



## Here I am, Lord: call and vocation



Whatever our age, ability or inclination, now is the time to discover or rediscover God's call on our lives, says CEO Richard Fisher.

'Here I am.'  
Many of us will immediately recognise these

words from 1 Samuel 3, where God calls the boy Samuel. At first, Samuel thinks it is Eli calling him. However, Eli realises that it is the Lord speaking to Samuel, and the priest tells the boy how he should respond: 'Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.'

So often, like Samuel, we don't at first realise God is calling us to serve him.

I have met many people who have talked of similar experiences. God had been calling them to a particular ministry or role, and it was only with the benefit of hindsight that they saw this. It often takes courage to respond and step out in a new direction. I remember two particular occasions at BRF when close colleagues came to me in tears to tell me that they were leaving, because it was clear that God was calling them to something different. They didn't want to leave BRF, but God's call was something they could no longer ignore.

### Enabled to do the extraordinary

It has been a real privilege over the years to see the ways in which BRF has enabled many people to discover, sometimes even rediscover, their vocation. For example, so many in Messy Church and Anna Chaplaincy have stepped forward,

often with some trepidation, and found themselves involved in ministry in ways they could never have imagined. Maybe they thought they were too old, too young, too shy or too inexperienced – but God enabled them to do extraordinary things!

### A personal perspective

The pandemic has been a challenging time for everyone, and a period of great disruption. My own experience has been quite a surprise to me. Eighteen months ago, I felt exhausted and burned out.

*'I wonder what God is calling me, and you, and BRF to do in this new season?'*

I badly needed a break and was due to have a three-month sabbatical from Easter 2020. Covid-19 put paid to that, and the first six months of lockdown turned out to be probably the most stressful and

challenging period of my working life. I wondered how much longer I could carry on like this. But something changed during the autumn (I'm still not sure what it was!). I found I had rediscovered my passion for my work at BRF and a renewed sense of vocation.

With BRF's centenary next year, I find myself looking forward with anticipation. I wonder what God is calling me, and you, and BRF to do in this next season? Whatever it is: here I am, Lord.

Read our series of online articles on the theme of vocation throughout September at [brf.org.uk/articles](https://brf.org.uk/articles)

### IN THIS ISSUE:

Boosting confidence and status in older people's ministry

Helping families connect with God by connecting with nature

Bringing strategic skills to children's and family ministry

and much more...



## Here I am, Lord

A time to review and renew our calling

Online conference

Saturday 9 October, 10.00 am–3.00 pm

The expression 'a new normal' has been much used in the past 18 months. We've had to live differently, perhaps letting go of familiar roles, routines and, tragically, even people we treasured so much. Many of us have had to embrace a whole new way of being. In times of transition, it's helpful to take time out to be still and re-orientate. Join authors Mark Bradford, Joanne Cox-Darling, Tony Horsfall, Lucy Moore and Andrew Roberts for this opportunity to discern what God is asking of us individually as we go forward into a changed world.

£15.00 for an individual ticket

£25.00 for a household ticket (up to 3 people)

Includes a £5.00 voucher to use at [brfonline.org.uk](https://brfonline.org.uk) (terms apply).

Book online at [brfonline.org.uk/products/hereiamlord](https://brfonline.org.uk/products/hereiamlord)

*'The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, "Samuel! Samuel!"*

*'Then Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."'*

1 SAMUEL 3:10 (NIV)

# Hello from Julie and the fundraising team



We are incredibly grateful to everyone who responded to our annual appeal. It has been fantastic to receive such generous support. Please read on for more ways to help us to achieve our annual fundraising target of £1.3 million.

## Greetings cards

As well as our year-round Everyday cards, we're now offering new Christmas card designs and multipurpose gift wrap. Stock levels this year will be higher so you can be confident of fast delivery. Every purchase helps to support our work.

Order your greetings cards and wrap at [brfonline.org.uk/cards](http://brfonline.org.uk/cards) or use the enclosed order form.



