



Welcome



As we step into the vibrancy of May, our hearts and minds turn towards one of the most transformative moments in the Christian calendar: Pentecost. This festival, often referred to as the 'birthday of the church,' marks the day when the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles, filling them with power, purpose and the unshakeable courage to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Pentecost is a celebration of divine empowerment and unity. In Acts 2, we read how people from every nation under heaven were gathered in Jerusalem, each hearing the apostles speak in their own language. It is a vivid reminder that the message of Jesus Christ is for all people, transcending borders, cultures and languages. This inclusivity is at the heart of BRF Ministries, as we inspire people of all ages and backgrounds to grow in Christian faith through our diverse range of initiatives – from Messy Church and Anna Chaplaincy to Parenting for Faith and our BRF Resources.

The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost is not just a historical event, it's an ongoing reality. The same Spirit that ignited the early church continues to work through each of us today. At BRF Ministries, we witness this Spirit moving powerfully in countless ways: in the creativity of Messy Church gatherings

bringing families together in worship, in the compassionate presence of Anna Chaplains offering spiritual care to older people and in the transformative insights shared through our Bible reading notes.

As we approach Pentecost, let us open our hearts afresh to the Holy Spirit's guidance. Let us pray for fresh inspiration, boldness and unity within our communities. And let us give thanks for the incredible support of our BRF Ministries family – supporters like you who make this Spirit-led work possible.

May this Pentecost be a time of renewed passion and purpose as we continue to celebrate God's love and light and share it with those around us.

Jules Morgan

Dr Jules Morgan, CIPD, CMI, ILM
Deputy CEO and head of people

MAY 2025

A culture of invitation

Growing Caraway

The everyday lives of children

Bartholemew's Pentecost

All Shall Be Well

and more...

Pray with us...

In the words of this prayer for Pentecost by Martyn Payne

*Faithful God,
whose promises never fail,
thank you for the promise
of your Holy Spirit,
who gives us power
from on high;
who guides us into all truth;
who gifts us with
ministries for serving;
and who graces us with
comfort and counsel,
as by your Spirit you work in us
helping us to become more
and more like Jesus.
Amen.*

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

Growing Messy Church

New Messy Church team members!

It has been an exciting few weeks in the Messy Church team as we have welcomed three new team members to join us and to help deliver Messy Momentum. Nina Seaman (centre) has joined the team as Messy Church administrator, Sophie Harber (right) has joined us as the youth project lead and Sarah Smart (left) has joined the team as network development lead.

You can read all about our new team members on the Messy Church website at messychurch.brf.org.uk/meet-the-messy-team



When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

ACT 2:1-4 (NIV)



Hello from Julie and the fundraising team



As Eastertide makes way for Pentecost, we send our sincere thanks to everyone who bought our Easter cards. Sales of greeting cards, including our lovely, versatile Everyday cards, are a valuable source of income for BRF Ministries – last year we sold a fabulous £27,605 worth of cards.

It's also greatly appreciated that many of you

made a donation on top of your card order. Plans are already underway for the production of this year's Christmas card designs (oh yes they are!) which will be available online from July and through the paper order forms included in the September issue of BRF Ministries News.

Meanwhile, this issue of our newsletter includes our 2025 Annual Appeal. The verse at the top of my appeal letter is Romans 15:13:

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.

I've always loved this verse and I believe the Holy Spirit prompted me to choose it for this year's appeal. As I thought and prayed about which verse to choose, these words kept coming to mind and then the verse kept being mentioned in different situations and conversations.

The 2024 appeal raised a truly wonderful £31,293 for which we are extremely grateful. We understand the difficult financial times that we are living in but hope and pray that you are able to help us with a donation this year. As I've shared before, we need to raise £26,000 per week to fund our ministries and every single gift makes a big difference.

Please pray for the fundraising team and all the activities that we undertake to enable us to continue to deliver our remarkable ministries. As the comments on this page confirm, with your help, we really are making a difference.

My thanks for your generosity, support and prayers.

Every blessing

Julie MacNaughton, MCIOf (Dip)
Head of fundraising

What people say about us

'I have been a user of *Guidelines* for a number of years and found it so helpful I decided to support BRF Ministries financially, and that naturally led to praying for the charity as well. It plays such an important role in nourishing individuals and ministries in their work for Christ.'

'The work BRF Ministries does is a wonderful example of God working through people to help others in so many ways. The work you do is so valuable and I think it is so important to support this work with prayer.'

