



## Welcome



‘Vocation’ is the underlying theme of this issue of BRF Ministries News and, as always, it’s fascinating to see how the theme is reflected in our various ministries.

When the church speaks about ‘vocations’, it is usually speaking about those

called to ordained Christian ministry. At one time, as the general superintendent of the Baptist Central Area, I was involved in testing such a call for those seeking Baptist ministry, both on selection committees and accompanying those sensing such a call, so I have ‘skin in that game.’ It is easy, then, to forget that every Christian has a vocation: the call to follow Jesus as his disciple.

Mark records how Simon and Andrew heard the call and ‘immediately left their nets and followed him’ (Mark 1:16–18). The Bible is full of people called by God – Abraham, Debora, Samuel, and Elisha among many in the Old Testament, and the apostles in the New – and that basic call to follow Jesus is what we signify through baptism and live out daily as we witness to our faith. But while each of us has a common call to discipleship, we also have a distinctive and unique way to work out that call in our context. Maybe as a worker, a homemaker, a politician or an artist, God has a shape for our discipleship that no one else can fit, and no one vocation is more important than any other. Never talk down your calling – the King has called you, and that’s what matters.

But having been called, we are also sent. Those first apostles and disciples were sent into the whole world to make other disciples (Mark 16:15–18), and we, also, are sent into our world, with all of its complexity and uncertainty, with good

news of a Saviour and of ways of living that makes us ‘good news people’ too. As we – like Charlotte, Patricia, Callum, and the others featured in these pages – live out the virtues of the life of faith, then our ‘call’ is translated into our ‘sending’.

Where to for you, today?

With best wishes

**Paul Goodliff**  
Vice chair of trustees

## Pray with us...

In the words of this prayer from  
*The BRF Book of 100 Prayers*,  
by Martyn Payne

*Gracious God,  
thank you for choosing  
us as your disciples  
and calling us to serve  
you in this world.*

*Help us to work out this calling in  
every season and circumstance,  
through change, challenges,  
and times of uncertainty,  
trusting that, having begun  
this good work in us,  
you will bring it to completion  
on the day of Christ.*

*In his name,  
Amen.*

■ [brfresources.org.uk/100-prayers](http://brfresources.org.uk/100-prayers)

■ Our prayer resources can be  
found at [brf.org.uk/pray](http://brf.org.uk/pray)

### JULY 2026

Called to bring hope

Called to grow

Called to equip

Called to care

Called to discover

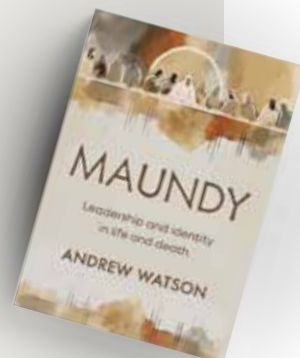
and more...



## Maundy

We are honoured to publish Bishop Andrew Watson’s final book before his death from cancer in March. In *Maundy: Leadership and identity in life and death*, he presents a decade’s worth of Christ talks at Guildford Cathedral – the Maundy Thursday sermons he gave as bishop of Guildford. With characteristic humour and warmth, he reflects on these familiar Lenten Bible passages, bringing gentle challenge and deep insight.

This book also contains Andrew’s ‘four last songs’, his final writings after receiving his terminal cancer diagnosis: his two pastoral letters to his diocese, a confirmation sermon on knowing who you are, and a Lenten reflection on wilderness.



■ [brfresources.org.uk/maundy](http://brfresources.org.uk/maundy)

‘... in the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace, and this grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began.’

2 TIMOTHY 1:8-9 (NRSV)

# Hello from Julie and the fundraising team



I never fail to be amazed by the generosity of our supporters. But perhaps I shouldn't be amazed. BRF Ministries is grounded in prayer, as are you, our readers and supporters. God answers our prayers for provision by prompting – calling – you to give, and in so doing sustains the work of our ministries.

So, once again, our heartfelt

thanks go to God, and to everyone who has felt called to support this year's annual appeal. Every donation is greatly valued and appreciated!

Our appeal remains open and if you do feel prompted to make a donation to our appeal, we would be extremely grateful as we rely upon fundraising and gifts in wills to deliver our ministries. You can do so online at [brf.org.uk/donate](https://brf.org.uk/donate), post a cheque made payable to 'BRF', or call our team on **01865 319700**.

