



Easter people

As we journey through Lent to Easter, Gordon Giles – BRF author, editor of *New Daylight* Bible reading notes and canon chancellor of Rochester cathedral – invites us to consider Lent with fresh eyes, through the prism of hope.

Lent, a season of hope



Traditionally the period of preparation for Easter is known as Lent (which actually means 'spring'). Easter was the time for

baptisms and Lent was the penitential period of self-denial and reflection that baptismal candidates went through. Like Christmas and the FA Cup final, Easter comes every year, so how can we engage with Lent and prepare afresh as it comes round again?

The key is hope. Christians are Easter people (and 'Alleluia' is our song) and Christians are people of hope (and faith and love). Hope is a constant, while the context of Easter each year is different. In 2020 we missed Easter, locked down by Covid-19. Churches were mostly closed from Mothering Sunday onwards. The real, palpable 'hope' that gripped the nation was fuelled by the fear of getting Covid and dying of it.

In 2021, post-Christmas lockdowns remained and, while worship could take place, there were many restrictions and the wine of Communion was not distributed. In 2022 memories of this were still fresh and the hope was a liturgical one, that we would make it to Easter and be able to worship together in a way we had not done the previous year.

A fresh perspective

This year, for the first time in a few years, we hope for, indeed expect a 'normal' Easter. It has been a three-year journey, a three-year Lent that mirrors the whole length of Jesus' active ministry on earth, from baptism to death and resurrection.

This year, make your preparation cross-shaped. Look backwards in time over three years, the long downward direction of the road travelled, but which, above the horizontal cross piece, bears us upwards and forwards to Christ risen, ascended, glorified. Look from left to right, at companions on the journey: friends, family, colleagues, neighbours – those who walked with us, who applauded the NHS, who prayed for and with us, and whom we helped and cared for. Remember those who have died, too; but do not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. So during Lent, we look backwards, forwards and across, as our place and eternity meet at the crossing point of faith, love and hope that is the Easter dawn.



SMASH Food Share, Huddersfield (see page 2)

IN THIS ISSUE:

The gift of hope in a book

A red letter day for Anna Chaplaincy

Warts and joy in Parenting for Faith

An 'unforgettably amazing' baptism

Solace in the Psalms

and more...

Pray with us

*Lord of the empty tomb,
thank you that today
we encounter you,
as 'the living
among the living'.*

*Lord of the Easter garden,
thank you that today
we greet you
as 'the one we are looking for',
peace-bringer and
Spirit-giver.*

*Lord of the open road,
thank you that today
we walk with you
as 'the fulfilment of the
scriptures and all our hopes'.*

Amen

Martyn Payne

To find out how you can pray with us visit brf.org.uk/pray

We'd love to keep in touch!

For the most up-to-date news about BRF and its ministries go to brf.org.uk/signup to sign up for regular emails from BRF and our ministries. We'll send you news and updates about the ministries that you have opted to hear about, as well as the occasional email about our work and fundraising.

*'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him,
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.'*

ROMANS 15:13 (NIV)

Hello from Julie and the fundraising team



So here we are in March 2023 with our fundraising activities well underway for our 101st year as a charity.

Thank you very much to everyone who has purchased our Easter cards. Money raised

from the sale of these cards supports our vital work. We also have a selection of everyday greetings cards for occasions such as birthdays, weddings or keeping up with friends. We are also currently preparing our range of Christmas cards for 2023.

It was a privilege to deliver packages of books – *The Christmas Story*, *The Upper Room Bible* reading notes, and the Ukrainian translation of *Comfort in Uncertain Times* – to food banks and community kitchens

following our fundraising campaign for Christmas 2022.

I hope that the photographs, stories and quotes within this newsletter give you an idea of the amazing impact these books made on those receiving them. When I first joined BRF, I spoke about hope. As a Liverpool Football Club fan, we sing about hope in our song 'You'll Never Walk Alone'. I can categorically say that BRF ministries bring hope to so many during what are very difficult times and

I thank everybody for praying for us and supporting us financially.