'I have been taking notes from BRF Ministries for decades and value your work and the way the organisation has grown and diversified to include so many walks of Christian life.'

Sue Wightman story



Sue Wightman contacted us recently to say how much a series of reflections in *Day by Day with God* had

meant to her. Sue found 'The gift of creativity' by Catherine Lerner 'so inspiring and encouraging.' Sue is a retired hospital administrator and lives with her husband on the Isle of Wight, where they're both very involved in a 'wonderful United Reform Church.'

Sue's mum taught her to knit and by the age of seven she was knitting mittens, scarves and dolls clothes. She's always found it relaxing – 'you go to another place when you're knitting' – but later in life it became something more: 'I was probably in my 50s when it became more spiritual. Grandchildren started arriving and as I was making blankets and clothes for them, I would find myself praying for them, even before they were born. I'd be knitting for an hour and just talking to God, it became my "thing": I knit and pray.'

But sometimes Sue felt a little 'judged' for her habit, as if knitting was a bit trivial, and that's why 'The gift of creativity' helped her so much: 'It was as if it gave me permission to say what I was doing – knitting and praying – was all right. I no longer feel I have to justify myself. I knit and pray, and it's my time with God. I think that's a gift God has given me, and it just shows that as you get older and you can't do as much, you can still mentally spend time with God and do beautiful things for him.'



Sue organises other knitters to make squares which she then stitches into baby blankets for teenage mums and colourful, cosy throws both for the older members of the church who can't get out and for people who come to the church's warm space, 'The Well', but who aren't coming to church at the moment.

Erica Roberts



Despite not officially being an Anna Chaplain, Erica Roberts has been a key member of the Anna Chaplaincy network from the earliest days of dreaming and planning around founder Debbie Thrower's kitchen table. A former paediatric oncologist, Erica was ordained in 2010 and became the diocesan city chaplain for older people in Southampton in 2014. In 2019 she founded the charity Caraway, which has worked in close partnership with Anna Chaplaincy ever since,

developing dementia services and resourcing the local church to reach out into the community and care homes. But now it's all change as she and her husband hand on their much loved home in Southampton and 'retire' to Devon. Erica brings the story up to date.

'It's been so exciting and inspirational,' Erica says. 'Without the Holy Spirit prompting me, it probably wouldn't have happened. And yet, it's not "my charity": it belongs to God. I am just part of a movement that is growing and evolving and that's a really lovely thing for me to see now, six years later.'

From those kitchen table meetings there are now nearly 450 Anna Chaplains around the country and Caraway has blossomed, in part because they were able to pivot so quickly in response to the Covid lockdowns.

'Like many charities serving those who are more vulnerable in society, it was actually quite a good time to grow. Caraway was very open to ways of working differently and we were lucky to be working with a lot of creative people who were very happy not to close things down, but think outside the box. So in an odd sort of way, lockdown probably accelerated Caraway's growth and we came out of Covid already a stronger and larger organisation.'

Because of Erica's diocesan role, and the growing reputation of Caraway, she teaches and trains across the diocese, equipping both lay people and ordinands to minister with older people. 'We are a new charity, but people have seen our track record so there is a sense of sustainability. Caraway is all about enabling others, whether it's the local church or other organisations. Now we have twelve Anna Chaplains in the Southampton area, ten of whom are licensed to Caraway, and the others are licensed to their local churches. But we train together, work together, supervise together and network together. It is really, really exciting.'

At the end of March, Caraway provided a diocesan training day for older people's spirituality. 'It's beautiful synergy,' says Erica, 'all these jigsaw pieces coming together.'

Despite a very natural pang about leaving, Erica's move is in response to 'a deep, deep call from God that it's time to move on.' How then does she understand the working of the Spirit, both in her own life's journey and in Caraway's journey?

'Our language limits who God is, who the Holy Spirit is. I think I used to see the Holy Spirit in the biblical way; the classical way of the whisper, the wind, the fire, the dove descending, but now I think it's all about movement. The Holy Spirit doesn't stay still, and there has been that sense for me, personally, and for us as an organisation, that there's always movement, like leaves, fluttering, and it's about trying to discern where the Holy Spirit is taking us.'

