



Welcome



I hope you've had a good summer and that you've been able to enjoy the long days and a change of pace before life moves up a gear with the start of the new term.

This issue of BRF Ministries news focusses on discipleship, a word which,

according to the author of two of our recent books on the subject, can prompt some rather negative responses: it's old-fashioned, dull, dutiful, meaningless... I know why some people might think that, but for me nothing could be further from the truth.

For me, discipleship is the whole process – the adventure – of following Jesus. A disciple is someone who's made a decision to follow Jesus and to allow that to impact every aspect of their life each day: their words, their actions, their attitudes, their behaviour, their relationships.

Discipleship is a sort of 'present continuous' – we *are* a disciple; discipleship isn't just something we *do*. As disciples, we're seeking to be transformed to become more and more Christ-like, and that's an ongoing, lifelong process. As we open our lives more and more to him, that transformation

continues and deepens through the work of the Holy Spirit within us.

Right from the very start of BRF Ministries, way back in 1922, our core purpose has been to encourage and support Christians in that lifelong journey of going deeper with God and being transformed more and more into the likeness of Christ. Of course, our engagement with the Bible and prayer is a vital part of this discipleship process.

We offer so many resources to help with this, and it's always a great encouragement when we hear from people who have found these resources to be a blessing in their lives. However, there's no formula for discipleship. It's essentially about our relationship with Jesus Christ and allowing that relationship to impact and transform our lives. What could be more exciting and life-giving? If we allow him into every part of our lives, we might be quite surprised at the results.

With every blessing,

Richard Fisher
Chief executive

SEPTEMBER 2025

Called to live generously

A beacon to me

A gentle discipling

Changed completely

A daily discipleship walk

and more...

Pray with us...

In the words of this prayer from the *BRF Book of 100 Prayers*:

*Holy and discipling God,
teach us through your Son,
who always did what he
saw his Father doing.
Strengthen us by the Spirit,
who speaks to us of Jesus.
Guide us in the love
of the Father,
who pours out his Spirit on us.
So that we may be
your followers
all the days of our life.
Amen.*

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

Growing Parenting for Faith

Parenting for Faith is scaling up! Having secured funding from the Church of England's People and Partnerships Board, we are excited to announce the appointment of three new members of the team: Laura Trigg, David Burn and Jessica Rodewald will be joining us from 1 September. Laura will be the new team administrator, David will be the marketing and engagement lead, and Jess will be the development and relationship lead. They each come with a wealth of experience and a genuine passion for Parenting for Faith.

See more on page 5.



parenting for faith®

'I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

JOHN 13:34-35 (NRSV)



Hello from Julie and the fundraising team



Our sincere thanks to everyone who has purchased our Everyday cards. We are grateful to all those who have contacted us to say how much they like the designs and appreciate that there is a card for every occasion which offers excellent value for money.

Jean from Huddersfield told us: 'I love BRF Ministries' Everyday cards.

There is a beautiful selection always available at my church and they are so reasonably priced. I am disabled and not on the internet, so I spend a lot of my time writing cards to keep in touch with friends and family, who all love them too.'

With Christmas on the horizon, we are delighted that this year's Christmas cards are now available to order. You can do this online at brfonline.org.uk/cards or by using the order form enclosed with this newsletter. Once again, there is a wide range of lovely designs, from traditional to contemporary, and I am sure you will appreciate that there is no price increase. I hope that lots of you will choose to send our cards again this year, and that they will be a blessing to those who receive them.

Before Christmas, we have Make a Will month in October. We are always especially grateful to those who leave a lasting legacy by remembering BRF Ministries in their wills. We are reliant upon fundraising and gifts in wills to deliver our ministries now and in the future, and a gift of 1% or more in your will helps us to continue our work.

This is a financially challenging time for many of us; we appreciate your prayers so much and are very grateful for every donation we receive. If you would like to make a donation to help support our

work, you can do so online at brf.org.uk/donate, post a cheque made payable to BRF or call our friendly team on 01235 462305.

My thanks for your generosity, support and prayers.

Every blessing

Julie MacNaughton, MCIOf (Dip)
Head of fundraising

Living generously



Chris Gillies is chair of trustees for Stewardship and author of *On the Way to Work: A Christian approach to thinking differently about success and fulfilment*. We asked him for his reflections on the theme of discipleship.

