



Welcome



In just a few weeks we will be into December and the annual round of carol services, nativity plays and other community events. I love the way Isabelle Hamley, author of our 2024 Advent book, *Embracing Humanity*, describes how profoundly she was affected by her first nativity play at the age of twelve: 'Despite growing up in a virulently atheist family and going through the highly secular French education system, the sheer wonder of it still gives me goosebumps,' she writes, 'the hard journey, the promise of a star, the extraordinary baby unrecognised while an indifferent world goes by.'

The greatest gift for Christians is the gift of Jesus and our greatest gift, not just to family and friends but to strangers too, is to share the gift of Jesus with them.

On the next page Tudor Humphreys talks about his 40 year relationship with BRF Ministries. He was introduced to *New Daylight* in 1984 through 'a dear, dear lady, Sheila' who cofounded and ran the Oswestry Christian Bookshop. Tudor and his wife Alison were running a mission in the town, the Kingswell Centre, and they started reading the reflections at breakfast time.

'It was a faith project,' says Tudor. 'We had nowhere else to go so *New Daylight*

gave us something to grab hold of every day. It was a discipline, but also we knew it was feeding us.' It's a routine they still observe today: 'Come rain or shine, *New Daylight* has been there. We've plugged away at it and it's fed us.'

In turn, this has led them to become regular givers to BRF Ministries – Friends – prompted by our virtual gifts appeal last year. This raised money to give free books and Bible reading notes to food banks, prisons, women's refuges and the like. 'There are always opportunities to give,' says Tudor, 'so sometimes we will do significant giving and sometimes we'll do lots of small

NOVEMBER 2024

A 'bungee jump with God'

Anna Chaplaincy's
best gift to Wales

All Together!
A conference like no other

Parenting for Faith at Cliff College

A Calendar of Carols

and more...

giving, but we thought this might be a small gift with a big impact.'

Present giving, however modest the gift, can be truly joyful and spirit-lifting. We're running our virtual gifts campaign again this year (details on page 2) and for those closer to you, might you give them a gift subscription for one of our Bible reading notes (details page 6)? They could find your gift as transforming as Tudor and Alison have found *New Daylight*.

We wish you a blessed and peaceful Advent and Christmas.

Karen Laister



Angela's prayer

Angela Avent is a retired nurse, living in Bristol. She loves helping to care for her four grandchildren and she's a devoted reader of our *Day by Day with God* Bible reading notes. Her mum used to enjoy *New Daylight* and as she reached the end of her life, Angela would read both reflections to her each day. 'That gave great comfort to us both,' she says. 'I wouldn't be without my daily guide and it has been a huge source of inspiration, guidance and strength, especially when storms of life have come. I cannot begin to describe how transformative reading *Day by Day with God* has been. A reflection in her mother's *New Daylight* inspired Angela to write the prayer that appears alongside this story.

■ If you'd like to share your story please contact us at enquiries@brf.org.uk

Pray with us...

In the words of Angela Avent:

Thank you Lord for this day.

May your word light my way.

*May it teach me
what to do and say,*

*and may your love and
kindness shine bright today.*

Amen.

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

Every good and perfect gift is from above,
coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights,
who does not change like shifting shadows.

JAMES 1:17 (NIV)

Hello from Julie and the fundraising team



As Christmas approaches the fundraising team is busy processing greetings card orders and donations. We so

appreciate everyone who has supported us by purchasing and sending BRF Ministries greeting cards. Our selection of Christmas cards to suit all tastes is available online or you can use a paper order form or phone our friendly team on 01235 462305 to place your order. If you receive this newsletter by post you'll also find a leaflet about our new range of beautiful everyday cards.

If you are looking for a Christmas gift with a difference, please check out our virtual gifts, as mentioned in Karen's welcome letter. When you give a virtual gift from BRF Ministries you are helping us to send Bible reading notes free of charge to chaplains ministering in hospitals, care homes, prisons, hospices and women's refuges. Again, you can order online at brfonline.org.uk/virtual-gifts or use the order form enclosed with this mailing. Our hope is to send out 1,000 free copies

of our Bible reading notes in December, for chaplains to begin using in January.

