor Budd, Jane Butcher, Debbie Clayden, Iona Gray, Stuart Holley, Tracey Jones, Karen Laister and Eley McAinsh. May they be guided by the power of the Holy Spirit

Game-changing God,  
turn our 'we are weary' into 'we are ready';  
turn our 'we are fearful' into 'we are faithful';  
turn our cry for help into a call to hope,  
for your name's sake. Amen





# For God's guidance in networking opportunities

We have learned that prayer is not simply about talking to God, but about stepping into God's flow of love for the world and being drawn ever deeper into God's purpose.

David Cole (ed.), *Celtic Prayer* (BRF, 2022)

## Thought for the week

When seeking to pray, we would do best to spend at least as long stilling ourselves before God as we do eventually in speaking words to God.



## Pray with us for

- Regular BRF staff meetings for prayer, recognising that everything we do must begin, continue and end in dependence on God
- The senior management team away day this week, asking that this will be a time of refreshment and revisioning in the presence of the Lord
- God's blessing on a workshop today on communicating with people with dementia, organised by the Anna Chaplaincy team
- Meetings with other Christian bodies and organisations that BRF may play its part in God's big picture of mission for our day
- Richard Fisher, BRF's CEO, as he supports the senior management team, the ministry leads and trustees



God of all that was and is and is to come,  
no darkness we experience takes you by surprise;  
no fearfulness is outside your love;  
no sadness is beyond your comfort.  
Walk with us hour by hour  
and hold on to us firmly  
as our souls cling to you in hope. Amen

# For Living Faith's influence and ministry

**A healthy prayer life... is more than language, but includes language; is done in both the 'hidden place' and in everyday life.**

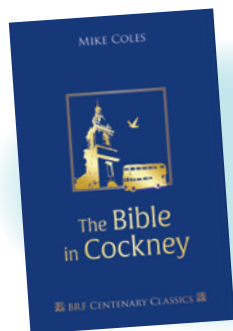
James Lawrence, *Growing Leaders* (BRF, 2020)

## Thought for the week

Whenever we pray, we join in with the never-ceasing prayers of God's people in all places and from eternity to eternity.

## Pray with us for

- The recent publication of another BRF centenary classic, *The Bible in Cockney*
- Living Faith lead Olivia Warburton and Holy Habits lead Karen Laister
- BRF Bible reading notes editors: Gordon Giles, Jackie Harris, Eley McAinsh, Daniele Och, Rachel Tranter and Olivia Warburton, as they commission themes, work with contributors and edit submissions
- All those reading BRF September to December Bible reading notes today
- Those working in BRF's content creation team, including Ben Bloxham, Felicity Howlett, Adrian Serecut and Becca Turnbull



One of BRF's special centenary publications

Thank you, Father God, that your written word leads us to Christ, your living Word, and that through your Spirit, you promise to teach, challenge and inspire us as we read our Bibles and spend time in prayer. Rooted in your words and your presence, may we serve as your disciples in our day, and may people of all ages grow into a living faith, for your glory. Amen



# All who nurture children in the Christian faith

**Prayer is the place of bringing all we are, all we have been and all we hope to be before the Lord – past, present and future.**

Sally McLean & Geoff and Joy Holt, *Celtic Prayer* (BRF, 2022)

## Thought for the week

In his stories, Jesus clearly calls us to ‘persistent prayer’ when faced with some of the tough problems in our world. I wonder how you encourage yourself not to forget to pray regularly for a certain person or situation?



## Pray with us for

- Those who work with children, both within and outside the church
- A recognition of the importance of intergenerational connections for the spiritual health of both young and old
- Those attending online training with Parenting for Faith and those joining the autumn season of Messy Masterclasses
- Those involved in BRF’s finance committee meeting this Thursday
- Those running Messy Vintage services as they seek to bring young people and older people together in a creative, faith-building experience of church

Loving God,  
you created us to know you and be known by you  
in a safe relationship of love.