Our thanks also go to those who have become a Friend of BRF Ministries by making a monthly donation of £2 per month or more. These regular gifts help us to plan our budgets with confidence and make a huge difference to us. If you would like to become a Friend of BRF Ministries please visit our website or call **01865 319700**.

One of our faithful Bible reading notes readers, Margaret Barnes, has a great phrase to describe one of the ways God

prompts us. She calls it 'the cough in the ear'. A gentle call to do something, to see someone... I often hear that little 'cough' when God brings someone into my mind who might need a call or a note, and I always have a few of our everyday cards to hand, so I can act quickly on God's nudge. If you have the same experience, you might like to know about BRF Ministries' lovely new selection of everyday cards, shown below, which are available to order from [brfresources.org.uk/everyday-cards](https://brfresources.org.uk/everyday-cards).

However you support us, you have our grateful thanks once again. Your prayers and generosity enable us to continue to inspire people of all ages to grow in Christian faith.

With thanks for all you do too!

Best wishes

**Julie MacNaughton, MCIOF (Dip)**  
Head of fundraising



# The holy habit of generosity



We're delighted that Janie Oliver, CEO of Stewardship, accepted our invitation to write an article for BRF Ministries

earlier in the summer. Janie reflects on the importance of forming a lasting 'habit of generosity' as part of our Christian calling. She wrote:

*'Generosity that costs us something has a way of revealing what we really trust. Do we trust that there will be enough? Do we trust that giving will not diminish us? Do we trust that God is at work beyond what we can see? These aren't questions we ask once. They're questions we should return to, day after day, as God gently reshapes our perspective. Slowly, we begin to see that we are not living from scarcity, but from abundance, and that generosity can flow from that place.'*

Stewardship helps Christians be the best stewards of the resources God gives them. 2026 marks **120 years** of working with generous Christians and the ministries they support. The organisation now helps over **30,000 donors** discover the joy of generosity as they give over **£110 million a year** in support of more than **12,000 churches, charities, and Christian workers**.

Our head of fundraising, Julie MacNaughton adds:

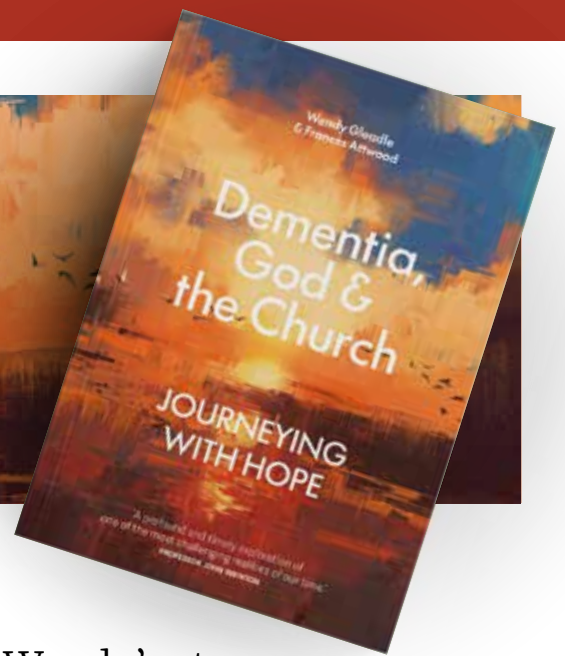
*'Stewardship's support is vital in enabling us to deliver our ministries.'*

Read the article [brf.org.uk/a-habit-of-generosity](https://brf.org.uk/a-habit-of-generosity)

'A profound and timely exploration of one of the most challenging realities of our time.'

**PROFESSOR JOHN SWINTON**

■ [brfresources.org.uk/dementia-god-and-the-church](http://brfresources.org.uk/dementia-god-and-the-church)



## Called to bring hope

Dementia is one of today's most feared health conditions, and Christians with the condition may also worry about losing their faith and their connection to God. However, there is hope: those living with dementia can still find meaning in their life and their faith, as Frances Attwood and Wendy Gleadle affirm in their important new book, *Dementia, God and the Church* published this month.