'I suppose my new language for the Holy Spirit comes from the Ignatian tradition and that's very much thinking about the movement of God, and moving towards God and moving away from God. There's that deep sense of knowing when we're stepping into where the Holy Spirit is moving. Maybe it's a personal decision, or maybe it's trustee meeting and around the table everyone's excited, and there's that sense that the Holy Spirit is there in the flurry of the leaves swirling. As I move on, I just hope that I can keep stepping into where the Spirit is moving in a new place.'

Find out more at
annachaplaincy.org.uk



Meet our northern-most Anna Chaplain

We're delighted to report that Helen Dray was commissioned as an Anna Chaplain (Church of Scotland) earlier this spring in Stockethill Church in Aberdeen.

Helen writes: 'My career was working with older people in residential homes and I loved my work and have missed the contact with older people since I medically retired. I love being able to support older people as they negotiate this stage of their life, to try and make a small difference in any way I can.'

'I first came across Anna Chaplaincy when I was at university when a fellow student became one. As I investigated it, the more I had a sense of "this is for me".'

'I became a pastoral volunteer around two years ago and during that time my minister and I had many discussions around Anna Chaplaincy; the church and the trustees agreed that it would benefit the church, and I did my training in the summer of last year.'

'I love my work, being able to make a difference to people's lives and supporting them as they negotiate the changes that old age brings.'



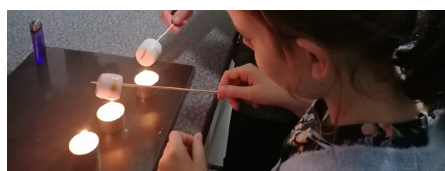
Who is the Holy Spirit?

The June session in *Get Messy! Volume 2* is called 'Who is the Holy Spirit?' and it was created by Great Barr Messy Church in Birmingham. Deborah Humphries (far right) started the Messy Church when she arrived eleven years ago as a new minister, still in training, and was keen to do Messy Church 'properly'. She has recently moved to a new post on the north Norfolk coast but still uses 'we' as she tells us how the Great Barr team came to write and pilot the Holy Spirit session, and she is still very much with her old friends and colleagues in spirit!

'We worked hard on the "proper" Messy Church stuff, the discipleship,' she says, 'and I think that's why those who come have really taken on ownership and would now call themselves Christians, whereas I'm not sure they would have done in the beginning. What's really good is that there's a real culture of invitation. So they will bring their friends, and some of them come and stay, and some of them come and don't stay, but there is a real sense of "this is good so we're going to share this with our friends."'

They got involved in *Get Messy!* when Sally O'Hare – a leader in Great Barr Messy Church as well as being on the central Messy Church staff team – said they were getting people together to create sessions for the magazine. Deborah said 'Why don't we get our young people to plan it?' Great Barr was assigned the Holy Spirit session and they had two online planning sessions, bringing together young people and adults and creating 'a melting pot of ideas' based on the Pentecost story in Acts 2:1–13.

'A big part of it was the idea that we all have different gifts,' says Deborah, 'so the fact that we included all the different ages working together reflected that. Then we also wanted to think about the different images of the Holy Spirit, so the activities are about fire and wind and the dove. We were trying to help people use and interpret those traditional images in a relatable way, as well as having fun. Of course anything involving fire and marshmallows is always fun!'



They needed to come up with ten different activities for the magazine and different families trialled different activities. 'It was really exciting when Sally brought in a copy of the magazine and their pictures were there on the page,' says Deborah.



'We had some really deep conversations with the kids about what the Holy Spirit is like, but for them, I think the best thing was that they were asked to do it and they were invited to get involved in something far wider than just their own Messy Church.'

It can only be the Holy Spirit

Mags Fraser has been involved in Gillespie Memorial Church in Dunfermline for nearly 55 years, since she was 14 years old. Following a spell of ill health and serious sight loss, she has moved to sheltered housing in a new part of town. In the winter she uses the 'Dial-a-Ride' service to get to church but in the warmer months she walks, having become an expert in using her roller ball cane.



'I walk everywhere,' says Mags. 'If I thought about it, I would know I'm quite vulnerable when I'm outside, but it's God who gets me through the front door and God is good.'

Once a month, Mags goes to Messy Church in the church hall, rather than the main Sunday morning service. 'It's wonderful,' she says. 'There's just a presence you can feel and you can't say it's anything but the Holy Spirit. There's a peace, but there's also an excitement, and people feel it's a safe place for them. Whatever they've been through, whatever difficulties they're facing, whatever the different emotions, Messy Church is a safe place for people in a way that a traditional church might not be. That's why they come; friendships have developed, and it's just like a family.'

