



The joy of sharing



For 100 years BRF's work has been characterised by a focus on sharing. Building up and equipping the local church, developing supportive ministry networks and connecting writers and readers all express this priority. Karen Laister, BRF's head of marketing, communications and strategic relationships, looks at the role 'sharing' has played and how you can get involved in sharing the BRF story.

Sharing the vision

In the past few issues we have been celebrating BRF's centenary year and sharing the story of our early beginning. The vision God gave to Revd Leslie Mannering and the congregation of St Matthew's, Brixton (to see God's kingdom grow, as individuals engaged more deeply with their faith), sparked what is now an international movement. A letter Revd Mannering included in his parish newsletter in December 1921 expresses his excitement, trepidation and anticipation. (To read it, follow the link on brf.org.uk/centenary.)

Any new venture can initially feel daunting, but because this vision was shared and because the Bible reading notes were making such a difference to the lives of many Christians, this small initiative continued to grow and thrive.

Sharing the journey

Fast forward to 2022 and BRF's ministries are providing new generations with ways to become part of a network, united in a common purpose. Just as people came together in the early days of BRF to discuss the Bible reading notes, today our four ministries provide ways for people to connect with each other, share faith and be resourced. In this issue you can read some great examples of this, including the Messy Church Conference that's given new impetus to leaders around the globe (page 4)

and the Parenting for Faith retreat that encouraged and sustained children's, youth and families workers (page 5).



Sharing the story

The theme for our centenary has been 'sharing the story' and earlier in the year we launched a short two-minute video

IN THIS ISSUE:

Helping older people process loss

A new intergenerational vision

Breaking isolation among church workers

'Companions' for the autumn

and more...

to share the story of BRF. It celebrates our 100 year history and our work today. If you haven't seen the video, please do view it and share it with family and friends. We would love your help in making our story more widely known so that others will get a hold of BRF's vision, as we look beyond our centenary.

Sharing the mission

We hope you will enjoy this issue of BRF News and that it will spark ideas of how you can become involved in our work. On the next page, Julie, our head of fundraising, identifies ways you can support us – including getting ahead with Christmas shopping! Or, like Glen, Pam and others (see page 2), why not consider becoming part of our volunteer team, sharing news of our resources and ministries in your own church or networks?

Sharing your story

We would also love to hear more of your stories of how the Bible and BRF have made a difference to your faith. If you have a special memory or testimony, please email us at centenary@brf.org.uk or write to us at the address on the back page.

View our 'Sharing the story' video at brf.org.uk/centenary

'Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.'

1 THESSALONIANS 5:11





Hello from Julie and the fundraising team

The final part of the year is always an exciting time, filled with all sorts of celebrations and occasions to be marked; this is no different in the fundraising team!

This September marks two years since we officially launched our **Friends of BRF** campaign, and we are delighted by the number of people who have chosen to support us in this generous way. If you would like to become a friend of BRF by making a regular gift of £2 a month or more, please visit brf.org.uk/friends. This is a really special way to support our work and helps us to plan for the future.

It is also that time of year again where we launch our range of **BRF Christmas cards**, and I am pleased to be able to offer these at the same great price as last year, with a whole range of new designs to choose from. Gift wrap and everyday cards are also available and can be ordered from brfonline.org.uk/cards.



October is **Make a Will Month**, and many solicitors choose to offer a will-making service free of charge during this time for those leaving a gift to charity. Perhaps you would consider a gift of one per cent in your will to help support the work of BRF? For more information on this special way of giving please contact the fundraising team on giving@brf.org.uk or call us on 01235 462305.

In November of last year BRF took part in **The Big Give Christmas Challenge**, and we were delighted to raise just over £22,000 for Anna Chaplaincy. Thank you to all our generous supporters who made this possible. This year we will be taking part again – this time to raise funds for Parenting for Faith.

Watch out in November for more information about this exciting campaign.



Whatever the month, here at BRF we are constantly creating new ways to raise funds to enable us to deliver our remarkable ministries. This year we are offering **virtual gifts**, a fabulous way to support BRF while sending someone a gift which helps make a difference to others. Find out more at brfonline.org.uk/virtual-gifts.

Our **centenary rose** has been a real blessing to many people and is still available to order. This too makes a wonderful gift – it has been fantastic to see boxes arriving all over the country throughout our centenary year! To order yours, or to find out more, visit brfonline.org.uk/rose.

As always, we value your prayers and your kindness. We pray every Monday morning for our supporters and value each and every one of you.

With best wishes for these coming months,

Julie MacNaughton, MCIOF
Head of fundraising
... and the fundraising team



Share the good news!