Wendy Gleadle is a retired Christian counsellor, Anna Chaplain, and secretary to an online dementia support group. Frances is also an Anna Chaplain. She has worked as a music teacher and music therapist with all ages and a variety of needs. Their book reflects a successful long-distance collaboration as they live in different parts of the country and have only met in person on a couple of occasions. But they share a strong sense of calling to their work, as they explain.

### Frances' story



My part of the book originated in my previous career as a music therapist. Latterly, I ran community music groups for people with dementia and their family carers. While it

was wonderful to provide something positive for these families, in that professional context I was not able to share or openly talk about the love of God. I also became aware of their isolation, and wondered if churches could provide more opportunities for them.

Looking back, I feel that God directed me by closing doors: none of the music therapy projects I pursued led anywhere. It was a very confusing time. I went to talk with my vicar, who suggested various paths to consider; Anna Chaplaincy was the first on the list – and once I read about it, I didn't need to look any further! I did an MA in applied theology first, then the Anna Chaplaincy training.

Meanwhile, I was volunteering in a reminiscence group at a church which offered dementia-friendly activities every day of the week. The more I observed and the more I learnt, I felt that many churches could do more to support families living with dementia. I decided to write my dissertation about this but I never wanted it to end up on a shelf collecting dust!

I love being able to enable people to remain socially integrated and practise the skills they still have, assuring them that they are still valued by God. It has also kept me grounded in the realities of living with dementia – I can't write in theory. Now I am sensing God's call to share what I have learned and to partner with other Anna Chaplains to encourage more churches to develop a ministry to families living with dementia.

### Wendy's story



Ten years ago I was 76 years old and my husband had recently died. Feeling low and uncertain of my future, I went to a women's prayer day, where several people said they

felt God was telling me 'There's more to come'.

Soon after this I felt led to study for a BA degree in theology, mission and evangelism with The Light College. I rang to ask if I was too old to be a student and was told 'You're never too old to learn more about God!' I knew this was my 'more to come'! I enrolled on the course, and was also baptised to reaffirm my faith. During my baptism I was again told, 'You're never too old', so this is now my personal mantra!



My course placement was at a dementia care home. I realised that despite lessening cognition, the residents were still able to experience God and his love through relationships, creativity, and the arts. Faith is not simply cognitive but embraces the whole person. In my final BA dissertation on 'God and dementia', I addressed the question, 'How can they love God if they've forgotten who he is?'

Like Frances, I didn't want my research to gather dust on a shelf and two years ago, I felt it was time to expand this whole theme into a book. It was Olivia Warburton, former content creation lead at BRF Ministries, who suggested combining my manuscript with Frances' work. A match made in heaven! So, at the ripe old age of 86 I will become a published author! It really is true – 'You're never too old!'

■ Find out more about Anna Chaplaincy at [annachaplaincy.org.uk](http://annachaplaincy.org.uk)

# Equipping the called



**Charlotte Berry is the children and families worker at Holy Trinity, Nailsea, near Bristol. She is married to Sam, having bonded over a shared**

**love of drumming in the church music group. A strong sense of God's call has led Charlotte to her current location and role, though she sometimes had to listen hard to hear God's voice and take a roundabout route, guided as much by brick walls as open doors. She told us more...**

Born and brought up in Canterbury, the foundations of Charlotte's Christian journey were laid in the Girls' Brigade. 'Every Friday, from the age of seven, I'd hear a little bit more about Jesus.' The turning point came at a Girls' Brigade summer camp, when she was 16. 'That's when I decided to give my life to Jesus. I probably would have called myself Christian before that, but I didn't really live a Christian lifestyle.'

She tried uni but it wasn't for her. She left after three months and returned to Canterbury, where she 'decided to get stuck into church – Canterbury Baptist Church – a bit more.' She began in the music group, but then got involved in the children's work. At 20, she decided to get baptised...

***'And that's when I started to sense, "Oh, I think God's calling me to work for him."***

Charlotte became an intern at the church and after a year, embarked on various training courses, including the CYF Equip course which was based at Bristol Baptist College, which involved a long and exhausting weekly commute from Canterbury.

'At the end of that, I just felt God was closing doors in Canterbury. It was a really tough time, because I tried to leave home once before, when I went to uni, and I really struggled.'