When Mags' sight deteriorated she felt a bit lost for a while. 'It was really hard to accept, and I thought, I wonder what I can do. I wonder what God has got for me.' It turned out she could still do her beloved crafting, with the help of her scan and cut machine.

'I have to look so closely I've got nose prints on the screen!' she laughs. 'But I can enhance the images 400%. It does take me much, much longer than a sighted person, but the fact that I can do crafting is just wonderful. So I said to the Messy Church team that I'd like to help and it's just been such a blessing to be involved. The children love doing the crafts, that brings me such joy. They've made me feel I still have lots to give.'

For the session 'Who is the Holy Spirit?' go to brfonline.org.uk/get-messy-vol-2-individual-sessions

Look out for upcoming Messy Church events here: messychurch.brf.org.uk/latest/events



Experiencing the Spirit in the everyday

Jess Jenner has been a children's and family worker in Bromley, south east London for 20 years and now works in the Pioneer-affiliated Jubilee Church. She has always created her own resources because, she says, 'I could never find resources that did what I wanted.' From the very first Sunday of lockdown she offered free family resources online and soon these were taken up by 10,000 people worldwide. It was also during lockdown that she connected with Parenting for Faith.

'I'd always been on the fringe of Parenting for Faith,' says Jess. 'I'd seen their posts but not really connected. Then I did everything in the wrong order. I've still not led a full Parenting for Faith course, but I was one of the first people to complete the Cliff College certificate course and I've been to The Forge retreat and connected with the team through that.'

Jess also became a Parenting for Faith champion last year and is looking for space in the church timetable to run the original Parenting for Faith course and the upcoming Grandparenting for Faith course. In the meantime, she continues to use many Parenting for Faith resources and tools with Jubilee families.

From the start, when Jess was looking for resources she couldn't find, it was the

theme of the Holy Spirit she wanted to explore. Why?

'Because I don't see the point in children discovering God but not actually experiencing God. That's what draws us in. As a young person, what impacted me most was going away to Christian camps and those moments when the Holy Spirit came and moved in power. But we don't need to wait till we're teenagers and away from our churches to experience that. I want to encourage children to have those moments and not as a one-off experience, but rather to know for themselves that they can experience the Holy Spirit in their everyday life. It's one of the things I love so much about the Parenting for Faith tool chat and catch: it just makes it so everyday, listening to God and talking to God.'

So how has Jess approached the themes of Pentecost and Holy Spirit?

'I come back to the fact that Jesus described the Holy Spirit as a helper.

Sometimes the Pentecost story might be a little bit scary. It's fire and wind, and

people not really knowing what's going on. But the outcome of Pentecost is all these people hearing the good news and responding to it. It's a dramatic story to tell. Kids really love making crowns with flames on them, and I've made a million crowns with flames on them over the years, but the essence of it is that we can encounter the Holy Spirit today. That helper is still with us today and that doesn't always look like flames on our heads: sometimes that looks like having the right words to share with your friend when they're upset. It's all about making it applicable.'

Last year Jess and her families were involved in a Churches Together Pentecost service outside the local Anglican church on Bromley Common. Interdenominational and intergenerational, 'it was really exciting and we're planning something similar this year,' says Jess, 'though we learned a few things, like having to tie everything down because it was so windy!'

Jess' free resources are still available at tath.co.uk and to find her curriculum resources go to foundationstones.co.uk

To find out more about becoming a Parenting for Faith champion email enquiries@brf.org.uk

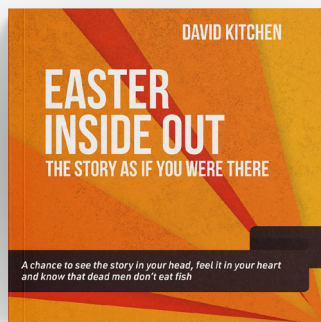


Parenting for Faith lead Anna Hawken is excited about the current series of the highly popular podcast and the coming book (to be published in October) on which it's based:

'Throughout 2025, we're looking at topics that appear in our new book, *A-Z of Parenting for Faith*. The book covers over 50 different Christian parenting topics and compiles the wisdom from the many experienced guests we've had on the podcast over the past five years

into short easy-to-read chapters. For the podcast, we're interviewing real people from all around the world to see what applying this looks like for them. They've been given a sneak preview of a chapter from the book and chosen an extract to talk about as they share their experience of Parenting for Faith in their context and the topic they've chosen.'