This month we have also mailed churches asking for donations to help us fund Messy Church. If you read September's newsletter you will know that this is a remarkable ministry with proven impact in communities throughout the UK and beyond. In my own community in West Yorkshire, Messy Church blesses people in many ways – according to local pastor Cassie Biggin:

'One of our more recent additions to our Messy Church is a colouring table for some of our older participants. They can choose a bookmark or postcard with a message on that they can also take home with them. It's a calm corner in a very busy session. It's also become a favourite corner for some of our neurodiverse children. In this photo, the lady on the right has advanced dementia and the little girl on the left is neurodiverse. They sat happily together for at least 30 mins. Later that week, the mum of the little girl told us that before bed her daughter had asked her the name of the "old lady at Messy Church". She said she couldn't wait to sit and colour with her next time

because "she talked to me and I like her". The mum told me: "This sums up the beauty of our Messy Church."

'This sums up the beauty of our Messy Church.'



If you would like to make a donation to support any of our ministries or become a regular giver – a Friend – please go to brf.org.uk/give or phone us 01235 462305

My sincere thanks for all your support and prayers.

Every blessing

Julie MacNaughton, MCIOF (Dip)
Head of fundraising

Meet our friends...



Tudor and Alison Humphreys are faithful subscribers to New Daylight and also regular givers – Friends – of BRF

Ministries. They have three children and six grandchildren. Tudor is now an executive coach and helps charities and businesses save money on their merchant services and banking costs. Alison runs a voluntary charity working with people living with dementia.

Tudor describes the leap of faith they took as young Christians in the early 1980s as a 'bungee jump with God'. Prepared to go anywhere in the world, they waited and waited for the call. When it came 18 months later, through an elder in their local church while out shopping one Saturday, it was to lead a new mission in their home town of Oswestry.

'There was no job description,' says Tudor, 'no contract, no money, a building that was a little bit tumbled down and we both looked at each other and said, "That's our yes!" God had twanged us back home!'

There followed 17 years of pioneering work at the Kingswell Centre, working with young people, the unemployed and families affected by drug and alcohol misuse. Tudor then moved on to a new role, leaving others to continue the work at Kingswell.

'They were heady days. It was about being a practical Christian presence and influence, bridging the gap between churches and communities. And really, we made some progress. Of course, there's plenty more to be done, but we made a start, and we made some memories. Lot of people have good memories of those times.'

Anna Chaplaincy in Wales

Sally Rees retired last December after ten years of ordained ministry, with a particular focus on ministry with older people, and from 2020, as Anna Chaplaincy lead for Wales. She is still a freelance trainer for BRF Ministries and has pioneered a popular residential training course on ministry with older people in collaboration with St Padarn's Institute, the Anglican theological college of the Church in Wales. She told us about the course and the growth of Anna Chaplaincy in Wales, while sitting at her computer against the magnificent back drop of the Black Mountains.

'God has been very good. When I began, I was the only person with distinctive ministry for older people/ Anna Chaplaincy in the St Catwg's ministry area, which has ten churches covering a large geographical area in rural mid-Wales. We now have three Anna Chaplains and a curate with a heart for older people who is also providing pastoral and sacramental ministry. God has provided more than I could imagine. It's amazing.'

Sally gradually established older people's ministry and Anna Chaplaincy in and around her hometown of Crickhowell but a turning point came in 2018 when she organised a conference in her church. 'We had about 80 people come from all over south Wales and lots of different denominations. We got a few Anna Chaplains from that event but the main thing was that people took the message back to their own places of worship and that was the real start of a network in Wales.'