***'But this time, I felt that God was with me and was going to be on the journey with me.'***

'I had a very strong feeling that God was saying I really want you to go and serve children and families in... well, I didn't really know where... but I just knew that this was what God wanted me to do.'

God called her to Nailsea where she continued to grow. She became the intern at Holy Trinity Church and continued her studies, completing a certificate in children and families ministry at the college in Bristol. A year later she was employed full-time as the children and families worker at the church. 'There's a really lovely saying that means a lot to me,' she says.

***"God doesn't call the equipped. He equips the called."***

'And I think that's part of it as well. I didn't know I had many of the gifts and skills that I now know I do have...'

***'... but God knew I had it in me to do the things that I do.'***

Since she's been in Nailsea, Charlotte has become more involved with Parenting for Faith, mainly through The Forge retreat for children and families workers, and is keen to lead one of the Parenting for Faith courses at her church. 'That's something that I'm really praying into at the moment: to do it at the right time and to make sure all the families can benefit from it.'

Where then, for Charlotte, does the idea of God's call come into Parenting for Faith? She doesn't hesitate to answer:

***'It's about empowering and equipping parents in their calling to be the primary disciplers of their children; equipping them to do the job God has called them to do in their life's journey as a parent.'***

## Parenting as a Church Leader

Church leadership and parenting are both profound callings, shaping lives in lasting ways. The Parenting as a Church Leader course, available to watch on demand via BRF Online (app or browser), equips you to embrace both with confidence. Watch it on your own, with a partner or friend, or as part of a staff team. The video series offers practical wisdom and encouragement to help your family feel connected, prioritised, covered, and empowered so that they can thrive as you lead.

**brfonline.org.uk/programs/parenting-as-a-church-leader**



# Called to grow



As Messy Church network development lead, Sarah Smart is responsible for spreading the word about

Messy Church as an intergenerational new worshipping community and helping to grow the network far into the future. Based near Winchester, her husband Russ is a vicar, and they have two young sons. Sarah came to faith at a Scripture Union summer mission when she was 15. She joined the team and two summers later, she heard a call from God so clear it upended her plans.

'It was in the middle of the mission when I felt this really strong call – I don't hear it very often; it was almost like an audible voice of God saying, "I want you in full time children's ministry." And I was like, oh, okay, this is different... I've always loved working with children; from when I was very little, I was called Mother Goose! If there were any children around, I would be the one looking after them. So I had this real passion for working with children and I was planning to train to be a teacher.'

***'I didn't really know what "children's ministry" looked like.'***

Sarah was able to explore that with the mission team and, supported by 'some very lovely youth leaders', took the decision that she was going to drop her teacher training place at university and study for a BA in applied theology, with a focus on family and community studies, at Moorlands Theological College.

'I was at Moorlands for four years, and I had such a brilliant time. Having only come to faith at 15, I knew very little of the Bible and very little of God and Jesus, so to be thrust into full-time study of theology at 19 was amazing. I absolutely loved it, and it was so formational in terms of the relationships you build, the teaching you hear, and the placements you do.'

After graduation, Sarah went on to work for a church as a children's pastor and later spent ten years working for

Scripture Union, before taking a step back when her eldest son was born.

Fast forward through the years to December 2024. Post Covid, the family had moved from an urban parish to a rural benefice, the boys were in school, and Sarah was beginning to sense God's call once more.

***'I do think God was moving me to think, what does my ministry look like now, in this new season?'***

'Then one of my very good friends sent me the advert for the Messy Church job, and they just said, "I wonder, is this something you'd have a think about?"'

***'The timing was a bit crazy.'***

'It was coming up to Christmas, which is obviously a crazy time in a clergy household. So, to be thinking, oh, I wonder... but the title, network development lead, really jumped out.'

Despite the 'scary' prospect of applying for a job after eight years out of formal employment, Sarah went for the job and got it.

***'It's been the best thing!'***

'The Messy Church team have been amazing. The whole BRF Ministries team are incredible.'



***'Working for BRF Ministries has made me feel so empowered in both my roles: as a mum, and in the ministry God has called me to, helping people of all ages grow in faith.'***

## Results are in!

207 Messy Churches across the UK took part in our February 2026 snapshot survey:

Approximately 17,454 people attended those Messy Churches which responded. Scaled nationally, that's an estimated **143,852 people attending a UK Messy Church in 2025!**

Average attendance is 43 people, with an **intergenerational mix of 52% children and 48% adults.**

Around 30% are hosted in areas of deprivation.