It's said that being a disciple boils down to spending time

with Jesus, becoming more like him, and doing what he did – or rather, doing the things Jesus might do if he were you.

Followers of Jesus are called to live generously. The entire biblical narrative is a generosity story, summed up beautifully when Jesus said, 'For God so loved the world that he gave...' (John 3:16). We're made in the image of a generous God. When we practise generosity, we live according to our original design.

Jesus sent out his twelve disciples saying, 'Freely you have received, freely give' (Matthew 10:8). In Luke 6:38 Jesus said, 'Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap.' Both sayings were set in a broader context of generosity – of ministering to others and of forgiving.

Living generously begins with relationships, helping others, hospitality and a host of other things – in short, by loving our neighbour as ourselves.

Jesus taught about money more than any other topic, so it's no surprise that generosity also involves how we steward our personal financial resources. Whether we're like the rich young ruler or the widow giving her mite in the temple, it's important to remember that we owe our lives to God, that his breath is in us, and that Jesus' resurrection saves us. So rather than thinking about what percentage of our money we should give away, maybe we could regularly pray, 'Lord, I owe everything to you, how much may I retain?'

Could it be that the primary purpose for money in our life is not so we can afford to live, but so that we might give, as God has lavishly given to us?

■ brfonline.org.uk/on-the-way-to-work



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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.

An amazing disciple



The word 'disciple' can be both noun and verb. As a verb, 'to disciple' means helping others become more like Jesus. Sally Rees, the former Anna Chaplaincy lead in Wales, helped to disciple many Anna Chaplains, but probably only one of them began as an entrenched atheist. Sue Simpson (pictured left) was born in Germany, into a family whose atheism went back generations. So what changed, and how did Sue come to faith and Anna Chaplaincy ministry?

'Because of my background, I never had God in my mind or in any part of my life. I married a soldier, travelled around the world, and settled in beautiful Wales.'

Sue had had many different jobs over the years and one day, sitting through 'a very boring workshop', a friend who managed a care home suggested she train as a carer.

'At first I said I couldn't do that work, but she said I should try it, do the training and then decide. She trained me herself, and from the very first day I just loved the work. Yes, there are many sad situations, but there are many very happy aspects to the work. That was 17 years ago, and I still love it. I feel I can really help people. For many of the people I care for, I'm the only person they see, the only person they have to talk to.'

Sue is a self-employed carer and one of her clients was Dawn, 'a lovely lady' who happened to be visited regularly by Anna Chaplain Sally Rees. 'When I first met Sally I told her, not disrespectfully but honestly, that I didn't believe in God.'



Sue with residents of Glaslyn Nursing Home in Abergavenny

But slowly, slowly, God was working in Sue's life. She used to take some of her clients to a coffee morning at Hope Baptist Church in Gilwern, 'where the people were really lovely to me.' It was a good time for Sue: she loved her work

and she loved Wales. 'It was a really good stage of my life and I thought, if I'm going to go to God, I don't want to go when I'm down, I'm going to go while I'm up and see what it's all about. So I went to that church for about three years every Sunday. I loved the people, and I would sing and I would pray, but I knew I wasn't quite there.'

Sue was considering baptism but then Covid hit and the church closed.

'In a way it was a good thing,' she says. 'During lockdown I realised that I would have been doing it to please other people and that made me think about it much more deeply.' Then, at the first opportunity after lockdown, Sue was baptised. 'I can honestly say I went down into the water, and when I came back up I was completely different. Completely.'



One day Sue was in the room when Sally was visiting Dawn and talking about how there was work for many more Anna Chaplains than she had.

'Dawn piped up, "She'll do it," pointing at me,' says Sue. 'Sally said, "Would you?" I said, "I don't think I'm the right person," and Dawn said, "You are exactly the right person." So I thought this is probably not going to happen, but I'll go along with it for now.'

Sally gave Sue the Anna Chaplaincy workbook and talked her through what

being an Anna Chaplain would involve. 'She said you're working with older people already. They really take to you. Just imagine what Dawn is feeling. She's been going to church her whole life but for the last five years, she's not been able to go. That was what persuaded me, so I said, okay, I'd give it a shot.'