## BRF centenary rose

The BRF centenary rose is an exciting new initiative to help celebrate the charity's 100th year. 'Cream abundance', a gorgeous floribunda, is a tribute to God's abundant provision for BRF over the past century. Order now for Christmas delivery via the enclosed leaflet or at [brfonline.org.uk/rose](http://brfonline.org.uk/rose).

(This project has been kindly sponsored by Rosemary Fenwick.)

BRF centenary rose 'Cream abundance'

## Friends of BRF

We're delighted that over 300 people have signed up to give regularly to our ministries in the past year. If you would like to become a friend of BRF, Messy Church, Parenting for Faith or Living Faith by giving £2 a month or more please do get in touch.

Go to [brf.org.uk/get-involved/give](http://brf.org.uk/get-involved/give)



## Make a Will Month

October is 'Make a Will Month'. Gifts in wills are a really special way to support us. If you would like to know how to give to BRF through your will please do contact us.

To get in touch, see the contact details below

## Special thanks to our sponsors

This mailing, along with much of our work, has been sponsored by some of our supporters, helping to reduce our costs. Two of the sponsors for this mailing have been long-time subscribers to the daily Bible reading notes *New Daylight*.

### Neil Skidmore

was introduced to the series by his parents. 'I cannot recall when I first started reading what is now *New Daylight*,' he says, 'but I will have been introduced to it by my parents, who were strong supporters of BRF. Certainly I read it when away at boarding school from the age of 14. As I am 90 next month, I have been reading it continuously for at least 76 years. It has been such a support for me through my life.'



### John Paddle

chalks up around half a century of reading the notes, which, he says, 'helped fill the gap between church and sacrament attendance, and private prayer. I found their value could not be underestimated, and I am so thankful for their help.'



**Julie says:** 'We are hugely grateful to Neil and John and all those who have contributed to the costs of this mailing, and other fundraising initiatives.'

## Could you sponsor a BRF activity?

If you would like to sponsor a BRF activity, such as a training event, mailing or other initiative, please get in touch (see below).

You can contact BRF's fundraising team at [giving@brf.org.uk](mailto:giving@brf.org.uk), call us on 01235 462305 or drop us a line at the address below.

'It has been such a support to me through my life.'





# A special Christmas book for families to share

‘A superb resource. If I were still a minister of a local church, I would ensure that every family in my church received a copy!’

That’s what Paul Beasley-Murray said in *Church Matters* about *The Easter Story*. Now there’s also a Christmas book for churches for ministry to families! Olivia Warburton, Living Faith lead, explains.

The vision of our Living Faith ministry is to encourage vibrant Christian faith through the Bible, prayer and fellowship. It’s about resourcing people’s spiritual journeys through a range of resources and events, both physical and digital, and creating a sense of community and belonging on those journeys.

Earlier this year we produced *The Easter Story* booklet for churches to give to families, and for parents and grandparents to share with their children. With the help of generous donors, we were able to send many copies to churches and Messy Churches free of charge. We also made it available at low cost via our website, and the response all round was so encouraging that we’re now developing *The Christmas Story!*

## Telling the Christian story to new families

As one reviewer said, these booklets present a narrative which is increasingly unknown among families today. Christmas is a time when many people who might not normally attend church do so, and Christmas 2021 is particularly special since this will (hopefully) be the first Christmas ‘back’ after the pandemic, with families able to meet together and churches able to celebrate too.



‘A little gem which brings the Bible to life, introduces creativity and encourages family prayer.’

Elizabeth Hogg, Transforming Ministry



## Will you support our work?

- Tell other people in your church about *The Christmas Story!*
- Buy the book at [brfonline.org.uk/thechristmasstory](http://brfonline.org.uk/thechristmasstory) (discounts for multipack orders)
- Donate to Living Faith at [brf.org.uk/donate](http://brf.org.uk/donate)

By donating, you can help us develop more projects like this one and make our resources accessible to more people and more churches.