Help all who are parents, godparents, grandparents, guardians  
and children’s ministers to pray for the children they know,  
to model lives of faith,  
and to encourage an experience of God-connectedness  
for the young ones in their care.  
In the name of Jesus. Amen

# For those who mourn loved ones

**Silence in prayer is never inactive. In silence, we become more aware of our mortality and our powerlessness. In silence, we stop seeking gratification and begin to work on our addiction to mental and physical stimulation. This is prayer at its deepest.**

Penny Warren, *Celtic Prayer* (BRF, 2022)

## Thought for the week

When I still myself to pray, I'm deliberately changing my perspective on everything that is happening around me. I am getting ready to see situations and people, including myself, from God's point of view.



## Pray with us for

- Those who have suffered as a result of wars, the pandemic and other tragedies. Pause to name before God those you know who are suffering
- Publications and online resources which support those who work with the bereaved
- Anna Chaplains leading services on the theme of remembrance, asking that they might have sensitivity in their conversations and good listening skills
- Peacemakers wherever they are working today, that they may be inspired in their efforts to reconcile differences
- Inspiration for those writing BRF Bible reading notes, that their words might speak prophetically into the lives of those who need your encouragement

Lord, in this month of Remembrance,  
we commit ourselves afresh  
to walk the way of peace,  
to love our enemies,  
to welcome the stranger,  
to honour those who have gone before  
and to work on behalf of those who will come after us,  
so that the whole earth may be renewed  
with the peace that passes understanding. Amen



# For BRF's social media posts and online projects

**Approaching prayer as a visual experience, whether by meditating on an image or creating an art object, can help us to express our thoughts and feelings and nurture our ability to reflect and be open to the spiritual dimension.**

Heather Macdonald et al, *Celtic Prayer* (BRF, 2022)

## Thought for the week

Prayer can take many forms. It can be a relaxed conversation, an urgent plea, an angry complaint, a heartfelt lament or a shared silence.



## Pray with us for

- BRF's social posts, that those who engage with them will be drawn into an ever-deeper relationship with God
- Inspiration for those writing prayers and feature articles, and for those selecting quotes from BRF publications to be published online
- Those who connect with BRF's publications online, listen to our podcasts and participate in Facebook Lives – that they will be blessed by these activities
- The publication of the 2023 Lent book this Friday, *Images of Grace*, by poet and storyteller Amy Scott Robinson
- The marketing and comms team involved in creating social media and digital content

Everlasting Father,  
wonderful counsellor,  
prince of peace,  
we cry to you again  
in this broken and divided world,  
asking, for ourselves and for others,  
your comfort, your calm and your companionship,  
as we face whatever today may bring.  
In the name of our mighty God. Amen

# For the writers, editors and readers of BRF's notes

**Some try to manipulate God to act by frequent, long prayers, believing that more prayers can change God's will. They are simply 'testing God' in disguise. We all need to be mindful not to make this mistake.**

Alison Lo, *The BRF Book of 365 Bible Reflections* (BRF, 2021)

## Thought for the week


Don't dare to pray unless you are prepared to be changed as a result of your prayers. Prayer is primarily about opening ourselves up to God's transforming power at work in our hearts.



Eileen Herman, lifelong reader of BRF notes

## Pray with us for

- Readers of *Bible Reflections for Older People*, that the Lord will strengthen their faith
- Readers of *The Upper Room*, that the various voices of Christians from around the world may be an encouragement and a blessing to them
- Readers of *New Daylight* and *Day by Day with God*, that they may be encouraged by the themes, readings and commentary
- Readers of *Guidelines*, that they may find inspiration in its readings for their personal discipleship and, for those who are leaders, that they may be equipped
- Readers, young and old, of *Get Messy!*, that they will find encouragement in what is written that helps grow their own faith, even as they share their faith with others



As we open up our Bibles, Lord,  
expecting to meet with you,  
speak to us and encourage us  
through the honest experiences of your people,  
through the timely words of your prophets,  
through the gospel stories of your Son  
and through the whisper of your Holy Spirit.  
Amen

# For all BRF supporters, advocates and volunteers

Prayer is simply living in the awareness of God with you, like an ever-present companion on a journey. We may not always be speaking to our companion as we walk, but we are aware of their presence, and in our stillness and togetherness there is always space for our companion to speak to us.