For 52% of people, it is their only church.

In 2024, 50% of Messy Churches had no 12-16 year-olds; in 2026 this has fallen to 34%, following the launch of Messy Momentum youth pilots.

***'Just had our first baptisms and more this Easter.'***  
A Messy Church Volunteer

***'Older church members who have come to help have been inspired and encouraged in their personal growth and church life.'***  
A Messy Church Volunteer

***It's so exciting to see God at work, growing his kingdom through Messy Church!***

# Life changing!

Trish wasn't much of a reader. Until fairly recently, she rarely found a book which held her attention. But since talking to one of our *New Daylight* writers, who lives in the same Norfolk village, all that has changed, and changed dramatically.

It started in the autumn of 2022, just after the death of Queen Elizabeth II. 'We just were generally chatting like you do, and a friend who is a writer and retreat leader mentioned *New Daylight*. I showed an interest, so she ordered a copy for me, and that started me off on my path. It took to it like a duck to water, finding it extremely interesting. I loved it.'

But a couple of years later, a neck injury set Trish back and that, combined with other difficulties, sent her into a dark place. 'I threw the *New Daylight* into a drawer. I really didn't want to know much about God or anything else.'

Trish had gone to Sunday school as a child, and sung in the church choir. She drifted away in her late teens but then, in the 1990s, she decided she 'needed to go to church.'

'I would go on a Sunday, come away, and that was it until the following Sunday. I was on the fringes. I'd always been interested, but never really interested enough to go any further.'

Trish's friend goes to the same village church, where her husband is the vicar, and it was through conversations after the service that Trish began to find a way through. 'I went very in on myself and felt I couldn't talk to anybody. But my friend would often speak to me on a Sunday when I was in church. She must have known something was wrong, but never pushed. And I always remember

one question she asked: are you reading anything at the minute Trish?'

A little while later Trish rang her and said 'Have you got a book I can read?' They had a chat and her friend asked her what she wanted. 'I wanted something nitty-gritty and real. We were coming up to Christmas and I said, I would like a book that tells me what Mary went through as the mother of Jesus.'

She gave Trish five or six books and that was the start of an avalanche of reading. Trish has kept a log of everything she's read – some 44 titles to date, including 14 from BRF Resources. 'There are some I've not read yet,' says Trish, but I read the Lent book, *Giving it Up* by Maggi Dawn and *To Hell's Mouth and Back* by Trystan Owain Hughes and I absolutely loved them. What I love is that these people are talking, not at me, but to me. They're talking out of experience, but they're not talking about themselves. They're pointing you to God.

'If it hadn't been for my friend, I would never have picked up the books, and I wouldn't have been introduced to *New Daylight*.

'God is very close, and he was with me when I didn't really want to know.

And I think he's been with me a lot longer than I care to think. I think he had his hand on me a long, long time, but I wasn't ready. He was calling me, gently, knocking at the door, but I didn't open it. But since I started studying the Bible with *New Daylight*, and since I started reading the books, the whole thing has come alive.'

■ [brfresources.org.uk/new-daylight](https://brfresources.org.uk/new-daylight)

Find out more about our Bible reading notes at [brfresources.org.uk/subscriptions](https://brfresources.org.uk/subscriptions)

## Called to care

Bishop Pete Wilcox's new book, *Come for Refuge: The book of Ruth and hope for migrants*, is a call to Christians to care for migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, in response to a biblical imperative. It's a timely and illuminating exposition of the book of Ruth, which reads the text through the lens of the global migration crisis. Interwoven with sections of biblical exposition are short testimonies of contemporary refugees and asylum seekers from Sheffield, England and Melbourne, Australia. Including six study sessions for groups and individuals, the book offers a hopeful vision of what migration can contribute to the world. Bishop Pete hopes that it 'gently challenges Christians who have not thought much about migration to do so – especially those who have absorbed an essentially negative view of it – at a time when it is clear the subject is going to remain politically live for the world.'

[brfresources.org.uk/come-for-refuge](https://brfresources.org.uk/come-for-refuge)



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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