Imagine sitting comfortably in your own home while being part of a team that is helping the local church in its mission...

One of BRF's goals is to support the local church in a variety of ways across all age groups – and our volunteer local church champions and networkers play a key role in that. Using whatever time and connections they have at their disposal, they help people discover the opportunities BRF offers to develop their daily walk with God and their gifts.

Local church champion Angela Smith says, 'The role has enabled me to share the different ways BRF resources support me in my faith. I've written short articles for the parish magazine and emailed helpful news items to the ministry team. I've left sample copies of the Bible reading notes in each of the larger churches for anyone to take away and leaflets and posters in all the churches in the group.'

Volunteer networker Revd Glen Graham says, 'BRF is a ministry that has blessed me greatly as a blind person and as a church leader, and I wanted to serve this organisation somehow. I'm passionate about everything BRF does and can communicate that and draw people to it'. Glen loves telling people about our approach: 'We really are doing the whole-life discipleship thing, from cradle to grave, in an ecumenical, imaginative and creative way.'

Could you help us to support your local church or network by volunteering for BRF? We offer ongoing support, information and the opportunity to be part of an enthusiastic, friendly team.

For more information contact jane.butcher@brf.org.uk



Contact our fundraising team at giving@brf.org.uk, call us on 01235 462305 or drop us a line at the address on the back page.

‘The pandemic hit, and our worlds changed.’

Anna Chaplain Jean Kerr recounts how the Anna Chaplaincy group from St George’s Deal in Kent helped an older congregation to process loss.

Unfinished business

‘Our older Wednesday congregation were, in the main, isolated. Weekly, our little team would contact everyone to make sure they were okay. We worked hard providing for spiritual needs and delivered resources for key festivals. Over the months our congregation of 40 lost 12 members (none directly to covid). Some funerals were watched online, but there was a great sense of unfinished business.

‘The empty seats... seemed to scream “loss” at us.’

‘Once we were able to gather again for Holy Communion, the empty seats, where Molly, Anne, Francis, Dick and others had sat, seemed to scream “loss” at us. How [were we] to cope with these spaces [where] our friends [had once sat]?’

A celebration of life

‘We decided to hold a service, where all twelve lives might be celebrated. We set the church out as for a party, with the very best tablecloths, decorations, holding crosses and individual LED candles. As people came in, their eyes lit up: church looked so different, so full of life!

‘During the service a candle was lit for each life we were celebrating. It was deeply moving as names were slowly read out. At the tables, people lit their own candles. They were invited to write thanksgivings for people no longer with us and to bring them to a large “tree of life”. It took time – it became clear that other losses were being remembered. We were indeed on ‘holy ground’. Even those with disabilities were determined to get to the tree without help – “This is something I must do by myself.”

‘The individual candles were given to family members, friends or others to take home. The president of the local Women’s Institute took one, promising, “I will light it at every meeting and pray as you have done today, thank you”’



Are you supporting older people through grief? Download our free bereavement resource: brf.org.uk/free-resource-for-bereavement-support

Angels of hope

Steph Packham, Anna Chaplain at St John’s Church in Wellington, Somerset, remembers a Christmas project that brought together a town grappling with the pandemic’s impact.

‘The goal was to reach some of the most vulnerable and lonely members of the community – older people in care homes, sheltered housing and in their own homes – with the message of hope. Since many would feel too nervous to come into town, we took the angels out to them instead: it was so important they felt included.

‘Gift bags were lovingly created and distributed to over 700 older people as a way of expressing our care. Each contained a lavender angel, knitted angels, chocolate angels and cards created by local children. A total of 120 large-scale, illuminated angels were crafted and positioned all over town, accompanied by a trail map (with QR codes) to encourage people of all ages to visit them.

‘Carols were sung outside care homes and DVDs of church services were gifted. It was truly an intergenerational effort, spreading the heartfelt message of hope at Christmas time. We even had a visit from the BBC who showcased the project on the evening news!

‘“The year the angels came to town” will be remembered fondly by many for years to come.’

■ Catch up with more Anna Chaplaincy news at annachaplaincy.org.uk/blog



Anna Chaplain Steph Packham and Revd Selina Garner, preparing the gift bags for delivery to care home residents.



‘An amazing experience and an eye-opener’

Part-time youth and children’s worker Arul Israel feels her ‘eyes are opening with Messy Church’ after a memorable conference in May.

Arul Israel is a longstanding member of a large Methodist church in the Birmingham circuit. The Messy Church she runs, open to all churches in the group she supports, is attended mostly by ‘non-Sunday worshippers’.