Sally has seen 20 Anna Chaplains commissioned in Wales across the denominations. 'The amazing thing about Anna Chaplaincy in Wales,' she says, 'is that it's been ecumenical from the start. So although the majority of Anna Chaplains are in the Church in Wales, we've got Anna chaplains in the Assemblies of God, the Methodist Church and the Baptist Church and we meet to share with and encourage one another online once a month. It's very collaborative and that's a real blessing.'

The 'Equipping older people's ministry' course that Sally pioneered in collaboration with St Padarn's has run twice now and has been oversubscribed both times. Based on the Anna Chaplaincy training course, it's a four day residential which people have found immensely valuable, as is borne out in the comments below. The course is now built into the college's continuing ministerial development programme until 2028.

So, apart from the ongoing legacy of the St Padarn's course, what does Sally think is Anna Chaplaincy's most precious gift to Wales?

'I would say the gift of Anna Chaplaincy is the much the same in Wales as it is everywhere else: it's the ability to take God's love into the community. Here in Wales, within the church, congregations actually look after each other very well: when anyone's poorly or bereaved, you know that people gather around and give support and care and pray, but Anna Chaplaincy's big gift is taking that out to people who are not in the churches and who may never go to a church.'

Comments on the St Padarn's course

'It was totally beneficial and exceeded my expectations.'

'Every session flew by – I was always amazed by the time. Both educational and affirming. Very encouraging.'

'I have a better understanding and feel better equipped to go and do ministry with older people and to think what form it might take.'

'It has made me want to learn more so that I can better serve older people and those living with dementia in my community.'

It was always a hand-to-mouth affair: 'I could go on listing these mini miracles of times we were on the brink of closing then somebody would say, "Have you spoken to this guy?" Three times that happened! And we ended up in a partnership with Spurgeons Charity, and we were them for about 17 years or so and that was fantastic for the centre because we were linked with other projects across the country which all had a Christian heart.'

Throughout these busy years, working at the centre and bringing up their three children, Tudor and Alison were sustained by our *New Daylight* Bible

reading notes. 'I like the bite-sizeness of *New Daylight*,' Tudor says, 'and the variety of the people who write for it. I would not have heard from Mennonites or Franciscan friars without *New Daylight*. People like Veronica Zundel, Stephen Rand, Amy Boucher Pye, Henry Wansborough, Tony Horsfall... I love that there are the academics at one end, with this deep, researched understanding of the language of the Bible, and then the heart people at the other end, and everyone in between.'

'We've been through some really tough, soul scraping times, times when the daily readings didn't give us any "warm

fuzzies". But that's wilderness time, and the Spirit leads you there so it's not somewhere to run away from. Your skin is burned, you're parched, but God is still close even if it doesn't feel like that.'

'The prayer at the end of this morning's reading was: *Lord, when the desert encroaches and our wells have run dry, lead us back to you, our living well*. That's it! Come rain or shine, *New Daylight* has been there, and we've plugged away at it and it's fed us.'

To become a regular giver go to brf.org.uk/give/friends

Thank you!

A huge thank you to everyone who supported Debbie Ducille's sponsored walk marking the tenth anniversary of Anna Chaplaincy joining the BRF Ministries family. With any aching muscles and blistered toes a distant memory, we're delighted to say that Debbie raised £5,000.

■ Find out more at annachaplaincy.org.uk

All together!

The conference that's been described as 'a gift that keeps on giving' by a previous delegate is back in 2025! The Messy Church Conference will be from 20 to 22 June 2025 at High Leigh Conference Centre in Hertfordshire. 'All Together' will explore how we welcome people of all ages, abilities and from all backgrounds to Messy Church. So, why should you come?

It's for everyone!

This intergenerational conference is for all Messy Church leaders and teams from anywhere in the world of any age. Whether you're 8, 28 or 108, if you're on the leadership team of your Messy Church in some capacity, this conference is for you. (Under-18s must be accompanied by an adult.) The range of activities and approaches during the weekend means it will be engaging and inspiring for everyone. We delight in simply being together, learning from and with each age group and country. We also welcome those interested in learning more about Messy Church as a movement.

