



Welcome



This issue of our newsletter highlights our new September title *Give Me Strength!* by Jane Walters, and I am conscious that faith and resilience have very much been on my mind lately. I've been considering my own resilience levels while occupying the acting CEO role for a short season, as well as the resilience levels of our staff team and of the charity itself, as we explore the new ventures we believe God is leading us into.

Resilience is a gift that enables us to persevere, adapt, and remain hopeful. It is also a valued trait in our society; we admire those who keep going through adversity, who find reserves of strength they did not know they possessed, and who emerge from challenges stronger and wiser.

Yet it can be difficult living in a culture where strength and resilience are prized and where it can feel shameful and embarrassing to admit we need help. We often respond by trying to prove our self-reliance, but that can be a dangerous path. Self-reliance can quietly persuade us that we are sufficient in ourselves, that we can carry life's burdens alone, and that we have little need to depend on God.

In *Give Me Strength!* Jane draws from her own life experiences. She compassionately addresses the issues which weaken us and, through biblical examples, shows how weakness is the

perfect starting point for God to step in and help us.

Discipleship is, perhaps, the lifelong journey of learning this lesson. At BRF Ministries, we are passionate about nurturing disciples of Jesus at every age and stage of life, helping people to develop habits and practices that sustain faith over the long haul. We know that resilience is rarely formed in isolation. It grows in communities that pray together, worship together, study scripture together, and encourage one another when life becomes difficult.

Across our ministries, we see this taking shape in many different ways. These are not programmes designed to make people stronger or more capable. Rather, they seek to help us become more deeply rooted in Christ, learning to receive as well as to give, and to trust God even when our own resources feel depleted.

Faith-filled resilience does not mean never struggling or always feeling strong. It means knowing where to turn when our own resources run dry. It means hearing again Jesus' invitation: 'Follow me.' And it means discovering, day by day, that God's strength is made perfect not in our competence, but in our dependence on him.

Every blessing,

Jules Morgan
Acting CEO

SEPTEMBER 2026

For everyone's flourishing

Our intergenerational journey

A bigger picture of God

Five key tools

Treasures in straw

and more...



Our thanks to Martyn Payne

After writing 20 issues of our seasonal prayer diary, our volunteer prayer advocate Martyn Payne is 'sadly but rightly' moving on to 'another retirement'. He writes in his introduction to the last issue:

'Fellow BRF pray-ers, it has been an enormous and unexpected privilege to be involved with this since lockdown 2020... Thank you for sharing this journey with me and thank you for continuing to pray faithfully with us for BRF Ministries and for so much more besides! May the Lord keep us all faithful as we continue to watch and pray "until he comes"'

We are so grateful to Martyn for all he has done in making the prayer diary such a valued resource for so many of our supporters and for all the hundreds of prayers he has written for us over the years, marking the seasons, major events, the church's year, and, as Jules Morgan puts it in her welcome letter, every age and stage of life. We wish him and his wife Ruth every blessing in all that is to come.

Pray with us...

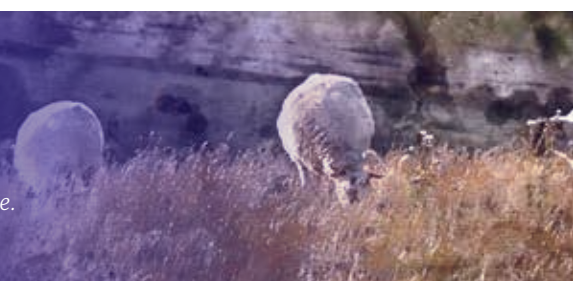
In the words of this prayer from our last seasonal prayer diary written by Martyn Payne

*Come, Lord God,
and by your Spirit in us
do a work of grace that
goes deep,
lasts long,
and overflows through us
in service and praise
for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.*

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

*Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.
Know that the Lord is God.
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

PSALM 100:1-3 (NIV)



Hello from Julie and the fundraising team



As our fundraising efforts look towards the Christmas period, I reflect on the incredible generosity shown over the last few months. Your support for our Annual Appeal, the many kind donations received with subscription renewals, gifts sent following a fundraising event or a family milestone, and those in memory of a loved one are all greatly appreciated.