Subscribe or follow wherever you get your podcasts at parentingforfaith.org/podcast



Bartholomew recalls the first Pentecost



Master storyteller Dave Kitchen steps into the Pentecost story, imagining what it was like to be Bartholomew

watching events unfold.

In the time between the day Jesus left us and Pentecost, we spent a great many hours in the upper room of Mary's house in Jerusalem. I got to know her son, John Mark, quite well in those days. He must have been about twelve – lively, bright-eyed and naturally inquisitive.

'What exactly are you doing?' he asked me one morning. He didn't say it but he was clearly implying that we didn't seem to be doing much at all.

'Well, we're waiting... so we talk, we listen in the temple, we pray.'

'Is that it?' he asked.

I nodded, hoping he wouldn't ask me what we were waiting for. He was called away by his mum and I breathed a sigh of relief. How do you explain what hasn't happened yet? John Mark was too smart for half-answers. The change came in the heart of the festival time. We were at his house so he felt it just as we did. It wasn't the first time we'd known God's

spirit at work but nothing that had happened before truly prepared us for that moment.

When we tried to explain it, we talked about wind shaking the house and fire resting upon us. But it was more than that: a flame had been lit in each one of us and it released something extraordinary. We spoke with an excitement and joy we'd never felt before. That noise drew a crowd. They were astonished because they all seemed to hear us in their own native language. There was no logic to it! Then Peter found the words to explain what was happening. Somehow, he always did.

Very late that evening, when we were eating together, John Mark came and sat down beside me.

'So that's what the word waiting means,' he said with a big grin on his face.

I smiled back at him: 'Never be in too much of a hurry. God comes to us when he knows the time is right, not when we think it is.'

Find out more about Dave Kitchen and his books *Easter Inside Out* and *Bible in Ten* at brfonline.org.uk/easter-inside-out and brfonline.org.uk/bible-in-ten

All Shall Be Well



Emma Pennington's second book about Julian of Norwich, *All Shall Be Well*, was published earlier in the

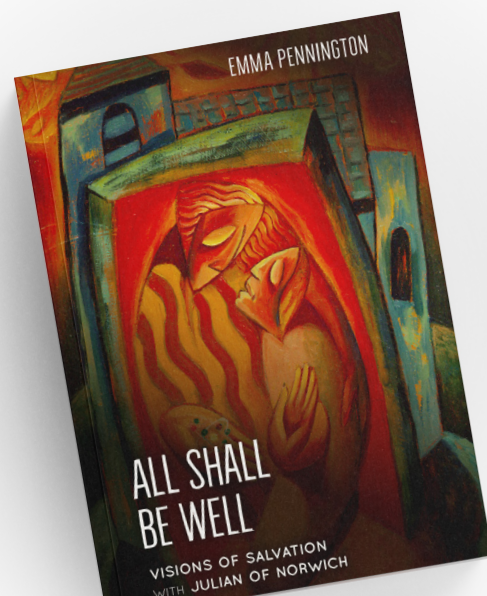
year. Julian's famous words 'All shall be well' have brought hope and comfort to many but what happens when all is not well, when pain and suffering return, when there is no solution, when there is no happy ending? Through deep engagement with Julian's visions of salvation, Emma encourages the reader

to reflect in prayer and devotion on their own personal relationship with God.

The book ends with an intensely moving, mysterious story of a hazelnut she once plucked from a bowl in the reconstructed anchorhold of Julian in Norwich. 'Months later and the little hazelnut has become part of my cassock pocket,' writes Emma. 'Occasionally I remember it's there but mostly not, until one day I meet a visitor to the cathedral. She tells me about her friend who is seriously ill and how she has found comfort and solace in Julian's words: "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well."

'She spoke of the hazelnuts that filled a bowl at the Julian shrine and how she wished she had one to give to her friend. In a moment of unthinking spontaneity, I reached into my pocket and groped about in its blackness until my fingers once again clasped the little ball, the size of a hazelnut, and gave it to her. Her eyes filled with astounded tears as I overcame her attempts not to receive my gift. But she knew that this was not about giving or receiving, it was a moment over which neither of us had any power.'

Read the rest of the story in *All Shall Be Well*, available at brfonline.org.uk/all-shall-be-well



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.

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