'Thanks for pulling together a great conference. It had a lovely relaxed yet informative feel – nicely straddling the differential between newbies and more seasoned practitioners.'



You'll make new friends!

Come on your own – we promise you'll soon have friends. Or come as a team of all ages – what better way to forge strong friendships across your team and be able to put new ideas into practice when you go back to your Messy Church again?

'I really enjoyed it and got a lot from it. Can't wait for our next Messy Church!'

You'll leave feeling inspired and encouraged!

If you've never been on a training conference before, this conference will be a great start: you'll be warmly welcomed, you'll be among people who look after each other and who will be interested in you and your Messy Church; everything is on-site so once you're there, you can just relax with everything in one place. And it will be that wonderful Messy Church combination of learning something every minute of the day in fun and engaging ways, just by hanging out with other Messy people, but also through a stimulating programme of activities. You can go to everything on offer or just one or two activities: it's completely up to you.

'It really has been excellent, and I've come away encouraged and inspired and with lots to think about!'



For further details, including our keynote speakers, ticket prices and booking details, please visit our website at messychurch.org.uk/the-messy-church-conference-2025



FLOURISH!

The Church of England has recently launched a new network of 40 worshipping communities to further its vision of becoming younger and more diverse. The new FLOURISH network will establish partnerships between schools or further education colleges and their local churches, aiming to engage a large number of children, young people and their families. An initial two-year pilot programme starting in September will introduce these worshipping communities across twelve dioceses.

We are delighted to announce that the BRF Ministries Messy Church team has been awarded funding to equip, enable and support school and parish partnerships to set up and run a Messy Church or a Messy Church Goes Wild in a school setting. To achieve this, the team will deliver bespoke training, create and facilitate an online learning community, provide a package of resources and create opportunities to support and develop student leaders. We look forward to sharing regular updates over the course of the project!

Look out for upcoming Messy Church events at messychurch.org.uk/latest/events

The Parenting for Faith certificate



Beth Burbidge is the associate leader of St Peter's Morley, an Anglican church in south Leeds. Originally from Lowestoft in Suffolk, she got involved in youth work while studying theology in York. She's married to Alex, who works for Leeds Diocese as part of the Growing Faith Foundation, and they have a daughter, 16-month-old Ada. On top of a very busy work and home life, Beth has also just completed the online Parenting for Faith certificate course run by Cliff College.

Despite the time-management challenges, it's a course she thoroughly recommends. She explained why.

'My theology degree was a secular degree, which has its pros and cons, and it was important to me to be doing ministry in the church alongside my studies. As part of that, I began following Parenting for Faith on Facebook. It was there I saw an advert for the Cliff College course and I really felt this was a brilliant opportunity for me to go deeper in my journey, not just as a leader, but also as a parent because that's a very new thing to me still.'

The course runs online for twelve weeks, with a new set of videos released each week. This meant Beth could work at her own pace, especially round busy times like Easter.

'Our vicar is always looking for opportunities for us to grow in our own personal development and was very encouraging. I carved Mondays out to say, "this is my study day", and where possible, I stuck to that and it worked really well. Yes, I've got lots going on, but I was able to be flexible and if I couldn't do my Monday, I'd switch it round or catch up a bit later.'

The course is wide-ranging but also allows students to pursue particular interests, offering plenty of suggested reading to help them go deeper in their

studies. Beth was able to focus on her special interest in intergenerational ministry and to reflect practically and theologically on the monthly all-age services she runs at St Peter's.

'I've really enjoyed being able to pick those apart,' she says, 'and think about the course and some of the reading that I've done and ask myself what can I do differently? That's been a real highlight for me: to push me and to get me to think differently.'

And as a relatively new mum, how has the course impacted Beth personally?

'As a parent, I found the Parenting for Faith Key Tools really, really helpful. And it was also really helpful to talk with my husband about them, and to think a little more long term about when our daughter learns to speak and is watching us as she gets older. For me, the "framing" and "windows" tools particularly are just so amazing and it's been really challenging – in a good way – for us to think how we actually put that into place for her.'