David Cole (ed.), *Celtic Prayer* (BRF, 2022)

## Thought for the week

Ultimately, it's not what we say that matters when we pray, but rather that we are inviting God to be at the heart of whatever we do, decide or dream.



Angela Smith, local church champion

## Pray with us for

- Those reading this year's BRF Advent book, *Sharing the Christmas Story*, that each day's reading may help prepare them for the mystery and miracle of Christmas
- Jane Butcher, advocates lead, as she supports and coordinates a team of local church champions and networkers
- The national team of Messy Church volunteers, who help with training, advocacy, writing, prayer and support
- Parenting for Faith volunteers as they support parents and church leaders
- Those freelance and volunteer supporters who are called upon to help out in the BRF office, at particularly busy times of the year, and also for special projects and events

Most High God,  
who chose to become most low,  
open our eyes afresh this Advent  
to the miracle of your grace,  
and remind us of how you,  
who made the heavens and the earth,  
came into our world to live alongside us,  
to make it possible for you to live within us. Amen



# For the BRF staff team this Advent

Abram built altars on his journey. These were places of prayer, where he could remind himself of God's faithful presence. I wonder what today's altar moment of prayer might mean for you. Might it provide an opportunity to look back on, and to look forward to, what God is doing in your life?

Erica Roberts, *Bible Reflections for Older People*, Jan–Apr 2022

## Thought for the week

‘Don’t be too quick to speak. Don’t be in a hurry to say anything to God. God is in heaven. You are on earth. So, use only a few words when you speak.’

ECCLSIASITES 5:2 (NIRV)



## Pray with us for

- The wider Anna Chaplaincy team of volunteers who work alongside Anna Chaplains in the ministry of valuing and nurturing faith among older people in our society
- Those in the marketing and communications team who are launching ‘A Year in Pictures’ to celebrate the end of the BRF centenary
- Sara Sheerin, head of people and culture, giving thanks for the support she provides to the staff
- Inspiration for those writing online prayers, articles and posts for the Advent season
- Maddie Jane (*pictured, right*) and Jenny Smith, as they coordinate and support the work of BRF’s ministry teams

**Forgive us, O Lord, because, again and again, we have misunderstood your grace, misinterpreted your gospel and misrepresented your glory.**

**Forgive us for showing hatred or suspicion toward our neighbour, who is different, and open our eyes instead to the beauty of your likeness in every person, without whom we cannot truly see Christ, who is our only hope and our true salvation. Amen**





# For seasonal creativity through Messy Church

**‘I pray because I can’t help myself. I pray because I’m helpless. I pray because the need flows out of me all the time, waking and sleeping. It doesn’t change God. It changes me.’**

William Nicholson, *Shadowlands*, cited in Sally Welch, *Journey to Contentment* (BRF, 2020)

## Thought for the week

Prayer could be described as an ‘intralogue’, in which God’s words weave themselves inside ours and ours inside God’s, as together we explore the mind of Christ and the will of God.



## Pray with us for

- Messy Churches using the *Get Messy!* session ‘We were there – are you?’ May many families who come to hear the truth of Christmas begin following Jesus
- Messy Churches planning Advent trails, that such events will have a lasting impact
- The international movement of Messy Church and their leaders
- God’s wisdom and guidance for the BRF Messy Church team as they make plans for the year ahead
- Those who write BRF Messy Church books and resources, and particularly the team involved in ‘Merry Church goes Wild’



**Coming Lord,**  
 once again we hear the Advent message,  
 with the prophets proclaiming, ‘Make way’;  
 with the Baptist crying ‘Make ready’;  
 with the angels singing, ‘Make music’;  
 and with Mary affirming, ‘Make room’.  
 All our past yearned for this coming.  
 All our future is shaped by this coming.  
 All our present depends on this coming.  
 Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come!