‘I’m very much for intergenerational’

For Arul, born in India, church had always been ‘intergenerational’. ‘Children and adults always worshipped together’, she explains. ‘I grew up with that, and when my son was born I found it so difficult that certain events weren’t for children. I took him to everything! That’s how I was brought up. I think the culture here is different, but we need to intentionally make church intergenerational.’

It’s not uncommon for churches to start a Messy Church as a children’s ministry – sometimes not catching its vision for unifying and discipling all age groups until later. ‘We do have teenage helpers’, admits Arul, ‘and the older generation help in the kitchen, but don’t usually get involved’. So it was a joy to discover at the conference in May what a truly intergenerational Messy Church ministry could look like.

God opens a door

‘I used to keep looking at the conference ad’, says Arul, ‘concerned about the cost... Then someone at church who was meant to go, couldn’t – it was like a blessing! I was just so excited.’

‘At first I didn’t know anybody, but it was amazing – I felt very comfortable meeting other Messy Church leaders and finding out what our challenges are and what goes well or doesn’t... bouncing ideas off each other – I got so much inspiration! I loved doing all the activities and liked the reassurance that church isn’t just on Sunday, but everything we do is God-centred. It’s all church!’ Inspired by the international Young Leaders’ presentation, Arul is now encouraging her teenage volunteers to join the group.

It was a relief, too, to share difficulties, such as recruiting volunteers. ‘It was good to know I’m not on my own.’

Sharing the vision

It’s been a turning point for Arul – and for the churches she works with. ‘I’ve come back really excited, and I’ve been sharing my experience with my church and the circuit. Some of the churches I work with are keen to have their own Messy Church, so I’ve recommended the Masterclass on starting one up.’

Supportive resources

‘My role is to give reassurance and support. I’m very good with organising – and love the Messy Church celebration’, says Arul. ‘But I’m not artistic!’, she says, explaining how the Messy Church resources help give leaders confidence and remove the stress of planning. The new book *Messy Church Goes Wild* has

‘I’ve come back really excited, and I’ve been sharing my experience...’

particularly inspired her. ‘I’ve been thinking how we can go outside a bit more. Even though our church hasn’t got much green space, maybe different churches can host.’

An amazing experience

‘The conference has been an amazing experience and an eye-opener’, says Arul, adding, ‘I wish the whole church could attend. I really do appreciate everybody from BRF who contributed in so many different ways – keep on doing what you’re doing – it’s very important!’



Could you donate to support Messy Church?

Shown here is one of the Messy Churches that Arul supports in the Methodist Birmingham Circuit. ‘We send missionaries to other countries’ says Arul, ‘but I think we shouldn’t forget that here at home Messy Church can play a brilliant part in mission. If people want churches to thrive here, we need Messy Church, helping all ages connect with faith.’

Please donate at brf.org.uk/donate or call 01235 462305





Forging connections to strengthen families' work

Parenting for Faith believes that to last in children's, youth and families ministry long term, it's vital to have people to journey with. That's why the Parenting for Faith team invests heavily in creating community and supporting those who support others.

'Being a children's, youth or families leader can feel very lonely,' says Anna Hawken, our ministry leader for Parenting for Faith. 'Many leaders start these roles without a network of people in similar positions to inspire, sustain and encourage them along the way. So, ten years ago, Rachel Turner, founder of Parenting for Faith, started **The Forge Gathering**, a space for these leaders to connect with each other.'

No ordinary conference

'Unlike many other conferences, you're encouraged to learn more from the person you're sat next to than from a speaker at the front,' explains Anna. 'We learn so much from each other! The Parenting for Faith team love seeing and hearing how the resources are being used in different ways in local churches.' The team also make sure there's space to rest and recharge, as well as to share resources and ideas and ask questions.

Transformed

Often, children's, youth and families workers tell us that discovering Parenting for Faith is transformative – whether it's at the bi-annual Forge retreat, through our other training events or by taking part in the free eight-week online Parenting for Faith course.

Kate Irvine was no exception. Now a member of the BRF Parenting for Faith ministry team, Kate says, 'The Forge is where I discovered Parenting for Faith, while I was working as a children's ministry leader in our local Baptist church – it transformed how I worked with the families I was working with.' As a staff member, Kate now helps to organise The Forge. 'We try and find venues which are both north and south of the country,' she says, 'and everywhere in between! The next one will be in Stirling, in Scotland, in November.'

Life on the staff team

'As support coordinator, there really isn't an average week in my job,' says Kate. She's the first point of contact when someone signs up for the popular Parenting for Faith downloadable course for parents and carers. 'It's making such a difference,' she reports. 'We love to offer prayer for each group that does the course – whether it's just a couple of parents or a church full of 50 families. I enjoy encouraging them and providing support by answering the questions that arrive in the Parenting for Faith inbox each day.'