To find out more go to
parentingforfaith.org.uk/certificate

Refresh in Guildford

We were delighted to hear exciting news from Janet Williams, children and families pastor at St John's Stoke (SJS), in Guildford, about the success of their toddlers group based on the 'Refresh' model pioneered by BRF Ministries author Caroline Montgomery.



The Refresh group only started in January but already Janet is seeing its impact.

'It has been such a privilege,' she writes. 'People have been enjoying it. Every week, all the parents, grandparents, carers and toddlers leave our hall with the toys and come and sit together in our lounge for snacks and to hear the "thought for the day". I believe, by God's grace, that mustard seeds are being sown every week.'

Janet has noticed that there seems to be more of a family feel in the group as the SJS Refresh toddlers team make a point of speaking to everyone – rather than only focusing on the children – and encouraging them in the inevitable ups and downs of life. Personal testimonies have also proved popular, 'as people are genuinely interested when we talk about our own life struggles and how we turn to God for comfort and help.'

'We are also finding that most people take the scripture with them so we pray that it will touch them in some way during the week.'

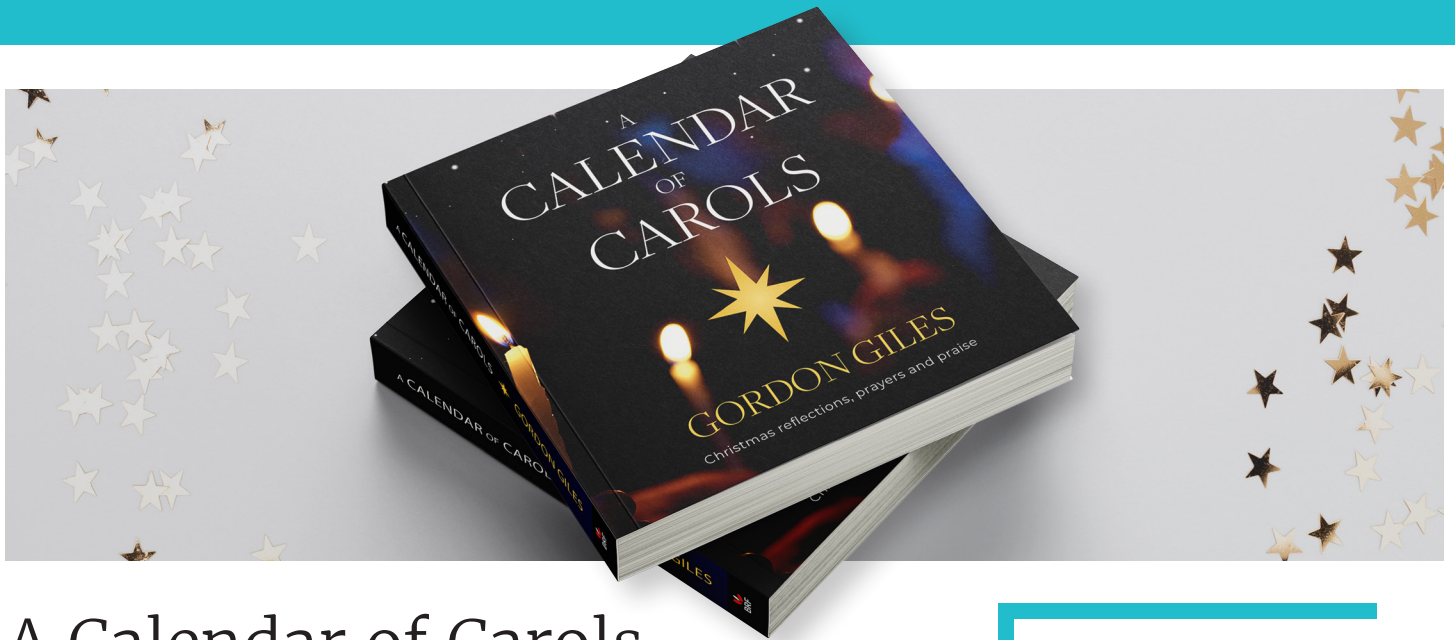
To find out more about Refresh, and how to run a Refresh group go to
brfonline.org.uk/refresh