Our next *BRF News* will contain our annual appeal, which I hope will be a great success. In the meantime, thank you for every donation. Your kindness really does make a difference.



Julie with Pastor Nicky Wilkinson of Huddersfield Elim Church, who distributed 'virtual gift' books in the local community.

Everyday cards

Our popular range of beautiful everyday cards is available now. Featuring designs for every occasion, including birthdays, Valentine's Day and 'Just thinking of you', every pack sold helps support our vital work, and we are hugely grateful for your generosity.



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

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

Julie

Julie MacNaughton, MCIOF (Dip)
Head of Fundraising

The gift of hope

Jane Dutton from our fundraising team writes:

I just wanted to let you know how well received the *Comfort in Uncertain Times* Ukrainian translation has been. There is a large Ukrainian population in Huddersfield, many of whom are fourth generation and a huge resettlement programme is ongoing. I distributed copies locally and then the opportunity arose to send 60 in Christmas boxes directly to the Ukraine. These books are now in hospitals, churches, refuges and with parents, grandparents and carers of children in the middle of this terrible war. The Christmas boxes containing the books arrived in Ukraine on 16 December and John Pasiecznyk, chair of the Huddersfield Council of the Ukrainian Association, has been in touch. John has asked me to say a huge thank you. He told me that everyone is incredibly grateful for the books and that great comfort has been found in them. Thank you for shedding a little light into their darkness this Christmas.

From the Cheltenham food bank

These particular titles will be a wonderful addition enclosed with our food bags as Christmas approaches. Your generosity will have a significant impact and will help us to continue to provide support to local people in crisis.

From our supporter services team

A recipient of some of the free books phoned to tell us that they had passed them on to some Ukrainian families in their church. 'They were overjoyed and in tears. They were so surprised it was an actual book! They assumed it'd just be a leaflet!'

To give online, go to brf.org.uk/give



From SMASH Food Share Huddersfield

Everyone at SMASH Food Share, based at St Michael and St Helen's Church in Huddersfield, would like to say a huge thank you to BRF for the lovely *Christmas Story* booklets, which have now all been distributed to the families who come to us for help and support.



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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.

Anna Chaplaincy for older people




Debbie Thrower, Anna Chaplaincy pioneer, celebrates an important milestone.

A red letter day!

It was a red-letter day recently when we passed the 250 mark for those joining the Anna Chaplaincy network! As I write we have more than 270 women and men

across the country offering spiritual and emotional support to people in their later years. We badly need extra comfort and solace in difficult times as we get older.

‘Anna Chaplaincy is a beautiful, growing movement to develop the spirituality of older people.’

Such growth in our numbers is partly thanks to the bishop of Portsmouth wanting to see ‘Anna Chaplaincy in every parish’. Last summer Rt Revd Dr Jonathan Frost declared: ‘Anna Chaplaincy is a beautiful, growing movement to develop the spirituality of older people. It is based on the ministry of Anna, who saw the infant Jesus in the temple and praised God for the Messiah. It helps to show the value of the older generation and gives lay pastors authority to visit people in their own homes and minister to them.’

The majority of Anna Chaplains are indeed lay women, though increasingly we are seeing more men being drawn to this ministry, which is open to both ordained and lay recruits, most of them volunteers.

A vision for the whole country

Our vision is to see Anna Chaplains all over the country, each one a good listener, with the tact and sensitivity to draw alongside people when they are experiencing sorrow and loss. Anna Chaplains help people come to terms with ageing, to reframe their perspective on life post-retirement.

There’s no doubt that it is a two-way process, with many Anna Chaplains reporting a renewed sense of purpose through supporting people in this way.

Growing old gracefully



Kate Powell is Alton’s fourth Anna Chaplain, following in the footsteps of founder Debbie Thrower. Since September 2022 she has written a popular monthly column in the local paper entitled ‘Growing old gracefully’, focusing on some of the older people she meets in the course of her work and

highlighting ‘their amazing stories and fascinating lives’. Kate tells us how it all started.

