



## Nurturing small beginnings into surprising blessings



In our centenary year, CEO Richard Fisher is thankful that BRF's flourishing ministries aren't just growing but maturing too.

BRF's centenary prayer includes the lovely phrase 'Thank you for your faithfulness in nurturing small beginnings into surprising blessings'. So often, BRF's growth and the fruit this has borne have come about in unexpected ways.

Messy Church, Anna Chaplaincy and Parenting for Faith all started as local church projects, addressing a local need. In each case, the opportunity for BRF to become involved came out of the blue. And now these ministries have spread throughout the UK and, in the case of Messy Church, around the world. I marvel at the ways in which God has blessed them and enabled them to be a blessing to so many others.

### A season of growth

This is a new season for Messy Church and Parenting for Faith, with new ministry leads taking them forward here at BRF: Aike Kennett-Brown for Messy Church and Anna Hawken for Parenting for Faith.

It's a new season for many Messy Churches themselves, as many restart for the first time in two years. We're also seeing new Messy Churches starting up – over 30 in the first two months of 2022.

This spring, Parenting for Faith launched a new season of podcasts and

Facebook lives, featuring guests from organisations right across the British Isles, demonstrating how the principles and tools work in diverse settings.

And it's a new season for Anna Chaplaincy too, with more and more Anna Chaplains being commissioned and joining the network.

### Growing deeper

We celebrate the signs of growth all around us. But growth is about so much more than simply increasing the numbers of those involved. It's also about depth – putting down deep roots. At the heart

IN THIS ISSUE:
New Parenting for Faith mindset gives parents confidence
Helping older people find inner peace
Hundreds of new families flock to Messy Church start-up
Bible-based resources change lives
Messy Church leads family of four to baptism
and more...

of our ministry for the last 100 years has been a passion to help people deepen both their faith and understanding of the Bible, help them to grow as disciples, help them to experience vibrant Christian faith and to share that with others. In this issue of BRF News, the stories from across our ministries illustrate this beautifully.

We're delighted to enclose a centenary prayer postcard with this mailing and hope that you will pray this prayer with us. And if you've bought a BRF centenary rose, I hope you're enjoying seeing it grow and flourish. I certainly am.

## A thanksgiving service to remember!

Did you join our online centenary thanksgiving service in April? If not, there's still time to enjoy it on YouTube.

Hear BRF vice president Canon Dr George Lings share what BRF has meant to him since childhood, be encouraged by news from our ministries and be uplifted with joyful worship music from The Oxford Gospel Choir.

With...  
Aike Kennett-Brown  
Bishop Colin Fletcher  
Christina Baxter  
Debbie Thrower  
Martyn Payne  
Olivia Warburton  
Richard Fisher  
and others



Watch the service at [youtube.com/brfcharity](https://youtube.com/brfcharity)

*Then Jesus asked, 'What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to? It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air perched in its branches'.*

LUKE 13:18-19 NIV



Sharing  
the Story  
since 1922



# Hello from Julie and the fundraising team

When we look back at the last 100 years of BRF's work as a charity, we can see a lot has changed! What hasn't changed is our passion for this vital work of resourcing and enabling people of all ages to grow in faith and to develop their understanding of the Bible!

What began as a mustard seed in 1922 has become firmly established as a wonderful tree, where all sorts of people can find encouragement to grow closer to God.

Thank you for helping us nurture this ministry through your gifts of time, money and prayer! We depend on fundraising and gifts in wills to fund our work, so we're praying that our annual appeal will be successful in raising vital resources.

We're constantly exploring new opportunities to raise funds, and are delighted so many of you have become friends of BRF by giving a regular monthly gift. If you haven't already done so, please consider supporting us in this way.



## Care for friends and cultivate our ministries!

Thank you to everyone who has bought our Easter and Everyday cards this year to remind friends and family you care. The selection is regularly updated – we're now busy hand-picking new Christmas designs so you can send beautiful, affordable, high quality cards and help fund our ministries!

## Give a rose and plant a blessing!



Sales of our centenary roses continue to be a blessing to us. We know that many people have bought these gifts; with Father's Day and the wedding season coming up,

perhaps someone you know would be blessed by this beautiful floribunda, Cream Abundance? It's available to order throughout 2022 from [brfonline.org.uk/rose](http://brfonline.org.uk/rose) or by calling the number below.

## Giving is easy!

Whether you'd like to support one of our ministries or BRF as a charity, it needn't take more than a minute to make your donation. Please see the reply slip for the different options available, including donating by text, or using the new QR code which takes you straight to our online donation page.

## Heartfelt thanks

We never fail to be amazed by the generosity of supporters like you, and we thank God for your kindness. Your prayers and support are much appreciated.