Hand in Hand conference 7-9 February 2025

Both Parenting for Faith and Messy Church will be well-represented at the 2025 Hand in Hand conference for children's and family workers. In an exciting new venue in Birmingham, Parenting for Faith's Anna Hawken and Becky Sedgwick, and Messy Church's Aike Kennett-Brown and Jane Butler will be leading seminars and workshops as well as running stalls in the main exhibition area.

For full details and to book go to
handinhandconference.com



A Calendar of Carols

The renowned composer and conductor Sir John Rutter has called this delightful new book by Gordon Giles 'A treasure trove for every lover of Christmas carols.' Gordon introduces *A Calendar of Carols* and shares the inspiration behind it.

Carols and Christmas hymns inspire affection and capture our imagination for they often retell (or reinterpret) the gospel accounts of the incarnation and the scriptural descriptions of shepherds, angels, magi and manger. It is possible to tell the whole story of Christmas using only phrases found within these songs – and I offer an attempt to do that in the book. But carols do not only connect us with Jesus and his story, they connect us with our own story. The carols we sing punctuate our lives every December and as we sing our favourites we are transported, not only to Bethlehem but back to our own childhood and the years in between. Thanks to Charles Dickens perhaps, Christmas is a sentimental time of year and our carols are part of that emotional atmosphere.

Christmas is about faith, but also about family and friends. Because we grow up with carols, and return to them each year, Christmas is a bit like a reunion where, come December, our favourite carols reappear – like friends and relations – musical soulmates whose relational value we treasure and look forward to renewing each year. We have changed

but they have not. As 'friends' we want to know about them – how they came into being, who wrote them, why and how. Do they mean what we think they mean? We want to find out more about them as musical friends, because we love them.

That is how it has always been for me. If I love something or someone, I want to know about them, their story, how they tick. I love carols and hymns – I love singing them and I love writing them (This is why the brand-new 'Camel Carol' is featured in the book, written by the composer Thomas Hewitt Jones and me). In the book I tell the stories and draw spiritual significance from carols ranging across time and place, in order to share the poetic and musical thought processes and intentions which inform the story of a carol. So, if Christmas carols and hymns are your friends and you would like to connect your story to their story, with spiritual and biblical threads, open the windows of this calendar of carols this December.

To order go to brfonline.org.uk/calendar-of-carols



Gift subscription for New Daylight 2025

Could you give a lasting gift this Christmas to a friend or loved one?

Bible reading notes are a great way to encourage, sustain and grow faith, as this reader testifies:

'As a regular reader of *New Daylight* over many years, I always look forward to my daily readings, and find them an absolute bedrock of faith and food for the journey. Thank you!'

Visit brfonline.org.uk/gift-subscriptions to find out more and order your gift subscription

As a charity, we rely on fundraising and gifts in wills to deliver Anna chaplaincy, Living Faith, Messy church and Parenting for Faith. Your gift helps us impact thousands of lives each year. Please support our work.

brf.org.uk/give +44 (0)1235 462305



Registered with
**FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR**

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



Images: p. 1 – Angela with her grandson by kind permission of Angela Avent, brown outdoor bench with snow on top banner from pexels.com/@trang-pham-294089 and view of Northern Lights over a snowy field from pexels.com/@joni-tuohimaa-1936935; p. 2 – Tudor and Alison by kind permission of Tudor Humphreys, Messy Church event by kind permission of Pastor Cassie Biggin; p. 5 – Beth Burbidge by kind permission, toddler group by kind permission of St John's Stoke, Guildford and Hand in Hand Conference © 2024 Hand in Hand Conference; other photos © BRF Ministries.

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