Kate is currently working on how to further support graduates from the certificate in Parenting for Faith course (in partnership with Cliff College), especially those who have opted for the self-study option, 'as they are equipped to help parents and carers to disciple their children and as they explore what Parenting for Faith looks like in their church and community'.

To find out more about The Forge, go to parentingforfaith.brf.org.uk/theforge

Talk to us!

If you'd like to explore what Parenting for Faith could look like in your church, Kate and members of our volunteer speaker team would love to help.

They're available to chat to church leaders about the ministry, or to give a talk to your church or other group about this liberating approach to faith in the home.

Go to parentingforfaith.brf.org.uk/meet-team

parenting for faith®



Kate Irvine



Becki Chafe



Sarah Hogben



Emma Olorenshaw



Iain Nash



Rhianne O'Rourke



Lauren Sheath



Ruth Morgans

Your companions through Advent and beyond

Olivia Warburton, Living Faith ministry lead, suggests books to give and to enjoy in the journey towards Christmas.



Fresh from writing this year's Lent book, Sally Welch takes up her pen again with *Sharing the Christmas Story*. Through each week of Advent, a different aspect of the Christmas story is examined: light, promise, mystery, love, peace and hope.

For poetry lovers, a stylish hardback reissue of Rachel Boulding's *Companions on the Bethlehem Road*, shares spiritual insights from classic poets such as T.S. Eliot, George Herbert, Tennyson and W.H. Auden.

Other best-loved Advent titles include Jo Swinney's *The Whole Christmas Story* and Gordon Giles' *At Home in Advent* – both won hearts and brought comfort during the pandemic. Now editor of BRF's *New Daylight* Bible reading notes, as well as canon chancellor of Rochester Cathedral, Gordon's found time to write a new book for January 2023! *At Home and Out and About: 52 biblical reflections on faith, hope and love for a re-emerging world*, helps us reflect on what we have learned as we venture out again after months of restriction, absence and anxiety.

Browse our Advent and Christmas books at brfonline.org.uk/collections/seasonal-reading

BRF centenary collection

Celebrate our centenary year with these beautiful books to treasure for years to come! From favourite classics in handsome new editions to stunning new anthologies – why not treat yourself and bless someone special!

brfonline.org.uk/collections/centenary

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A treasure chest of prayers

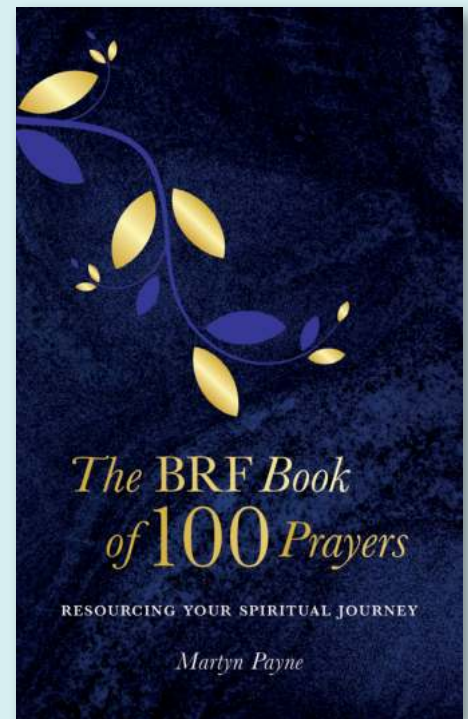
Martyn Payne's prayers, featured in our digital communications, have been hugely popular – so now there's a book: *The BRF Book of 100 Prayers*.

A companion to *The BRF Book of 365 Bible Reflections*, this elegant book of original prayers is written by former staff member and now volunteer prayer advocate, Martyn Payne. Beautifully produced and illustrated, it's a fitting celebration for BRF's centenary year. It's also a really practical resource for individuals looking for inspiration in their prayer life or leaders seeking material for services and special occasions.

'Dipping into this book is like rummaging through a box of precious stones and every so often picking one out with... delight.'

John Pritchard, bishop, writer and speaker

Find out more and buy the book at brfonline.org.uk/100-prayers



STOP PRESS!

Responding to the cost of living crisis

Advance notice! The Marketing and Comms team are working on a new group resource based on the Holy Habits resource **Gladness and Generosity**.

In response to the cost of living crisis, we want to offer reflective online material to help Christian reevaluate their response. Watch out for your Zoom invitation.

Find out more at brfonline.org.uk/collections/holy-habits-events



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