# Tracing a golden thread towards Advent

In BRF’s new Advent book for 2021, Jo Swinney, writer, speaker, editor and director of communications for A Rocha International, looks afresh at the Christmas story.



In writing *The Whole Christmas Story: An Advent adventure through Genesis, Revelation and points in between*, Jo wanted to challenge the sense of over-familiarity which can hinder our understanding of the true significance of

the birth of Jesus. It was a huge task and a labour of love.

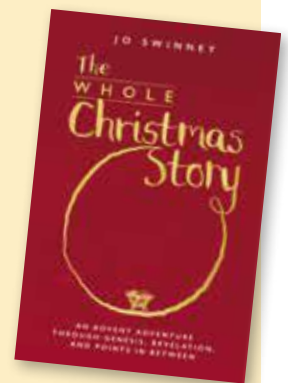
‘I decided to try to put that event – the birth of Jesus – into its whole biblical context,’ she explains. ‘I looked at the broad thematic sweep of the Bible, from creation, to fall, to redemption and the new creation, and chose parts of the Bible to represent those large themes.’

‘It was a reminder of the beautiful coherence of this library of books we call the Bible,’ Jo reflects. ‘There’s this absolute golden thread running through the narrative, from beginning

to end, across all the different genres, the different cultures, the millennia of history – throughout it all, there’s this traceable thread of hope culminating in the birth of a person who against all odds arrived and changed everything.

‘It was a reminder of the beautiful coherence of this library of books we call the Bible.’

‘I hope people will be able to look at the nativity scene and not be so bored by it! Not to think, “Oh, here come the angels” and doze off. Not to think, “Oh, and here are the shepherds, again,” but to see it afresh in all its nuance and depth and complexity. I hope, ultimately, that *The Whole Christmas Story* will help people journey towards Jesus.’



Find out more and download sample pages at [brfonline.org.uk/whole-christmas-story](http://brfonline.org.uk/whole-christmas-story)



# Messy Church Goes Wild!

Tackling climate change is serious business, but Messy Church is making it fun to raise awareness and change attitudes and behaviours...

With the UN climate change conference (COP 26) meeting in Glasgow this autumn and with many churches focusing on Creationtide, BRF's Messy Church team is making its own contribution to environmentalism. It's developing new ways for families to connect with the great outdoors, with the big questions of science and religion and, ultimately, with the creator of it all.

## Meeting God through his creation

Messy Church Goes Wild is the name given to a strand of the ministry which encourages Messy Churches to 'meet God outdoors, love the natural world, experience a sense of awe and wonder, and be more eco-aware in all we do, as gathered and dispersed church, for the good of the planet' says Lucy Moore, Messy Church founder and leader.

Thanks to generous funding from Scientists in Congregations, twelve **Messy Adventures** (specially designed Messy Church sessions) will give even the least experienced Messy Church leader the tools and confidence to reimagine their Messy Church outdoors. These exciting new resources, available in 2022, each offer fun activities with a strong scientific focus, questions to discuss and inspirational 'Big Thinking' provided by scientific experts. There'll also be suggestions for creative ways of responding in Christian worship with awe, wonder, celebration and encouragement for deepening learning and discipleship.



## Testing and refining the approach

'We are delighted to receive this financial and scientific help to pilot the material in several urban and rural churches over the autumn,' says Lucy. 'We will use the reflective and participative action research techniques developed in the recent Deepening Discipleship research to enrich the experience and critique the material.'

Supporting the initiative are Dr Dave Gregory, who developed Messy Church Does Science, fellow BRF authors Martin and Margot Hodson (*A Christian Guide to Environmental Issues*) and Cate Williams, environmental engagement officer for the Diocese of Gloucester and an experienced Messy Church practitioner.

## God's family looking after his world

Looking further ahead, Lucy's vision is even bigger. 'We plan to extend Messy Church Goes Wild through more projects,' she says. 'These will involve Messy Churches from all over the world working together and making the most of the opportunities for sharing experiences online. Together we can make a difference to the planet through the way we behave as the worldwide Messy family of God.'

