



So much to be thankful for as our centenary year draws to a close



As the end of 2022 approaches, I've been reflecting on the past year as we've marked BRF's centenary. I'm so thankful that we've been able to celebrate the milestone at all after two years of challenge and uncertainty, though of course that sense of challenge and uncertainty has been reignited with the sad death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

BRF enjoyed a close bond with Queen Elizabeth's mother. We were honoured to have her as our patron for many years and her presence at our silver and golden jubilee celebrations has been recalled in words and pictures throughout 2022.

The year began with *Songs of Praise*. It was a pleasure to work with the *Songs of Praise* team on the programme they broadcast back in January, and we were thrilled at the way they featured aspects of our ministries to illustrate the theme of 'The power of the Bible to transform lives'. We know of several people whose journey to becoming an Anna Chaplain began with watching that episode.

We learned so much about online worship during the pandemic and put those lessons to excellent use in our own online service of thanksgiving and rededication in April. To date this has been viewed almost 1,200 times – a far greater number than would have been able to attend such an event in person had we followed the pattern of previous anniversary services in St Paul's and Westminster Abbey.

We were particularly delighted to publish *The BRF Book of 365 Bible Reflections* as we launched the centenary year, and we've loved the positive feedback we've had from readers. One person told me how much she's enjoyed discovering just how many of the contributors she knows or has met. 'It's like hearing from old friends,' she said.

It has been a real joy, too, to hear stories of people whose lives have been impacted by BRF, particularly those who have been faithfully reading our Bible reading notes for many years. One of my favourites is a letter I received from a subscriber at the start of the year, enclosing a cheque for £73 as a special donation – £1 for every year he had been reading BRF notes. Being introduced to the notes as a child established for him a habit of a lifetime.

What a year! There's so much to be thankful for, especially you, our supporters, for being with us. We couldn't do what we do without you.

Richard Fisher, CEO

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Pray with us

Please join with us in praying our new BRF prayer, written to mark the end of our centenary and inspire us for the years ahead:

Faithful God,

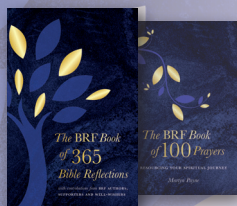
*thank you for growing BRF
from small beginnings
into a worldwide family
of ministries.*

*We rejoice as young and old
discover you through your word
and grow daily in faith and love.*

*Keep us humble in your service,
ambitious for your glory
and open to new opportunities.*

For your name's sake,

Amen



The BRF Book of 365 Bible Reflections has been hugely popular throughout this centenary year. The Bible is at the heart of BRF's work, and this special anniversary collection, with contributions from BRF authors, supporters and well-wishers, symbolises the breadth and depth of our ministry. This ribboned hardback makes a stunning gift, to be used and treasured for a lifetime. Also available is *The BRF Book of 100 Prayers*.

Christmas/New Year office hours: Closed from 12.00 pm on Friday 23 December. Open again at 9.00 am on Tuesday 3 January.

'Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.'

PSALM 119:105 (NIV)



Sharing
the Story
since 1922

Hello from Julie and the fundraising team



Many thanks to everybody who has already purchased our Christmas cards and gift wrap. We really appreciate receiving your orders. We have a wide selection of designs to suit every taste, available to order online at brfonline.org.uk/cards or by phone on 01235 462305.

We are delighted by your generous response to our Virtual Gifts appeal, which enables us to provide copies of The Christmas Story Booklet and The Upper Room Bible reading notes free of charge to chaplains working in prisons, hospitals and hospices, food banks, and community kitchens. We have also raised funds to translate Rachel Turner's book *Comfort in Uncertain Times* into Ukrainian, and we are now fundraising to make this available free of charge to churches and organisations working with Ukrainians and those supporting them in the UK. If you would like to donate to this appeal, you can do so at brf.org.uk/donate or by sending a cheque payable to BRF.

It is always wonderful to hear messages from you about how BRF has made an impact in your lives. This is a real blessing and encouragement to us. Enclosed with this newsletter is our Christmas message to you and an opportunity to send us a Christmas

message in return, which will be placed on the BRF Christmas tree.



As the year draws to a close there is one final opportunity to order a BRF Centenary Rose either for yourself or as a Christmas gift for a loved one. Visit brfonline.org.uk/rose to order today.

As always, we appreciate your prayers and kindness and particularly ask for your prayers for this year's Big Give Christmas Challenge and our other fundraising initiatives. We continue to pray for our readers and supporters during our team prayer time.