Julie MacNaughton  
and the fundraising team

## Welcome, Matthew!



Matthew Duval joined us as fundraising support officer in March this year having previously worked in our supporter services team. Along with David Cowen, Matthew is on hand to help you with any fundraising queries when you call us on the number below.

# Sow seeds for BRF's ministries!

## Do you have a heart for supporting the local church in discipleship and mission?

Are you (or would you like to be) well connected within a local Christian network – such as a group of churches, deanery, diocese, Methodist circuit or similar? We're recruiting a team of volunteer BRF networkers to promote more widely the opportunities our ministries offer. Whether or not you have experience, and whatever time you have available, we'll support you to make a difference.

## Could you be a BRF networker?

Through your contacts, you'll be helping promote BRF's work and ministries, including the Bible reading notes and other resources. You'll be able to point people to ways to get involved in our ministries and signpost training opportunities. And you'll help raise awareness of funding needs. If that sounds like something you'd enjoy, please get in touch.

**Happy to start with just your own church?** The BRF local church champion role could be for you!

Find out more at [brf.org.uk/volunteer](http://brf.org.uk/volunteer) or contact [jane.butcher@brf.org.uk](mailto:jane.butcher@brf.org.uk)



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Contact our 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 on the back page.



# Families swarm to new Messy Church!

When Rachael Gledhill, curate at St Barnabas in Dulwich, south London, decided to give Messy Church a go, little did she know what was about to happen!

'We started it in October 2020 between lockdowns, and the first thing we did was Messy Harvest. We had no idea what it would be like, but we advertised, and we thought we'd have 16 family bubbles round the hall. That doesn't seem very many, but we were amazed it booked up so quickly! So we thought, oh, well,

we'll offer a second one the following week. We'd found it so hard to minister to families during the pandemic and this seemed a good way to do something, and within 24 hours that was booked up too. So we thought, well, maybe we can offer a third one, and that was fully booked too, with a waiting list!'

## Astonishing growth

Despite being in and out of lockdown, Messy Church really took off: 'From October 2020 to today, we've had over 300 families come through Messy Church, and 87% were unknown to us before.'

You might have seen this huge, vibrant Messy Church featured on *Songs of Praise*, 'The power of story' (BBC One, 23 January 2022). Why does Rachael think it's been such a success? 'I think people were just so desperate to have a connection to community,' she says, 'and that's what Messy Church offered them. And then they started to think, "Oh, is there something bigger?"'



Messy Church at St Barnabas Church, Dulwich: 'Muddy Christmas' event.

# Leading families on the path to faith

A team in East Sussex described how years of lovingly tending their Messy Church led to a 'cause of joy and celebration' for the whole congregation.

## From zero to front row

'Luke and Samantha had no links with church as they grew up,' explains Angela, a member of the Messy Church team at St Stephen's, Bexhill-on-Sea. 'It was only when their first child, Reace, was a toddler, that Samantha sought out a support group and discovered Messy Church. She and the children started attending a midweek Messy Church, and when it moved to a Sunday morning, her husband Luke started coming too. On Christmas Day 2019 the whole family sat in the front row – it was such a joy to see them there! Now they feel very much part of the church family.'

## A bouquet of blessings!

Samantha feels that Messy Church doesn't just provide fellowship for her, but has also helped both Reace (ten) and Isabella (six) grow in confidence. 'The children have even helped deliver

the regular all-age church services – something Samantha would never have thought possible,' says Angela. After several years of experiencing this creative, inclusive ministry, in a landmark event for the church, Luke, Samantha and the children were all ready to be baptised this January.

**'The children have even helped deliver the regular services.'**

'Two weeks later, two other mums and a child were baptised,' says Angela, acknowledging 'all the prayer and faithful ministry of the Messy Church team.'

'Now, Luke, Samantha, the two mums and one of the dads are preparing for confirmation' she adds. 'In one month we've seen a breathtaking series of Holy Spirit events in which the outreach of Messy Church has 'in-reached' to encourage and bless the whole church family!'



The Rushton family had no church background – but thanks to the local Messy Church, they've all made a step of commitment by being baptised.

Will you help more Messy Churches to attract families new to faith? Please support our annual appeal.

# A weight off parents' shoulders

Mum Helena told us how the down-to-earth Parenting for Faith course was helping her cultivate new, easier ways to show her daughter what it is to know God.

'She's sunny and fun and an explorer! Very compassionate and empathetic, with a calm nature.' Helena's joy was evident as she described three-year-old, Hope. Both attend a church toddler group in the Peak District, where church workers Rachel and Adam offered the Parenting for Faith course. It was an easy sell to a mum keen to know how to help children develop their own faith.

Gathering once a month over a meal, parents from half a dozen families have watched the course videos, shared thoughts and experiences and prayed for each other. 'It's a real mixture of people and backgrounds,' says Helena. 'But the leaders created a very safe environment,

and the down-to-earth videos have helped everyone open up.'