I was always speaking to lots of older people as part of my job, and I thought these stories should be more widely known. I contacted the *Alton Herald* and they really liked the idea. It happened really quickly because there was one woman, Penny Carmichael, and she thought it was a brilliant idea. She wrote a lot of letters to the *Herald* and was quite well known around Alton. But she was dying. She wasn’t frightened: every time I went to see her, she asked me to pray that she would die quickly and peacefully. When I asked her if she’d be my first ‘victim’ for the series, she said: ‘Yes, but you’d better hurry!’ Penny died two days after the interview.

When the *Herald* printed the story, they called it ‘Penny makes her final contribution’. Brilliant! After she died her son asked if, instead of an obituary, the interview could be published as her tribute: her own words were so beautiful.

People are beginning to notice the stories and that’s really encouraging. Older people are full of amazing stories and they’re so inspiring. They’ve endured hardship and they know they can come out the other side. Or they say, well, it’s tough now, but I did enjoy all those years of it being easy. For me it’s such a source of hope to know that suffering is part of life and, rather than trying to escape it all the time, they seem to – not embrace it, that wouldn’t be the right word – they experience it head on, and then they’re not frightened of it.’



As Carol, an Anna Chaplain in Southampton, explains: ‘The variety of the role makes being an Anna Chaplain so meaningful. It is both humbling and inspiring to encounter and serve older persons from such a wide range of backgrounds and living within so many differing circumstances.’

We look forward to all God has in store for this much-needed ministry for 2023 and beyond.

Sign up for the
Anna Chaplaincy blog

One of the best ways to keep in touch with all the latest developments and stories from Anna Chaplaincy is through Debbie Thrower’s blog.

■ Sign up at annachaplaincy.org.uk/blog



Messy Church Goes Wild goes on the road



Messy Church Goes Wild is the movement within Messy Church aiming to encourage

Messy Churches to meet God outdoors, love the natural world, experience a sense of awe and wonder and to be more eco-aware in all we do. The BRF Messy Church team have been taking this message 'on the road'.

Showcasing the new Messy Adventures resource – twelve units of material containing fun science activities, questions, 'Big Thinking' provided by scientific experts and creative suggestions for responding in Christian worship – the roadshow provides leaders with the tools and confidence to take their Messy Church outdoors.

Messy Church lead Aike Kennett-Brown adds: 'The BRF Messy Church team had such a joy-filled day at the Gloucester Diocese roadshow. It was lovely to see people of all ages from diverse backgrounds interacting with the Messy Adventures material, making connections between creation and the creator. I'm excited to see how Messy Churches will discover new ways of worshipping outdoors and foster a renewed care for creation through Messy Church Goes Wild.'

To find out more about Messy Church Goes Wild and Messy Adventures, go to messychurch.org.uk/goeswild

For the latest information about all Messy Church training sessions and events, including two Messy Church Goes Wild roadshows on Saturday 22 April 2023, go to messychurch.org.uk/upcoming-events

Messy Baptisms!



Helen Vass has run a Messy Church for five years, most recently at St Andrew's in Chelmsford, where the first

session of a new Messy Church was held in March 2022. She shares the heart-warming and inspirational story of their first Messy family baptism in December.

Can you do six of us?

Lauren and her boys, Henry and George, had already been coming to our 'Little Fishes' parent-and-toddler group, and she had talked to our vicar, Simon, about having the boys baptised right from the beginning. They lived locally but neither she nor her husband Matt had been brought up in the church.

Then they came to the first Messy Church, absolutely loved it and have come to every single one since. After a few sessions, Simon said to me that they want the boys baptised, and I said, 'Well, why don't we do a Messy Church baptism?' He looked at me and said, 'Yeah, why don't we. Why drag them to a 10 o'clock service that they don't want to go to?'