On behalf of myself and the fundraising team, I thank you for your ongoing support and wish you a peaceful and happy Christmas time.

Julie MacNaughton, MCIOF (Dip)
Head of Fundraising

The Big Give Christmas Challenge: Parenting for Faith

parenting for faith®



One donation, twice the value

Donate to Parenting for Faith through The Big Give Christmas Challenge 2022 and your gift will be doubled!

Following the success of last year's campaign for Anna Chaplaincy, this year Parenting for Faith is taking part in The Big Give Christmas Challenge, a nationwide initiative which enables charities to receive match funding and which raises millions of pounds for charities each year. We're aiming to raise £20,000 to help parents help their children and teenagers to find their own faith in God.

The Big Give Christmas Challenge takes place for one week from **29 November to 6 December 2022**.

During this time, all donations made through The Big Give website to Parenting for Faith will be doubled through match funding – up to £10,000.

Every gift makes a difference!

Please take part to support our Parenting for Faith ministry. Even a small donation will have value, as it will be doubled through The Big Give. Just go to the website below and search for 'Parenting for Faith'. Thank you.

Please make your donation to Parenting for Faith: helping children know God, between noon on Tuesday 29 November and noon on Tuesday 6 December at donate.thebiggive.org.uk

Christmas cards!

Our new range of BRF Christmas cards is available now. Featuring many new designs for 2022, both modern and traditional, there is something to suit everyone. Every pack of cards sold helps to support our vital work, and we are hugely grateful for your generosity.

Order your cards today at brfonline.org.uk/cards



‘The stories were the best!’

Former teacher Alison Sutton is the evangelist at LifeChurch in Warrington. Married to Colin and with three children under four, she’s been running the Parenting for Faith course for the first time with her mums’ group, trialling the resources for a possible roll-out across the five different congregations which make up the 400-strong LifeChurch.

‘We’re all a little bit nervous, I think, that our kids are going to get sucked in by the world,’ Alison says, ‘and some of the group have been leaning towards home educating. We all want our kids to be saved, obviously, but sometimes we don’t know how to get the balance right between how much of it is our responsibility and how much it is the sovereignty of God. I don’t want to mollycoddle them to the point where they don’t see the world.’

‘It’s deepening the parents’ faith, and giving them tools to relate to their children in a spiritual way.’

Tackling the tough questions

‘My hope for the Parenting for Faith course is that it’s going to show us the best way through all those questions,’ she says. ‘One of the best bits of the course for me so far was the second week, when it was about how to frame things. I’ve been doing that instinctively, but it’s a nice confirmation that it’s the right thing to do.’

Alison likes having the handbooks to make notes in. ‘That makes things stick in my mind,’ she says. ‘I also like the choppiness of going from the DVD to discussion, then back to the DVD, then to an activity. It’s not just staring at the screen for 45 minutes then having a little discussion at the end. It’s back and forth and you get very engaged. It’s deepening the parents’ faith, and giving them tools to relate to their children in a spiritual way.’

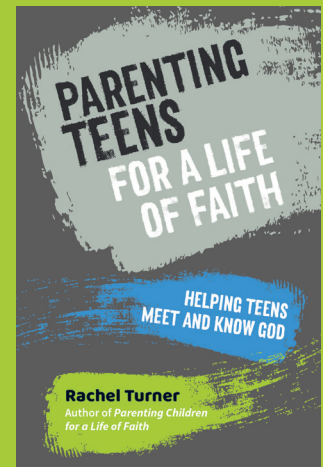


‘The stories were the best of all, especially in week 4,’ she says. ‘The testimony of the boy who felt the “Father’s hand” on him! Some of us cried. These were really important and added weight to what Rachel was saying.’

Three ‘fantastic resources’

Fran Smettem is an ordinand at Ripon College, Cuddesdon. Formerly a children and families worker, she’s impressed with BRF’s family ministry resources, including *The Essential Guide to Family Ministry*, which is ‘really, really useful if your church is starting to explore how

to engage with families, the changing landscape of families and what you can do to help your families.’ Two of Rachel Turner’s books, *It Takes a Church to Raise a Parent* and *Babies and Toddlers*, also get Fran’s seal of approval: ‘All three are fantastic resources!’



Parenting teens has its challenges. It can be easy to think that parents are less influential in their lives, particularly when it comes to faith. But that is not true. Parents remain the significant spiritual influencers in a teen’s life, and this new book by Rachel Turner will help all parents, carers, grandparents and others involved in teens’ everyday lives to better understand the teenage faith journey and to find their place within it.