## Valuable tools

And it's clearly making a difference: 'I could see parents beginning to be freed up – weight lifting off their shoulders: suddenly understanding their child's energy, seeing it as an opportunity, not a barrier; realising we don't all have to be the same. There's so much I could say... the tools are so valuable – and the opportunity to reflect on our own faith journey: thinking about what we'd like our children to do, or not do. You really want to take away what you've learned and put it into practice at home.'

## Letting children in

'One example is how we're encouraging Hope to pray. Instead of "saying a prayer", we encourage her to talk to and connect with God. There's a massive shift in our language and approach – from head to heart knowledge. And we're more intentional about letting her into our relationship with God: for example, we include Hope in our quiet time. It felt weird to begin with – yet it's also the most obvious and sensible thing in the world – why wouldn't you?'

Would Helena recommend the Parenting for Faith course? 'Wholeheartedly! I've mentioned it to pretty much all my friends with kids – and to a couple of churches. I tell them "It's amazing – you should absolutely do it – and it's even free!"'



Helena Monck, mum to three-year-old Hope

Discover how the Parenting for Faith approach works specifically with babies and toddlers! Join this summer's new online course at [parentingforfaith.brf.org.uk/babies-and-toddlers-events/](https://parentingforfaith.brf.org.uk/babies-and-toddlers-events/)

# Season of change for Parenting for Faith

Rachel Turner, Parenting for Faith pioneer, has stepped back from leading BRF's Parenting for Faith ministry to pursue God's plan for the next stage.

## 'When God says go, we go!'

Rachel had led Parenting for Faith at BRF since 2016, shaping her initial vision for empowering parents and carers to parent for faith into a dynamic, resourceful and creative ministry that is impacting churches and families worldwide. She likened stepping out of the day-to-day running of the ministry to becoming more of a 'grandparent' – still 'cheering on from the side lines' and 'turning up at family events!'



Rachel Turner with Rick Otto, head of kids' ministry at New Wine, at New Wine National Leadership Conference 2022. Rachel is holding her new book *Comfort in Uncertain Times*.

## Anna takes the lead

Anna Hawken, who has taken on the leadership role, says 'Rachel's day-to-day presence will be sorely missed, but we are also so excited at what God's got planned for her next steps – and for ours!' Anna has been the national coordinator at Parenting for Faith for the past four years and had previously worked with Rachel for six years.

'This year we've introduced lots of opportunities to welcome in new voices,' says Anna, 'with more guests in the Facebook live events as well as in the podcast. They've been able to share the range of what using Parenting for Faith tools looks like, in all sorts of families, churches and situations.'



Former Parenting for Faith national coordinator, Anna Hawken takes the wheel as ministry lead, as Rachel steps back.

Will you help Parenting for Faith take root across the country? Please support our annual appeal.



# Helping older people ‘finish well’

Good gardeners use the end of the year for clearing up, pruning, repairing and planning. So too, Anna Chaplains tend spiritually to those in the autumn of their lives, helping them to ‘finish well’. It’s something God has laid on Debbie Gurling’s heart, as this powerful example of her ministry reveals.



In her late eighties, Doreen\* has a terminal illness and is cared for by her 70-year-old daughter Priscilla\*. Both women are supported by Debbie and a volunteer Anna Friend.

## Forgiveness and freedom – after 50 years

One day Doreen confessed to Debbie her worries about dying. For 50 years she’d carried the guilt of ‘breaking an important commandment’, and as she approached the end of her life, was growing increasingly fearful of God’s judgement. Gently reassuring her of God’s forgiveness, Anna Chaplain Debbie was able to lead Doreen to lay this burden down before him in prayer.

‘I thought she might pick it up again,’ says Debbie, ‘but she didn’t. In the days and weeks afterwards, she kept saying how free she felt – that she couldn’t even think of all the things that had been burdening her.’

‘She kept saying how free she felt.’

‘For me that was precious’ adds Debbie, ‘because it had been a barrier to her dying peacefully.’

‘Trust doesn’t happen easily or with everybody,’ she reflects, ‘Sometimes you know you’re not going to get very far – and that’s okay, because it’s all about timing and being faithful. Not everyone’s up for receiving it, so you just love who and when you can.’

## Healing relationships

It wasn’t only Doreen whose trust Debbie had earned. As she got to know Debbie, daughter Priscilla had begun to open up about her own struggles. As a carer, and the person closest to her mum, she often bore the brunt of Doreen’s frustrations. She wasn’t even sure her mother really loved her – Doreen was from a background and culture that made

saying so impossible. As her mother’s illness progressed, Priscilla became increasingly distressed by the thought of losing her with this question unresolved.

So when the time was right, Debbie called upon her years of experience and Anna Chaplaincy training to gently broach the subject with Doreen. ‘I told her how I, too, had grown up within that culture. And I explained how lovely it would have been to hear those words while my mother was still alive.’