Find out more at [messychurch.org.uk/mcgw](https://messychurch.org.uk/mcgw)

## Messy Church shout-out!



**Lydia Harrison**, children and family work enabler in the Goole and Selby Methodist Circuit, volunteers for two Messy Church support teams.

As a leader of the Prayer team, Lydia organises monthly prayer get-togethers for the work of Messy Church both locally and worldwide. As one of our brilliant Writers and Readers, she recently worked on our session for The Great God-Family Picnic, presenting a wonderful Facebook Live in her garden – until rain prompted a dash indoors! We simply couldn't support Messy Churches as we do without volunteers like Lydia: always willing to help out, and doing so quietly, without expecting recognition. It's of great comfort to know she's praying for us. **Thank you, Lydia!**



At next year's Messy Church International Conference, titled **Making a Difference**, leaders from around the world will explore how, by focusing on the kingdom of heaven, Messy Churches can make a difference to churches, communities and the planet. With Dr Paula Gooder speaking, practical workshops and Messy Church sessions, there'll also be time for volunteers young and old to connect with God and each other.

Find out more at [messychurch.org.uk/mcic22](https://messychurch.org.uk/mcic22)

# ‘It’s great to be part of what God is doing!’



A deep desire for others to know God as Father is what fires Mary Douglas’ passion for spreading the word about Parenting for Faith.

Mary joined the team last year as a part-time networker for the southern region. When she first heard of Parenting for Faith’s vision for supporting Christian parents, she was ‘filled with excitement’. With two children and eight grandchildren, Mary is well aware that ‘the relationship with God that Parenting for Faith portrays – connection, not just knowledge – is one which so many parents long for their children to have’. It’s also, she says, a relationship that God longs to have with his children: ‘I so want people to know that God is our Father, that he loves us totally and that identity, meaning and purpose are found in him. Parenting for Faith helps that to happen.’

‘I’ve found myself sharing more of what God means to me’

## A passion for sharing

With a master’s degree in theology and experience working with church leaders across denominations, enabling evangelism and championing families, Mary is well equipped to promote Parenting for Faith among churches, theological colleges and diocesan offices.

‘It’s great to be part of what God is doing here!’ she says. ‘BRF has been mightily used by God to take new ideas and make them happen. Beneath a calm, “safe” exterior is a radical, red-hot beating heart.’ This fire for God has fuelled Mary’s own passion: ‘I’ve found myself sharing with friends and family more of what God means to me, revealing more of my deepest

self, showing them something of the relationship at the heart of who I am.’

Find out how Parenting for Faith’s networkers can help your church at [parentingforfaith.org](http://parentingforfaith.org)

## Free online course for parents and carers of teens

This autumn we’re running the transformative online Parenting for Faith specifically for those with teens in their life, exploring the challenges of ‘parenting for faith’ through this crucial phase. Churches taking part can run their own break-out groups.

Find out more at [parentingforfaith.org/PFF-teens-focus](http://parentingforfaith.org/PFF-teens-focus)

# ‘Do it! It’s a great course!’

Children and Family Ministry Coordinator Lisa Graves says the recently launched Certificate in Parenting for Faith at Cliff College has helped her church as a whole to develop.

Lisa’s wide-ranging role involves pastoral care for over 50 families and a team of 80 volunteers in a fast-growing Apostolic church with two congregations in rural Leicestershire.

## New confidence

‘Parenting for Faith has hugely increased my vision and confidence,’ she reflects, explaining how it’s shifted her focus from ‘team first’ to ‘parents first’. ‘I heard Rachel Turner (BRF’s Parenting for Faith pioneer) speak at a conference and was inspired and challenged to see the role of parents as primary disciplers. Since then, the families who have attended our two Parenting for Faith courses have significantly changed their language, grown in confidence and are raising really passionate children who have a relationship with Jesus – which is our goal in everything!’