I, along with all my colleagues at BRF Ministries, am greatly encouraged by the messages and cards we receive from supporters. Two such heartwarming cards arrived recently:

‘Please accept this donation to support your Anna Chaplaincy ministry. This is in memory of my dear Mum, whose 91st birthday would have been today. May God bless you and your ongoing ministry.’

‘A gift in memory of my Dad. Both my parents used BRF Bible reading notes for most of their adult lives, and I keep up the tradition subscribing to *The Upper Room* series. Thank you for all you do to make the Holy Bible accessible to a wide range of ages and abilities.’

Before Christmas, we have Make A Will month in October. In addition to all the many kind donations highlighted above, we are extremely grateful to everyone who has remembered BRF Ministries with

a gift in their will. We are reliant upon fundraising and gifts in wills to deliver our ministries now and in the future. If you would like a copy of our legacy brochure with information on how to support us in this special way, please contact our office on **01865 319700**.

Again, my sincere thanks for your generosity and prayers. Our ministry would not be possible without your support.

Every blessing,

Julie MacNaughton, MCIOF (Dip)
Head of fundraising

DISCIPLESHIP FOR EVERY AGE AND EVERY STAGE

Ann Abernethie



In a phone conversation with one of our supporter care team, Ann Abernethie shared a little of her story. Born in Jersey in March 1940, just before the German occupation, she and her family faced near starvation in the final months before the island was liberated in 1945. She lived with her parents and younger sister on a smallholding in a remote part of the island, where her father kept a secret wireless. After liberation, when the family returned to Midhurst in Sussex, five-year-old Ann

was so weak she was not expected to survive.

Happily, she did survive and despite many family challenges and lifelong health issues, she went on to have an exceptionally rich and varied life, personally, professionally, and spiritually. She recalls sitting in a Sunday morning service when she was seven or eight. ‘Sunlight streamed into the church and I suddenly became strongly aware of the Lord’s presence. That was the beginning of my spiritual journey.’

A year or so later, a close family friend introduced her to BRF Bible reading notes, and they’ve been part of her journey ever since. It’s a spiritual journey which includes deep study, regular retreats, and spiritual direction, supporting missionaries across the world and active involvement in her local church, all gently underpinned by our notes. ‘Their influence on me has been low-key – subtle and steady rather than

dramatic. I read them at breakfast and they’re an important part of my routine: a holy habit that keeps me grounded. I’ve tried other Bible reading notes over the years, but have always returned to BRF’s because they suit me best.’

Read more of Ann’s story at
brf.org.uk/category/articles

We always love to hear from you with your comments, stories, and feedback. So, if you have anything you’d like to tell us or share with us, please fill in our contact form at brf.org.uk/contact-us, or email enquiries@brf.org.uk, or phone **01865 319700** to speak to one of our friendly supporter care team.

For everyone's flourishing



Charlotte Maughan, a volunteer Anna Chaplain in north Oxford, trained as an occupational therapist (OT) and moved to Oxford to take up her first job. As the busy mother of three young children, she might not fit the usual image of an Anna Chaplain, but her passion for her work is unequivocal.

'I've always just really loved older people,'

she says. 'I've been really fortunate with all my grandparents. I have loved the relationship I have with them and, as I've got older, I've appreciated them more and more. Their impact on my life growing up was so significant in my growing understanding of who I am, but also seeing their spiritual walk, their faithfulness, I've come to recognise what a blessing that's been.'

As an OT, Charlotte especially enjoyed working with older adults. She stopped work when her children were tiny, but as they started to go to school she began wondering what else she might do. Already involved in the pastoral care team at St Andrew's, north Oxford, her associate vicar mentioned Anna Chaplaincy.