‘What would you like your daughter to know?’

After much prayer, one day Debbie took the plunge and arrived at Doreen’s house with some stationery. ‘What would you like your daughter to know, that you can’t say face to face?’ she asked. Writing down Doreen’s words, she put the note into an envelope. Later she slid it into Priscilla’s handbag, somewhat hesitantly. She needn’t have worried. Priscilla was thrilled to discover the note and guessed Debbie had played a part: ‘My mother would *never* have done this by herself!’

‘Now, any time her mother is harsh to her,’ says Debbie, ‘Priscilla has in writing how she *really* feels – she knows she’s really loved – and they both have peace.’

‘That’s what I mean by finishing well,’ she adds. ‘I feel that’s my new call – praying for people to die well.’

**Will you help propagate the vital Anna Chaplaincy for Older People ministry throughout the country? Please support our annual campaign.**

\*Not their real names.



## Getting the message out there: older people matter!

The appointment of a new church lead for Anna Chaplaincy reflects our vision for an Anna Chaplain in every community.

‘Sometimes you encounter a ministry that is bursting with life, potential and the transforming power of the Spirit,’ says

Debbie Ducille, explaining the appeal of this new full-time role. ‘Passionate about vibrant relational life in the church and pioneering reflective and strategic ways for us to think, live and act together’, Debbie brings to the team broad experience of

education and voluntary sectors, and of church ministry. Debbie says:

*‘I’ve really enjoyed starting to meet both with existing Anna Chaplaincy partners, and enabling new relationships around the country.’*

Debbie’s appointment allows Julia Burton-Jones to focus fully on training and developing the growing network of Anna Chaplains offering this compassionate, specialist ministry amongst older people.

# God's word for all seasons

On opposite sides of the world, two readers shared how BRF's Living Faith resources have brought God's word into their lives – in very different ways.



## A family unites around scripture

When Andy Haynes chose a present for his family last Christmas, little did he know he

was preparing the soil for a new kind of connection!

Andy had been in the congregation at Kinver Methodist Church, when Holy Habits founder Andrew Roberts, who was preaching, mentioned that *The BRF Book of 365 Bible Reflections* would make a lovely present. It gave him an idea.

'Mum is 90 and she keeps saying "I don't want anything. I've got everything." So I went with Andrew's suggestion and ordered the book for myself, and one for Mum. When they came, I started flicking through and I thought others in the family would enjoy it. In the end I ordered seven copies.

'The first person I heard from was my daughter: "Thank you so much for this

book Dad," she said, "I find the Bible overwhelming, but this just gives me an understanding and it's great." I was thrilled. Then one of my sons suggested we form a family WhatsApp group, so from 1 January we've all been following the daily readings. And it's doing a lot for us as a family, bringing us together in a new way.'



## Peace, as the earth shakes!

Caught up in New Zealand's catastrophic earthquakes of 2011, regular *New Daylight*

reader recalled that morning's reflection and dug deep to hold on to its promise.

In the recent episode of *Songs of Praise* featuring BRF's work, Alison Taylor, from Christchurch, New Zealand, shared how a particular reflection had brought her comfort in the midst of fear and uncertainty. A few days after the first earthquake, she had been in her prayer

group, discussing the day's reading from Matthew's gospel, telling how Jesus calmed the storm (Matthew 8:23–27).

Less than an hour later, Christchurch was hit with yet another terrible quake. As Alison recounted, 'As I took refuge under a rack of clothes in the shop I was passing through, I cried out to the Lord, in fear, to protect and save me and my family. I remembered what I had just read to the group and tried to trust Jesus.'

**Alison held on to the hope that Jesus would calm the storm she was experiencing even in that very moment.**

Writing to *New Daylight* author Amy Boucher-Pye in the days following the earthquakes, Alison concluded: 'The past three weeks have been difficult, and nothing is the same, but all our family are well and this has brought us closer to the Lord.'

**How could BRF's resources make a difference to your life? Go to [brfonline.org.uk](http://brfonline.org.uk) to browse the range.**

## Entering the presence of the creator

For centuries, Christians yearning for intimacy with God have repeated the Jesus Prayer. A new BRF Centenary Classic introduces this deceptively simple prayer to new readers.

**'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.'**

This new BRF Centenary Classic edition of *The Jesus Prayer* by the late bishop of Coventry Simon Barrington-Ward, suggests how to use the prayer in

personal devotion, and opens up Bible passages that help us understand it.

In his introduction, the author expresses the hope that 'the book will help many... to be drawn into a deeper communion with God... to the secret of unceasing prayer... that continues day and night, while we are working, eating, meeting with each other and even while we sleep.'

**Enjoy sample pages at [brfonline.org.uk/products/the-jesus-prayer](http://brfonline.org.uk/products/the-jesus-prayer)**



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