



Sharing hope and love



Happy New Year to you from all of us at BRF! We pray for God's blessings for the year ahead for you and all those you love.

Someone asked me recently what my hope is for BRF for the coming year.

Quite simply, it's

that we'll be able to reach and connect with even more people during 2023. That's not because we want to grow BRF just for the sake of it. We've seen the difference our work makes to individuals and families across our ministries, and we want to see more of those changes.

'We want to share even more widely the love of God, which we know changes lives, with its message of hope, encouragement and reassurance.'

I think of the numerous letters and emails from readers of our daily notes, marvelling at the way that a particular reading, or series, spoke so powerfully to them and their circumstances today, even though it had been written up a year previously.

I'm inspired by the Messy Church leaders I met at our conference back in May, as they shared stories of how they coped with the challenges of the pandemic and

lockdowns and are now even more passionate about continuing with this ministry today.

I think of our network of Anna Chaplains – many of them retired, some in their 70s and even 80s themselves – who are ministering among older people in care homes and in their local communities, offering spiritual care, love and friendship to some of the most vulnerable in our society.

And I think of the parents and carers, alongside the children and family workers, who have been encouraged by the Parenting for Faith team, not just for their role they play in nurturing the faith of their children, but also for their own faith journey too. One young mum told us: 'My son has started praying. At first, he wanted me to pray for him, then we prayed together and now he prays for me!'

There are so many ways in which God is at work through BRF ministries and those involved with them. So many lives touched and blessed as a result. Why wouldn't we hope to see even more of this in 2023? With your continued prayers and your generous financial support, I believe we will.

Richard Fisher
Chief Executive



When Richard Fisher helped deliver copies of the Ukrainian translation of *Comfort in Uncertain Times* to the Abingdon food bank, he saw a young Ukrainian mother receive a copy. 'It was wonderful to see her face light up as she realised the book was in her own language!'

**Read more on this story in
Julie MacNaughton's letter on page 2**

IN THIS ISSUE:

Heartfelt thanks from
our fundraisers

A special calling

Are you ready to audit
your rubbish?

Life in the goldfish bowl

Do you have ten minutes?

and more...

Pray with us

A prayer of dedication
at the start of this new year.

*Thank you, Lord Jesus,
for your example and
inspiration to pray constantly
and to lift up holy hands
in your name,*

*on behalf of your church,
your world and all those
with whom we work and live.*

*We commit ourselves afresh
to the work of prayer,*

*without which all our
BRF ministries
and programmes
are worth nothing,*

*and only with which BRF can
bear fruit and multiply,*

*rooted in your will and the
purposes of your kingdom.*

Amen

**(from the BRF Prayer diary,
written by Martyn Payne)**

**Our prayer resources can be
found at brf.org.uk/pray**

*'I lift up my eyes to the hills –
from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.'*

Hello from Julie and the fundraising team



As always, I want to express my sincere thanks for your generosity and prayers. Our Christmas cards proved very popular once again: a massive thank you to everyone who bought and sent them. We're enclosing information about our new range of Easter cards with this newsletter, and I hope that you will choose to support us by purchasing some this year. Our everyday card range for celebrations and other occasions continues to be available throughout the year.

We were overjoyed to receive lots of Christmas messages which we displayed on our Christmas tree.

The Big Give Christmas Challenge raised valuable funds for our Parenting for Faith ministry, via this fabulous match funding initiative.

Our virtual gifts campaign enabled us to send free copies of *The Christmas Story*, *The Upper Room* Bible reading notes and *Comfort in Uncertain times* (translated into Ukrainian) to food banks, community kitchens and chaplains ministering in prisons, care homes and hospices. We had several moving emails confirming just how much these gifts were needed around the country and the difference they will make in the lives of families, prisoners and older people.



We were particularly moved to hear from David Moodie of the Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees:

'Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees were delighted to receive 120 copies of *Comfort in Uncertain Times* in Ukrainian. From the Highlands to the Borders, these books will be used to help build relationships with Ukrainian families and compliment the practical and pastoral care that churches are already engaged in. Being able to give young

people such a relevant resource in their own language is incredibly valuable so we are very grateful to BRF for making them available.'

I would like to pass on thanks from all those who benefitted from receiving these books.

We enter our 101st year and look back on our centenary year with so much gratitude: our ministry has touched a lot of people and Centenary Roses are blooming all over the country. With your generous support we look forward to all that 2023 might bring.

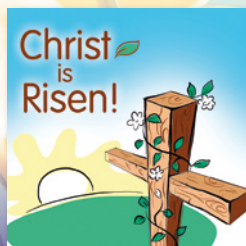
Wishing you a very happy New Year from all of us in the fundraising team.

Julie

Julie MacNaughton, MCIOF (Dip)
Head of Fundraising

Easter cards!