'I looked into it and thought I would love to do this. It's very holistic, like occupational therapy, but the opportunity to bring in spiritual care was

just amazing. I was really excited by the training, but also by the opportunity to volunteer into this space using all my skills and to practise my faith and be more openly spiritual. Plus I've got the flexibility to be with the children. I was really excited about that, and still am!'

St Andrews has a very small parish boundary and no care homes within it, so Charlotte has been licensed for the area of North Oxford, which encompasses seven churches across different denominations, three care homes and three supported retirement communities. She connects with representatives of all but one of the churches, and they meet regularly. One is already licensed as an Anna Chaplain and another is in training.

'We look together at what can we do for the community and how we can best work together with the resources that we've got. Where's the duplication? Where are the gaps? We put on shared events, like summer socials, but we're

also looking at how to support and encourage each other.'

North Oxford is a leafy, affluent area, but for Charlotte and her colleagues, the people they care for still face the serial losses that come with ageing.

'I've found there's a kind of a thread of sorrow in people's recognition that they've misplaced value in their lives. They've set so much store by their roles and their status. They're mourning the loss of that and having to come to terms with it.'

'Our different roles change throughout our lives, and we put our hierarchies on them, and we value one over another, but actually all of them are fleeting and what remains is our innate worth – that can be a hard lesson to learn, but we're there to help. We recognise the struggle that many older adults go through; how hard it is, how it can challenge their faith, and sometimes our role is simply upholding, supporting, encouraging, and holding faith for them until they're ready to pick it up again for themselves. The stripping away is very painful, but if we know that we are not abandoned – rather we are loved and we are cherished – that can be very powerful. We are a family of different generations for a reason, and God gifts us with each other for everyone's flourishing.'

An introduction to Anna Chaplaincy

Anna Chaplaincy is delighted to share a new introductory video with Anna Chaplain Charlotte in Oxford, filmed in the care home where she ministers, Fairfield Residential Home. The video features reflections from staff and residents in the home, as well as from Charlotte, on the importance of spiritual care. Charlotte says of her work as Anna Chaplain at Fairfield: 'It's been a huge privilege to be in this space, and an amazing experience.'

Watch the video at annachaplaincy.org.uk/about-anna-chaplaincy



'We are finding this new film an excellent resource in enabling churches to understand the distinctive role of Anna Chaplains, and we are very grateful to Charlotte and everyone at Fairfield for all their help in making it.'

JULIA BURTON-JONES, ANNA CHAPLAINCY TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT LEAD

■ Find out more about Anna Chaplaincy at annachaplaincy.org.uk

Our intergenerational journey



Mary Judkins 'retired' to Cornwall 11 years ago having moved frequently all her life, first because of her father's work as a Baptist minister and then her husband's as a hospital consultant. They met at a Christian Union house party in Mary's first year at Bristol University, where she was studying theology before going on to train as a teacher. She has been deeply involved in Christian mission and ministry since childhood, and she and Keith are still in active ministry in a small independent church. On top of that, she leads a very special Messy Church, which meets in her own home and garden and attracts some 40 people every time, including four generations of one family and those elusive teenagers.



When Mary arrived in Lelant, near St Ives, a new Messy Church was about to start and she was quick to get involved – and quick to move location when certain members of the Sunday congregation were less than welcoming. They moved to the local Church of England school until Covid hit, and then as soon as people were allowed to meet again outside they shifted to a nearby garden, where they stayed in family groups and, to keep people safe, everything they needed was in a bucket.

'What we noticed,' says Mary, 'was that the parents, children, and teenagers were learning

from each other. We didn't know that was going to happen, but the team would go round, listen and watch, and we realised that the adults were learning too. That's where our intergenerational journey started.'

Mary had developed strong links in the local school, and many people were drawn into Messy Church as a result. The vast majority of the people who come have no prior church links. 'They say: "Messy Church is our church." We've tried to get them to church events. It's a no-no; it's not their culture. So we've stopped asking.' Unusually for churches and Messy Churches alike, Mary and her team

have kept their teenagers and attracted new ones.