# For God's end-of-year blessing

**We long for God. We are designed to be together with God because we are created in love. We join in the dance of prayer because the very fibre of our being – who we truly are, not who we think we ought to be – is made for this.**

Penny Warren, *Celtic Prayer* (BRF, 2022)

## Thought for the week

We marvel at the global communication networks of our day and at the speed with which they work, and yet we sometimes fail to wonder at the far greater and universal network of prayer that reaches from the beginning to the end of time itself.



## *Pray with us for*

- God's blessing on our ministry teams as they look forward to a Christmas break
- BRF staff on leave as the office closes between Christmas and New Year
- The BRF staff team working in the office this week fulfilling last-minute orders
- Richard Fisher, BRF's CEO, at the end of a busy celebration year, that he may be renewed in his energies and vision to lead the BRF into its next century
- God's blessing on those who have left BRF this year and those who have joined the team

Timeless Lord, who stepped into time;  
limitless God, who folded yourself within limits;  
matchless one, who emptied yourself to match our life  
in the person of Jesus Christ:  
give us courage to follow this way of true kingship,  
by stepping down, simplifying and sacrificing ourselves  
for the sake of others this Advent and Christmas.  
Amen



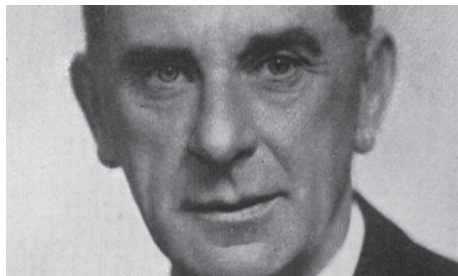
# For the many blessings of this BRF centenary year

From its earliest days BRF's founder Leslie Mannering [*below*] prayed that 'the Spirit must have free play' in the development of this movement and that is still our prayer today.

From the introduction to BRF's online thanksgiving service earlier this year

## Thought for the week

Prayer is attentiveness; prayer is longing; prayer is gratitude; prayer is the sincere cry of the heart. Only when prayer starts like this, dare we add words.



## Pray with us

- As we contemplate the mystery and miracle of Christmas that we celebrate at this time, may the breathtaking humility of our God ever inspire in us to humble service of others
- May the miracle of the child in the manger ever inspire us to be faithful witnesses to God's amazing grace
- Remembering the blessings of this BRF centenary year, including the BBC *Songs of Praise* and the thanksgiving service
- For all the centenary classics publications and their impact on nurturing faith
- With gratitude for all who contributed to this centenary year. Thanks be to God!

Our recommitment to BRF's mission and ministry as used in the BRF thanksgiving service in April:

As members of the BRF family,  
we rededicate ourselves  
to prayer;  
to Bible reading;  
and to the work of enabling all ages to grow in faith.  
In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen





# 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



Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Reader's Version®. Copyright © 1996, 1998 Biblica. All rights reserved throughout the world. Used by permission of Biblica.

Image credits: p. 3 © Katie Norman; p. 4 © Rachael Gledhill, St Barnabas, Dulwich; p. 6 © marcinjozwiak/125 images/pixabay; p. 9 © Daphné Richard on Unsplash; p. 11 © alicja 2697 images/pixabay; p. 12 © Naty Photography/pixabay; p. 13 © Clem Onojeghuo on Unsplash; p. 17 © Rachael Gledhill, St Barnabas, Dulwich; p. 18 © Nico Smit on Unsplash; all other images by BRF staff.

BRF, 15 The Chambers, Vineyard, Abingdon OX14 3FE  
+44 (0)1865 319700 | [enquiries@brf.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@brf.org.uk)  
[brf.org.uk](http://brf.org.uk)



Bible Reading Fellowship is a charity (233280) and company limited by guarantee (301324), registered in England and Wales