Our new range of Easter cards is available now. Every pack of cards sold helps to support our vital work, and we are hugely grateful for your generosity.



Order your cards today at
brfonline.org.uk/cards

Support us in prayer

One of the most significant ways you can support our work is by praying for us, and we're so grateful for all who do. From BRF's earliest days, prayer has been the very foundation of our work. Because we value your prayers so much, we offer various ways to make praying with us and for our work enjoyable and fulfilling:

- Our seasonal prayer diary is much more than just a list of needs.
- Our inspiring social media prayers are perfect for sending to friends or sharing in groups.
- Our weekly prayer email keeps you up to date with what our teams are doing.

To find out more and sign up for any or all of these resources go to brf.org.uk/get-involved/pray

Anna Chaplaincy

As the Anna Chaplaincy network expands across the UK, and concern for the spiritual well-being of older people grows, the focus on training and equipping individuals and churches for this ministry becomes ever more important. Two courses are available, the Spiritual Care Series and the Anna Chaplaincy training course. To find out more, read on...

The Spiritual Care Series: Transforming spiritual care for older people Maureen O'Neill



Maureen O'Neill is director of the independent, Edinburgh-based charity, Faith in Older People. She was part of a group of care industry professionals who trialled a ground-breaking new resource recently brought to the UK by BRF, the Spiritual Care Series, designed to help churches equip leaders and members for ministry among older people. Maureen spoke about the course at the launch last September, saying: 'It is an amazing resource; it has got so much in it and I think it's excellent for challenging our assumptions and giving us fresh angles on what we're learning. It's particularly pertinent at the moment because our emphasis here in Scotland around spiritual care for older people is that it's everybody's business.'

'... spiritual care for older people is...
everybody's business.'

To find out more about the Spiritual Care Series go to
annachaplaincy.org.uk/spiritual-care-series

If you would like to arrange to talk with one of the team about the Spiritual Care Series, please email spiritualcareseries@brf.org.uk to arrange a telephone call.



A satisfied student

One of our 2022 online learners, **Revd Dr Paul Fitzpatrick**, wrote of his experience of the Anna Chaplaincy course:

'The course material is exceptional and clearly frequently reviewed, updated and contemporised. The six week structure, with online sessions, preparation, review and action recording, is excellent. Safeguarding, confidentiality, professional practice, chaplaincy identity, and crucially, working within and for, an older population, is professionally covered and competently delivered.'

'The sum is more than the parts: this training has prepared me, and my course fellows, to engage professionally and safely, in all the complex forms of Anna Chaplaincy ministry.' – **Revd Dr Paul Fitzpatrick**

Julia Burton-Jones
Training and development lead
for Anna Chaplaincy

To find out if Anna Chaplaincy training is for you go to
annachaplaincy.org.uk/about-anna-chaplaincy

A special calling: the Anna Chaplaincy course Julia Burton-Jones



Anna Chaplaincy arose from a recognition of the special calling and distinctive skills associated with ministry alongside older people. Pioneer Debbie

Thrower believed that creating a named role embracing spiritual care in later life would enable churches to resource and support older people's ministers more effectively.

BRF has developed a pathway through which Christians can discern their calling to chaplaincy with older people and be equipped to embark on their work. Training is an essential component of this equipping process. We offer our six-session online course to prepare new Anna Chaplains, but the learning does not stop there. We continue to grow and develop in our understanding of later life spirituality through opportunities to reflect and learn from encounters with older people. Anna Chaplains and Anna Friends identify training topics for themed half-day workshops on Zoom; these have included end of life spiritual care, care home ministry, boundaries and self-care, as well as including people with dementia in worship.

Messy Church 2023 Challenge!

Aike Kennett-Brown



Delegates at the recent COP27 meeting on climate change struggled to retain international commitment to previous targets on global warming and worked later and longer than planned to try to find common ground. And yet the warning signs are all around us.

The world is experiencing more natural

disasters because of extreme weather events: droughts, wildfires and flash flooding. We shouldn't be surprised. We hypothesised about global warming during my school years in the 1980s and have had decades of David Attenborough documentaries charting the changes humans are imposing on the natural world.

The uncomfortable truth is that I've lived long enough for these events to become a reality and have been a part of the problem. I have opted for ease and convenience within my lifestyle as the consequences seemed so remote and far off until now. Climate change can feel overwhelming, but the key way to being part of the solution is to start with small steps.

In a Facebook Live interview with Laura, from Tearfund's Bin Twinning team, we put out the challenge to do a rubbish audit.