Commissioned on 5 November 2023, Sue gave it such a good shot that she now visits a number of older people in their own homes to offer spiritual care, and when Sally retired, she took over her chaplaincy work in Glaslyn Nursing Home in Abergavenny.

'Sally is an amazing disciple,' says Sue, 'she's just a beacon to me.'

Find out more at annachaplaincy.org.uk

Still time to book!



The next online Spiritual Care Series course begins on...

29 September and runs on Monday evenings until 1 December.

The Spiritual Care Series is a highly regarded, comprehensive eight-week course for individuals and churches who want to provide good-quality spiritual care to older people in their local community.

Find out more at annachaplaincy.org.uk/spiritual-care-series

Book your place at brfonline.org.uk/spiritual-care-series-online



A gentle journey of discipleship, indoors and out...

Worthen Church is a vibrant church community that has been offering Messy Church for a number of years and is a core part of the church's ministry in the community, where it seeks to serve others and, hopefully, transform lives.

Messy Church began in the local church school as an after-school programme but has evolved into something deeper, leading the church community to take the bold decision to relocate to the church building itself.

'We wanted these children and parents to experience the church building and feel comfortable in it,' explains the Revd David Moss, rector of Worthen. 'The church isn't just a building for Sunday worship – it's a place for community, learning and growing together in faith.' Despite a small reduction in numbers following the move, Messy Church continues to thrive with approximately 20 adults attending, each bringing one or more children.

During the summer months, Messy Church transforms into Muddy Church, a style of worship that is centred around a campfire in the recently cleared church field.

'There's something deeply spiritual about gathering around a fire in God's creation,' says David. 'The children connect with faith in different ways when they're outdoors. Muddy Church gives us opportunities to teach biblical principles through nature that you simply can't replicate indoors.'

'For me as rector, it's about seeing where God is at work and being willing to try different or new things.' As this Messy Church continues to evolve, he says, 'We are gently introducing more traditional church elements of worship while maintaining the welcoming, accessible atmosphere that has made it successful.'

'We're not in a rush to make dramatic changes. Each term, we try to make it a little more church and a little less "youth

club.'" It's a gentle journey of discipleship that respects where people are in their faith journey.



The Revd David Moss in the porch of Worthen Church

For David, discipleship means 'walking with' and not 'preaching to': 'We are walking with the families in Worthen on their own individual journeys; we are praying that those journeys will lead them to the foot of the cross but know this might take some time.'

As yet the children's work hasn't delivered an increase to the Sunday congregation, and it's important to recognise that for the people who go to Messy Church, that is their church. 'The main thing is that they recognise that they are loved,' says David. 'We want them to know that we are genuinely interested in and care for them. Through Messy Church, we're showing how local churches can serve the everyday faith of people by meeting them where they are and creating meaningful connections beyond traditional Sunday services.'

Adapted with kind permission from an original article published on 22 April 2025 © Diocese of Hereford [hereford.anglican.org/news/faith-in-motion-charting-the-evolution-of-worthens-messy-church.php](https://www.hereford.anglican.org/news/faith-in-motion-charting-the-evolution-of-worthens-messy-church.php)

All together!



'It felt like a Messy Church family, being all together. It feels so wonderful to sit with international Messy Church sisters and brothers. I've loved dwelling in the word. I will bring this to my Messy Church team.'



After more than two years in the planning, it was with great excitement that the BRF Ministries Messy Church team gathered at High Leigh Conference centre in June to host the fourth Messy Church conference. The theme of the conference was 'All together!' and the 160 participants came from across the UK and around the world, including Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Ghana, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, Sweden and the United States.

Look out for upcoming Messy Church events: [messychurch.brf.org.uk/latest/events](https://www.messychurch.brf.org.uk/latest/events)

Growing disciples in Plymouth



Canadian-born Denise Libby has been involved in the children and families work at Methodist Central Hall in Plymouth since she was 19. Visiting with her youth group from Nova Scotia in 1994, she met ‘the boy’ who is now her husband, father of her three children and lay pastor at the church. With perfect timing as they got together, the church’s first paid children’s worker post was advertised. ‘I thought I really want to do that,’ says Denise. ‘I was so excited. I wanted to stay, and I’m still here!’

Inevitably Denise has seen many changes in the children and families work, but the main development in recent years has been a shift of focus away from segregated age groups to ministry with the whole family, across ages and generations.