'I think the key with teenagers is the relationships you build', she says. 'From when they were small, I knew what they like to eat, so when it's breakfast, there's always popcorn, there's always watermelon, and I can tell you which ones go for which bits. We've got one 15-year-old who said to me, "Mary, I've been coming since I was five", and another 15-year-old who is six-foot-two, and I have to tell him to sit down while I talk to him.'

But the appeal is not just breakfast! 'We do challenge them. We don't do nicey-nicey stories, because I realised that these youngsters needed a challenge. They're living in a difficult age.

'Those lads, especially the lads, like the competition element if I can work that in. We did John the Baptist but we focused on the locusts rather than the dove. We made little locusts out of clothes pegs that you can make jump, and we had parents and teenagers on the floor outside, getting very excited seeing who could jump their locusts the furthest.'

There are three teenagers in the family of four generations in Mary's Messy Church. Headed by Xena at 104, followed by her daughter Carlyn, a non-stipendiary priest in the Church of England, granddaughters Miriam and Eleanor, and great grandchildren, Joel, Navarre, and Sanara. 'Xena calls it Sunday school; she can't get her head round "Messy Church", but that's okay! She's a real prayer warrior. Sometimes at the end of Messy Church, I'll say to her, "Xena, do you mind praying for us?" Suddenly she sits up: 'Almighty God...' and she's off. It affects our non-church folk, because I don't think they've ever seen anyone like it. She's just amazing.'



*'Rooted in the **Five Marks of Mission**, these engaging sessions will help Messy Churches of all ages grow in **faith**, have confidence to share the gospel, **care** for creation, and **serve** their communities in ways that are wonderfully **imaginative** and warmly **inclusive**.'*

Archbishop of Canterbury, the Most Reverend Sarah Mullally

Get Messy! Volume 4, the essential resource for Messy Church leaders, is available in print, as a digital pdf or as individual sessions. Get your copy at brfresources.org.uk/get-messy-volume-4



A bigger picture of God

Emma Dobson is children and families work leader at Glenwood Church – ‘a really special place’ – in Cardiff and is also a qualified play therapist, splitting her working week between the two roles. She is married to John and has two children, aged 13 and 10. She first arrived in Cardiff, and Glenwood, as a student, and apart from a brief ‘sortie’ to Bristol, has been there ever since. She is passionate about Parenting for Faith, has been to The Forge multiple times, and has recently signed up as a Parenting for Faith Champion, despite major health challenges.

When Emma started in her role at Glenwood, her son was nine months old and her daughter was three, and the first thing she did was create a little daytime home group.

‘We brought our children and we opened the Bible together and prayed for each other. We learned very quickly to pray with our eyes open while we had toddlers!’ It was in looking for material to use with that group that she came across Parenting for Faith.

‘From the very first video of the original course I thought this is brilliant, this is just what we need!’

‘It really, really spoke to me – the accessibility of it, the groundedness of it, and the real life nature of the course – and it went from there.’

She now runs the course most years, alternating between daytime and evening so as many people as possible can take part, and she uses the Parenting for Faith Key Tools informally throughout her ministry.

‘They very much shape a lot of what I do. I use them in my training as well, with volunteers, and we often use some

of them in our all-age services, so they really seep in to so much of what is happening here.’

Emma’s faith and resilience have been tested over many years, first losing her dad when she was just nine years old, and more recently with a cancer diagnosis when the country was back in lockdown in January 2021. There were other Covid losses too – both grandmothers and an auntie – ‘and online funerals are brutal’. So what has helped her come through those testing times and gives her strength for the future?

‘Actually we were doing session three of the course yesterday, and there’s an exercise in it where you use a flip chart and you come up with as many names for God or attributes of God as you can. We were discussing how one of us on our own wouldn’t have come up with everything on that piece of paper, and that’s the perfect illustration that in community we’re able to get a bigger picture of God than we can on our own.’