This involves keeping everything you throw in your bin for a month and then looking at the frequently used items. When Laura did this, she noticed she was eating lots of meal deals, so took to making a packed lunch and a refillable water bottle and coffee cup when out and about, halving the amount of waste she was creating and saving money at the same time. I only managed to do this for a week, but quickly realised that most of my fruit and vegetables came in unrecyclable plastic bags, and so I have switched to choosing 'loose' items from the supermarket. I've also taken to meal planning, which has reduced the amount of food waste.

I wonder what small changes you could make to become more sustainable and care better for God's creation at the start of this new year? Throughout 2023, we're challenging Messy Churches to undertake a rubbish audit and see what gets thrown away at the end of a session, providing them with top tips on how to make a Messy Church more eco-aware. Could you do the same?



Sadly, the issue of climate change will not go away if ignored. We all need to start making changes, however small. Let's continue to encourage each other to take up the challenge of making our lives and Messy Churches more sustainable.

Aike Kennett-Brown
Messy Church ministry lead

Take the rubbish audit challenge and tell us what you discover!
messychurch@brf.org.uk

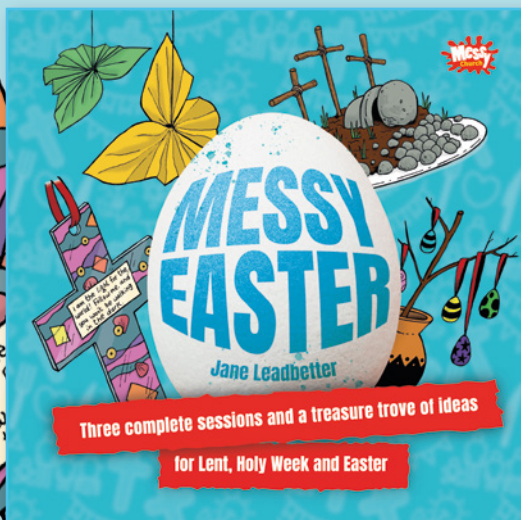
Messy Easter!

Looking ahead to Lent and Easter, Messy Church has a huge range of resources to help you mark the season in all sorts of fun, creative, Christ-centred ways. Top of the list is the new edition of Jane Leadbetter's *Messy Easter* with three complete sessions and a treasure trove of ideas for Lent, Holy Week and Easter.

Other titles include *Easter Family Time* and *The Easter Story: For families to share*.

■ To find out more and to order search brfonline.org.uk

And for Jane's amazing list of all sorts of other Easter resources, including free downloads, go to messychurch.org.uk/resource/summary-easter-resources.



Life in the goldfish bowl



Becky Sedgwick introduces the latest resource from the Parenting in Faith team

The latest offering from the Parenting for Faith stable is a unique video-based course

for church leaders who are also parents. Based on Rachel Turner's popular training days, the course is designed for anyone who leads in church and who is also a parent and feels the tension of their children sitting in the in-between of church and home: ministers, children's, youth and families' leaders and key volunteers, leaders in training and others, as well as their partners.

When you are a leader in church, your family comes too, giving rise to all sorts of unique dynamics and challenges. There's the pressure of living in the goldfish bowl of church – hugely loved but also exposed. There's the question of how to lead from the front when your kid needs you right there and then. There are the interesting dynamics of your home

being your workplace and the odd hours that church leaders often keep. And of course, the longing to see your kids go on their own journey of faith when you're worried that they've maybe seen too much of the reality of church.

Recorded by Rachel Turner, the course has been designed to be hugely flexible. It has been created with Zoom in mind – but also works brilliantly as an in-person course. It could be run by a denomination, a benefice or local network, in a local church or watched by individuals. There's a handy guide for leaders, as well as participants' handbooks, and because we're only asking for donations from those who use the course, it doesn't cost the earth.

Based on solid research as well as extensive conversations with all sorts of church leaders, the in-person days have been really well-received, filling a gap that church leaders feel intensely but is rarely addressed in training.



Read what some people have said about the new course:

'As a vicar and single mum with a toddler, trying to navigate church and being mum, whilst putting family first is hard – this has been a Godsend.'

'Parents in any kind of church leadership need this! There are so many tips and ideas for staying well connected with our children, as we navigate the complexities of leading in the church.'

'This course helps you think through how church leadership and parenting can really coexist! It has given me so much more confidence in approaching life as a parent and church leader and so many ideas about engaging with our children, especially providing a language to do that well.'

The Parenting for Faith podcast: Giving parents the 'heads up'!

The popular Parenting for Faith podcast series aims to help parents and carers navigate current issues and concerns. New episodes are released weekly and there's a searchable list of around 200 topics. Digital marketing officer Iona Gray gives some examples: 'The most recent

series of the Parenting for Faith podcast has been all about giving parents and carers the "heads up" on issues that may affect children and teenagers: things like their children's digital diet and how gaming can be a healthy part of family life, and how to frame the cost of living crisis and financial struggles for children.'