At that point it was just about the boys, but the conversations continued until eventually Lauren rang Simon and asked, 'Can you do six of us?'

An ongoing relationship

So it was really lovely. There's been minimum preparation, but it's an ongoing relationship, isn't it?

The baptistry was a little pink paddling pool at the front of the church. The boys stood in the paddling pool and had a big jug of water poured over them and the adults just sort of knelt at the side. Everybody got drenched! It was messy stuff!

Here was this lovely picture of a family who had never been at 10 o'clock and would never come to the 10 o'clock, but why do they need to? For Lauren, the whole experience was 'unforgettably amazing!'

It's given a huge boost to the whole Messy Church. We've also got an associate minister, Andrew, who's a retired teacher. He's very forward-minded, but he's been brought up in the Church of England for the past 65 years. He turned to me at the end and said, 'We should do every baptism like this!'





Lucy Rycroft

We're delighted that popular blogger Lucy Rycroft has joined the Parenting for Faith team to cover digital marketing officer Iona Grey's maternity leave. A common thread of hope unites Lucy's parenting blog and her new role, as she explains

In the name of hope

A few years ago, I knew it was time to rename my Christian parenting blog.

Anyone who's ever needed to name something – a business, a charity, an initiative – will, I'm sure, identify with the frustrating process of brainstorming that I embarked upon. Coming up with multiple – largely terrible – ideas, crossing them out, trying again, combining different elements... I thought I'd never find a good name.

And this is why: all my ideas either sounded depressing or smug. I couldn't find the balance.

Warts and joy

The name needed to reflect the honest, warts-and-all nature of my writing, with no gloss and no sheen. With four children five years apart in age, two of them adopted, our home is noisy, messy and chaotic. I also wanted the name to reflect the joy and peace that Jesus brings to family life – but what about families who weren't experiencing that? How could I find a name which allowed space for both light and dark?

'This is why I love the Parenting for Faith course and materials. There is no smugness.'

It turns out that our messy family life is not unusual. Parents reach out to me each week to share their own challenges – from medical diagnoses, to struggling marriages, to teenage children making poor decisions. And this is why I love the Parenting for Faith course and materials. There is no smugness from the mouth of one who doesn't know

parenting for faith®

what it is to parent in the 21st century, but a genuine awareness of the different challenges facing family life and tools which can be easily adapted to any situation.

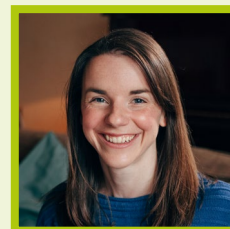
Just right! Understanding and hope

The brilliant Rachel Turner gets the balance just right: understanding the stuff families go through, but offering... hope. Hope! That's it!

'Through Parenting for Faith, thousands of parents the world over have been given hope.'

Through Parenting for Faith, thousands of parents the world over have been given hope. Hope that they have the necessary tools to nurture their children's faith. Hope that their children can and will respond to God's call.

Back to my blog: the name I settled on was 'The hope-filled family'. Not smugly winning at every area of life. Not depressingly resentful of how parenthood has changed my life. But filled with hope that God can work through our mess for his glory.



Anna Hawken

Anna Hawken, Parenting for Faith lead, tells how the hope of Easter sustains her in both her work and her family life.

Bright hope for tomorrow

God often pops song lyrics into my head as part of my conversation with him. One of my favourites is 'strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow' from 'Great is thy faithfulness'. This is often my prayer as I juggle leading the team at Parenting for Faith with a busy family life. In his generosity, he doesn't just give us what we need to get through the day, but invites us to be encouraged and excited by what he has next too. The amazing truth of Jesus' death on the cross is that it gives us strength and hope where we had none. We can now have a relationship with God that gives us strength for whatever today holds and invites us to share the future with him too.