‘There’s something within community where more of who God is is revealed, and that’s really been my experience: connecting with God through others. Someone said to me a long time ago...

“We all take turns: sometimes we carry each other, and sometimes we’re carried, and if you don’t take your turn being carried, you’re depriving other people of the opportunity to minister to you.”

‘That really helps me to reframe that feeling of needing to be strong all the time.’

New Five Key Tools course

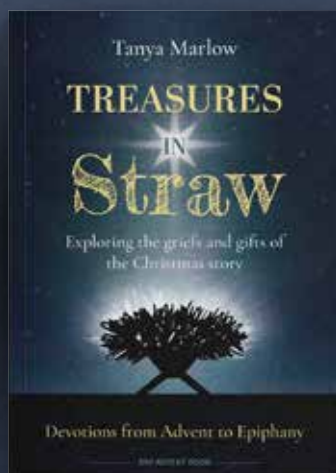
Discover how everyday life can become a place where children and teenagers naturally meet and know God.

New for September, the Five Key Tools course from Parenting for Faith offers a practical and encouraging way to help children and teenagers develop their own relationship with God. Whether you join as part of a church group or take part on your own, you’ll explore five flexible tools for nurturing faith in everyday life. With new teaching from Rachel Turner, and your usual podcast hosts Anna and Jess to guide you through.

[parentingforfaith.org/
the-five-key-tools-course](https://parentingforfaith.org/the-five-key-tools-course)



ALL OF LIFE IS PRESENT IN THE CHRISTMAS STORY



For some, Christmas is a magical time. For others, it can be painful, and the usual tinselled tellings of the Christmas story feel unbearably saccharine. Yet in that first Christmas, all of life is there – disgrace and honour, uncertainty and hope, temptation and tyranny, sorrow and celebration.

Interweaving theological insight with honest experiences, Tanya Marlow traces the themes of loss and gain throughout the nativity. Against a darker backdrop, we see with greater clarity our unshakeable blessings. However you feel about Christmas, *Treasures in Straw* will leave you with fresh wonder, deeper understanding, and genuine joy.

[brfresources.org.uk/
treasures-in-straw](http://brfresources.org.uk/treasures-in-straw)



Give Me Strength!



Jane Walters introduces her new book, *Give Me Strength!*, which publishes this month.

‘How are you?’ If you happen to be

in church as you read this, your answer will probably have been easy: ‘I’m fine, thanks. You?’

There are many reasons we struggle to be honest with others (and ourselves) if things are not fine. Perhaps we imagine that everyone else has their lives sorted and we’re the only ones with a problem.

But the truth is radically different and, as Jesus said, it’s the truth that sets us free. And the truth is that God created us to be dependent on him.

It’s not pathetic or demeaning to think of ourselves as weak; it’s part of our natural make-up. We get tired, things happen we can’t control, we can’t always cope, we don’t always know what to do. And when we’re in these states, the wonderful truth is that God has, and is, everything we need. When out of exasperation we

mutter, ‘Give me strength!’, God loves to respond with his outstretched hand.

Writing *Give Me Strength!* has been the most difficult thing I’ve written. It was hard to go back into some of my dark places of loss, bereavement, and trauma, even though I was keen to share the many ways God helped me, and others whose stories I’ve featured, through them. The BRF Ministries team encouraged me to be real and to produce a manuscript ‘with grit’. I’m grateful now that they did, though I maybe wasn’t at the time!

My hope in writing the book is that every reader will find ways of connecting with God in a way that makes a real difference to their lives. God isn’t into quick-fix, band-aid solutions – despite us endlessly wishing he was. God works more deeply in us, if we will let him. Sometimes, the outward circumstances don’t change. Sometimes our prayers for something to shift are left unanswered. But that never means that nothing has happened. Turning to God is always a good move. His strength is always available.

[brfresources.org.uk/
give-me-strength](http://brfresources.org.uk/give-me-strength)

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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