‘My assignment will be shared with the leadership to help us go forward together’

After attending one of Parenting for Faith’s day courses, Lisa embarked on the more in-depth certificate course. ‘I had read the books and wanted to become more strategic about supporting families and the team.’

## A whole-church vision

Fortunately Lisa’s church were very supportive. ‘They gave me time to study – equipping parents was a high priority for the leadership, which was awesome! They’re really interested.’

The hardest thing, says Lisa, was writing the assignment, ‘though I’m getting in the swing of it now. The sacrifices have been worth it, as it means I’ll be better placed to support the team later, and my assignment will be shared with the leadership to help us go forward together.’



Already the course is making a difference to Lisa’s practice: ‘It’s improved my communication to the eldership, and it’s helped me to encourage team members and to create a strategic vision for how we believe our ministry should join up with the wider church.’

## Highly recommended

Lisa encourages any children’s and family leaders considering the Certificate in Parenting for Faith to do it. ‘I highly recommend it! Thank you BRF and Parenting for Faith – it’s a great course! Also thank you to Cliff College for making it available to dip back into in the future as we implement different elements of the training.’

Find out more about Parenting for Faith training opportunities at [parentingforfaith.org/events-and-training](http://parentingforfaith.org/events-and-training)

# Investing in the future of the church

Following NCVO's encouraging evaluation of the work of Parenting for Faith, **Bill Lattimer**, principal of the ministry's main funder, The Douglas Trust, explains its vision for this ministry.

My wife still has a leaflet given to her parents when she was christened, in the 1950s, entitled, 'Parents: First teachers of religion'. In the 1950s people really understood that the home was the place where children were introduced to Jesus. Since then, however, we've somehow forgotten how vital this is – because children always spend so much more time at home than they ever do in church.

## Nurturing a faith that lasts

If we can reverse the decline in the number of people who see the home as the primary place where our children develop a relationship with God, we'll help families to enable, in their children, a faith which really lasts – through those



difficult teenage years and through the young adult years – into mature adulthood. It's so important that children *experience* God when they're young, because an experience is something you can look back on and which will affect you deeply. One of the distinctive things about Parenting for Faith is its emphasis not just on knowing *about* God – getting the right answers to questions – but on *knowing* God.

## Vital, strategic work

To others considering supporting this work, I'd say two things. First, if you believe this is absolutely vital, strategic work, then support it. If we don't bring our children up in the faith of Christ, although nothing is ever hopeless under God, the future of the church looks difficult, to say the least.

Second, it's clear from the recent external evaluation that Parenting for Faith is working. So, the more we can do, the more we can get the word out, the more courses, podcasts



and events, the more online material, the more books we can get out there, then the more we will, eventually, change the culture. Getting these great resources out to as many people as possible costs money, but I believe there's a great payback on that investment for the future of the church.

**'If we don't bring our children up in the faith, the future of the church looks difficult, to say the least.'**

To find out more about Parenting for Faith and how to donate, go to [parentingforfaith.org](https://parentingforfaith.org)

# Anna Chaplaincy training 'invaluable'

**'Affirming'... 'empowering'... 'enlightening'... 'encouraging' – participants offer high praise for the new online Anna Chaplaincy course launched this year.**

A new online course for Anna Chaplaincy has given 80 people new skills, professionalism and confidence in their work to spiritually care for older people. Many participants of the course, which was delivered nationally as well as to groups in Kent, Cumbria and Wales, have taken the next step towards being commissioned as an Anna Chaplain or Anna Friend.

Alongside six two-hour Zoom sessions, learners are given a training manual with set weekly reading and tasks. The course also gives them the opportunity to hear from commissioned Anna Chaplains about their ministry with older people.

**Do you know someone gifted in ministering to older people? Why not direct them to find out more at [annachaplaincy.org.uk](https://annachaplaincy.org.uk)?**



Sue Yeo completed the online course before being commissioned as an Anna Chaplain in February.

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