Find the Parenting for Faith podcast at parentingforfaith.org/podcast



Cliff College Certificate in Parenting for Faith

In a popular and creative collaboration between Cliff College and Parenting for Faith, the next Certificate in Parenting for Faith course begins on 30 January 2023. Led by Becky Sedgwick and Rachel Turner, this twelve-session online course is an opportunity to complete an assignment and receive a Cliff College Certificate in Parenting for Faith.

For more information go to cliffcollege.ac.uk/courses/online-hybrid/parenting-faith-online



Andrew Roberts' New Year's resolution

Founder of Holy Habits Andrew Roberts shares his 2023 resolution

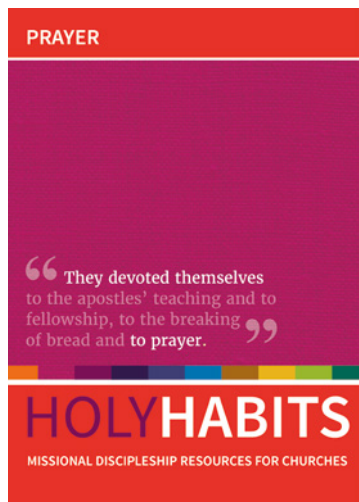
For me 2022 was a very challenging year. I won't bore you with all the details but suffice to say the challenges included several serious illnesses amongst family and friends. There was also a house move that proved to be more of challenge than expected with a host of things to fix that neither our seller nor surveyor had told us about. In the midst of all this I read this quote from Corrie Ten Boom:

'The wonderful thing about praying is that you leave a world of not being able to do something, and enter God's realm where everything is possible. He specializes in the impossible. Nothing is too great for His almighty power. Nothing is too small for His love.'

My resolution for 2023 is to go deeper into that prayerful place not just for myself but those I continue to pray for; to enter God's realm afresh, where everything is possible.

'My resolution for 2023 is to go deeper into that prayerful place.'

To find out more about Holy Habits discipleship resources go to holyhabs.org.uk



At one and the same time that quote inspired, comforted and frightened me. Frightened me because I don't like 'not being able to do something'. I'm a planner, an organiser, a diary person and someone with our household budget worked out in fine detail on a spreadsheet. And here is the Lord, through Corrie, encouraging me to let go, to go into that deep place of prayer which is much more about humble receptivity than asking God to bless what I think God should do.

Get involved!

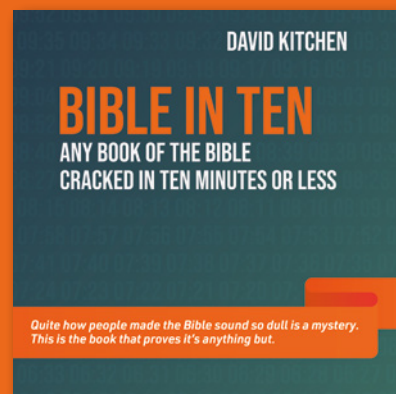
New season, new opportunities

Could you help BRF in its mission to support people of all ages and stages of life?

As part of our volunteer team, BRF local church champions and networkers share the work of BRF within their local church or network. Both roles are flexible to fit with availability. Could you help others hear about opportunities and resources that could change lives?

All resources and support are supplied along with a warm welcome and regular opportunities to meet with the volunteer team.

For more details visit brf.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer/ or contact jane.butcher@brf.org.uk



Do you have ten minutes?

'Such an exciting initiative. I love Bible in Ten.'

Rob Parsons, OBE

Cardiff in late September... and a team of twelve were hard at work recording the audiobook version of upcoming Living Faith resource *Bible in Ten*. Author Dave Kitchen's study was fitted up as a recording studio and the likes of Rob Parsons, former BBC radio producer Karen Walker and BRF author Trystan Owain Hughes arrived at two-hourly intervals to take their turn with the microphone.

Bible in Ten is a labour of love, many years in the making, and inspired in part by *The Street Bible* by Rob Lacey, who was a personal friend of Dave's. Each Bible book is retold in a snappy summary that takes no more than ten minutes to read (even the longest ones) and there's a Bible overview. It's for young and old alike; for seasoned church leaders looking to refresh their knowledge of a particular book and for people discovering the Bible for the very first time.

'A labour of love, many years in the making.'

Publishing 17 February in print and audio versions

Find out more at brfonline.org.uk/bible-in-ten



Registered with
FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR

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



Images: p. 1 Desert during Nighttime from pexels.com/@walidphotoz; p. 2 Yellow Flowers from pexels.com/@punttim, Hands in Prayer from unsplash.com/@milada_vigerova; p. 4 pile of rubbish from unsplash.com/@jannerboy62, Overflowing garbage can from unsplash.com/@theblowup; p. 5 goldfish from unsplash.com/@carsive; other photos © BRF.

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