Four hope-filled courses

The best known Parenting for Faith course is the original, highly regarded eight-part video course that can be done online or in person, but there are now also courses on parenting babies and toddlers, parenting teens and parenting as a church leader.

■ Go to parentingforfaith.org/the-courses to find out more.



Finding hope in the Psalms



Alison Morgan's new book *World Turned Upside Down* is published on 24 March. Here she tells how she prays her book

will help her readers find hope, even in the depths of pain and suffering.

'We boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, endurance produces character, character produces hope – and hope does not disappoint us,' Paul wrote. But what exactly is hope? It's something you haven't got and you can't see; something you have to wait for, he explains.

How helpful is that, I wondered, when the suffering is not a concept on the biblical page, but an aching reality in your own life? Reflecting on my own experiences and those which others have shared with me, I decided to read the Psalms, and then to pray them. And in the Psalms I found not a simple consolation of this text for that circumstance, but a complex web of interlocking meanings, a song which begins sadly but weaves its way to a triumph of confidence and joy.

'In the Psalms I found a song which begins sadly but weaves its way to a triumph of confidence and joy.'

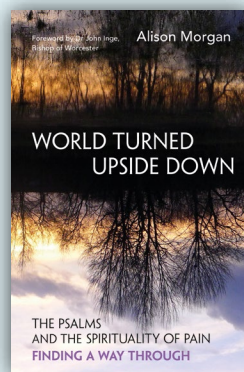
Pointing the way

As I prayed, the Psalms became the signposts on a new journey. Who are you, they ask, and who is the God who made you? Look up and out at the world around you – what does it tell you about him? Look back over history – does your own life fit into the pattern you see there? We can lend you the words – can you now articulate your pain in conversation with this God who is so much bigger

than you? What does he say, what help does he offer? As you do all these things, perhaps, slowly, this thing called hope will begin to grow within you.

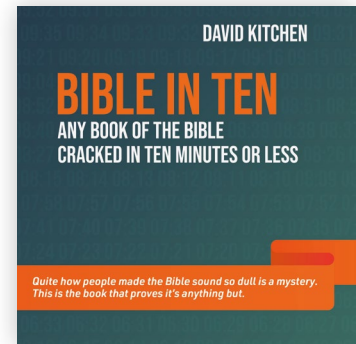
The Psalter is a complicated book. On one level it's a collection of personal prayers offered by a variety of individual authors at moments of anguish or joy; on another it's the reflection of the journey of an entire people; on yet another it's the story of creation, loss and redemption, the story of the gospel itself. The Psalms are the prophetic incarnation of the message of hope which would one day be embodied so powerfully by Jesus and articulated so confidently by Paul – the message which alone can bring healing to our troubled souls. As I prayed the Psalms, I too began to find that hope does not disappoint us. My prayer is that, in reading this book, that may become true for you too.

Alison Morgan has written widely on literature, theology and the Christian life. She is an associate of the Mathetes Trust, where she oversees the Rooted in Jesus discipleship programme for Africa, now in use in 19 countries. In her spare time enjoys birdwatching, walking and photography.



World Turned Upside Down is published on 24 March. A thematic exploration of the Psalms, it aims to bring insight and solace to those who are finding life complex and painful.

To find out more go to brfonline.org.uk/worldupsidedown



Do you have ten minutes?

In the January issue of *BRF News* we were excited to announce the imminent arrival of Dave Kitchen's *Bible in Ten* in print, digital and audio versions. Now we're developing two videos too! First, a short introduction to the concept and content of *Bible in Ten* and, second, an interview with the author covering what it is, what inspired it, what's good about it and who it's for.

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

Rob Parsons of Care for the Family

Bible in Ten is a labour of love, many years in the making. 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.

Explore the print, digital and audio versions and the author videos at brfonline.org.uk/bible-in-ten

Living Faith video

Our Living Faith ministry is having a makeover, as head of content creation Olivia Warburton explains in our new Living Faith video.

Watch it on the Living Faith page of our website: brf.org.uk/living-faith



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