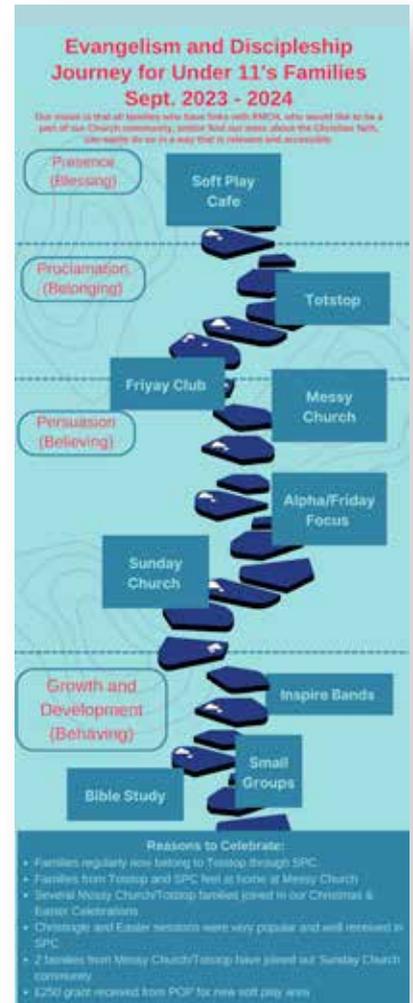
The church has contact with hundreds of families every month, through Sunday services, Messy Church, Friyay (a group for young people and parents), plus a soft-play café four days a week and two carer and toddler groups. Denise ran the Parenting for Faith course online during Covid and now uses many Parenting for Faith resources and ideas in her work: ‘The whole ethos of Parenting for Faith is reflected in all our children and families work.’



‘Our aim is that everybody who sets foot in the church can easily access a path to grow in their faith, be part of our community, or learn more about faith in a way that’s relevant and accessible to them. We never push or pressurise people, but we want to make it really easy for them to engage and to grow and we see this happening all the time.’

‘I think of one woman who came first through our café. She seemed sad; you could tell she carried a heavy burden, but she began to come along to Messy Church. As we got to know her, it came out that she lost a baby years ago and she’s been grieving for years, and it’s been really, really hard for her. We got to know her and we started praying for her, and then she started coming along on a Sunday, and now she’s serving on the team. She’s done the Alpha course with us, and she wants to learn more about the Bible. She’s completely changed – she just seems so much lighter, as God’s Holy Spirit has been working in her life. Last week she said, ‘This is my family’, and I thought that’s what it’s supposed to be about. We’re not supposed to be running programmes, we’re meant to be like Jesus, walking alongside people, getting involved in their lives.’

Post Covid, Denise and her close-knit team of colleagues have been working to a five-year plan to encourage discipleship across the whole church community. It was a new way of working, but the team believed that even though it would take longer, if they worked together intentionally it would bear more fruit. ‘And that has happened,’ says Denise. ‘We’ve worked hard to get to know families and invite them along to things and build those initial relationships. And now those same families who five years ago were on the fringes, are at church and they’re serving in the life of the church.’



Each year the church produces a card to illustrate the plan for the year (pictured above). ‘We use the image of stepping stones between different stages of faith,’ says Denise, ‘so people can move along at their own pace.’

‘Next year we’re having a bigger focus on discipleship. A lot of families are wanting to become part of small groups. If I was pastoring a church, I don’t think I’d put so many resources into a Sunday morning. I think we should be putting more resources into having more small groups. Yes, of course, still gather on a Sunday, but I think people are going to grow more as disciples in small groups than they are by listening to preaching in church.’



‘I am excited to be able to use my gifts and skills to make a difference for the kingdom in this next season at Parenting for Faith!’
- Laura Trigg



‘Parenting for Faith is a mission I really believe in – especially now, as a dad to an amazing two-year-old boy! I’m looking forward to helping to get these wonderful resources into the hands of more parents who want to share Jesus with their children.’
- David Burn



‘I have been a cheerleader of Parenting for Faith for over ten years and have benefited from the work of the charity, both as a children’s pastor and as a leader within the church. It’s a privilege to be part of developing all the present and future resources.’
- Jessica Rodewald

The magic sauce of discipleship



We asked Guy Donegan-Cross, author of *Discipleship: Start This Way* and *Discipleship: Walk This Way* to share his

personal perspective on our theme.

For a few years I have met with a friend of mine every Thursday morning for 45 minutes. We meet with one purpose – to help each other grow as disciples. We do so by asking each other five simple questions and praying for each other. The questions are:

- 1 How are you getting on with your addictions? (Neither of us is addicted to any of the classic things like drink, drugs or pornography. This is more about the fact that we all struggle with various things that can pull us away from who God makes us to be – pride, greed, anger, selfishness. Having said that, if I was struggling with any of the ‘big three’, I could share that.)
- 2 How is your praying?
- 3 How are your close relationships?
- 4 How is the balance between work and rest?
- 5 How have you got to share your faith – in words or actions?

You might think that these are quite strong questions – and you would be right. However, we trust each other, and these questions help us to be growing in things we both agree we want. On several occasions, being able to mull these things over with another disciple has helped me to experience real change in my own life, and I trust they have in his as well.

The truth is that one of the greatest things we can do for each other as disciples is to ask how we are getting

on. How we are truly getting on. The ‘magic sauce’ of change and growth is accountability. Some people have a reaction against the term ‘accountability’ because they might have experienced it as something which gives power to one person over another. But offered in the right spirit, it is a precious gift. It is a wonderful thing to be able to give this kind of vulnerable friendship and to receive it. I think the people who have genuinely loved and supported me the most are those who have been able to ask me questions which help me grow.

brfonline.org.uk/discipleship-start
brfonline.org.uk/discipleship-walk

Reflected in Nature



We’re excited to be publishing Claire Daniel’s new book, *Reflected in Nature*, this month. We asked her to tell us

what inspired her new work.

A walk in the sunflower fields of France rekindled a long-held idea of creating an illustrated collection of reflections, exploring how God is revealed in nature. Though past their bloom, these flowers revealed an unexpected beauty – a reminder of purpose in every season. The seeds of inspiration for *Reflected in Nature* had been germinating since about 2017, and it was a joy to see the ideas God planted in my heart grow as I developed them for the book. Researching the wonders of the created world unearthed fascinating facts and folklore, as well as rich connections to scripture and further resonances of God’s glory.

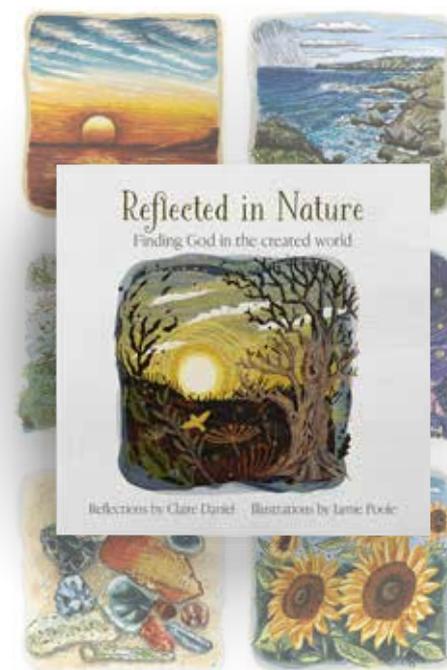
Collaborating with an artist to illustrate the reflections was such a joy! Jamie

Poole created the vibrant artwork, using photographs I had taken as a starting point combined with his own incredible gift and flair, even weaving the Bible verses for each reflection into their intricate design.

In the reflections that span the seasons, an autumn meditation on acorns and planting a legacy focuses on discipleship, contemplating the verse from Zechariah 4:10: ‘Do not despise these small beginnings. Like a humble acorn, discipleship can often start small – an encouraging word, a shared prayer or a seed of curiosity planted in a heart, that grows into a living faith. It takes many seasons for an acorn to become a mighty oak tree, and it reminds us that discipling others involves sowing with confident faith for future generations. Even if we do not immediately see fruit, we can make an eternal difference.

Exploring themes that resonate in our daily discipleship walk, it is my hope that the gentle prompts to pause, ponder and pray in *Reflected in Nature* will encourage readers to deepen their connection with God, who is constant in every season.

■ brfonline.org.uk/reflected-in-nature



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

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