For more information and to order go to brfonline.org.uk/parentingteens

Tears of blessing: Messy Church reborn



Karen Hopwood-Owen became vicar of St Mary's, Ellenbrook and St Andrew's 'church in a school' in nearby Boothstown

eight years ago, after retiring early from a teaching career she loved. She inherited a thriving Messy Church and a 'fabulous' team of volunteers. By the time of the first lockdown Messy Church, led by volunteer Helen Wiles, was hugely popular, with 70 adults and children meeting once a month after school on Fridays in St Andrew's primary school.

'We had a nice problem,' Karen says, 'but we were struggling to cope with the numbers. We had a superb team, who were providing a hot meal cooked on the premises in a very tiny kitchen area.'

'We've made real relationships with the vast majority of those families who came pre-Covid. A lot of them have been with us a long time and very much identified

Messy Church as their church, their family.'

But the numbers gave rise to concerns. Karen knew that some potential volunteers were deterred by the sometimes chaotic feel of Messy Church, and she and her team were also worried that they weren't achieving the deeper spiritual dimension they had hoped for.

Time to rethink, time to pray

So, hard as it was, lockdown gave them time to breathe, time to think, and time to pray.

'As time went on, we made the firm decision that we would restart small,' Karen says. 'A number of our volunteers retired during lockdown, so we could accommodate up to 30 parents and children, and we would do one Messy Church each half-term. We were taking a bit of a chance, but we've had three sessions now and it has been fabulous; just incredible!

'What's surprising is the calm that there is now in Messy Church and how much more we're able to do. We've kept the same number of activities, but there's more time for people to go around and there's more time and quiet for the leaders to engage.'

She adds: 'It feels like God has really intervened and has touched people spiritually in a new way. We've had lots of tears – quiet tears and not so quiet tears. That was unexpected but a real blessing, and it's taught me that this is the way we need to go.'

'It feels like God has really intervened and has touched people spiritually in a new way.'

'I do think that we need to meet once a month,

because that gives you continuity, so we need to look at the practical side of scaling up. I'm putting it all out to prayer. I have faith, it will happen. We might have some bumpy times, but Messy Church is far too precious to lose.'



Messy Advent

The Messy Church team excels at creating fun activities for every season, and this year they've designed an online Advent calendar with different suggestions for each day from 1 to 24 December. Follow @MessyChurchBRF across social media in December. Here are three ideas to get you started:

Create your own nativity scene

Create your own nativity scene by raiding your recycling bin, using your favourite toys or going on a wintery scavenger hunt to find materials.

Journey to Bethlehem obstacle course

Create an obstacle course around your home or in the garden with the resources you have. Think about how the journey to Bethlehem must have been a difficult one and how God helps us get over obstacles we face.

Make a Christmas playlist

Listen to some Christmas songs and get everyone to choose their favourite to make a playlist to listen to in the run-up Christmas. Think about what the words in your chosen song might mean.

Messy mini books

Messy mini books are a great way for families to spend time together having fun and exploring faith. There are five in the series, including *Christmas Family Time*.

Find out more and order the book at brfonline.org.uk/familychristmasmini



Anna Chaplaincy and a bicycle made for two

Debbie Ducille



A few months before our wedding, my (now) husband and I decided to go for a 'fun' tandem bike ride. We still laugh about it, 23 years later, and often recommend it to couples as valuable marriage preparation. On the back of the tandem, I had limited vision of the way ahead and minimal control

over the direction taken. I simply had to trust my beloved navigator.

Only a decade ago, Anna Chaplaincy was a small seed, planted in fertile Hampshire soil by Debbie Thrower and the local churches there. Anna Chaplaincy has flourished since being grafted into the BRF 'tree' in 2014.

Older people matter

As we come to the end of BRF's centenary year, the network has grown to 230 Anna Chaplains and affiliated members, and counting. In addition we have hundreds of Anna Friends all over the country, volunteers who quietly support an Anna Chaplain. Together, from the Orkneys to Truro, from Swansea to Lowestoft, they are proclaiming in word and deed, 'Older people matter.'

I have learned in recent months that, like my tandem experience, the growth of Anna Chaplaincy is neither under our control nor ours to direct. We see an increased awareness of our rapidly ageing society; we have been shocked at the brutal impact of Covid-19 on vulnerable older people; there's a growing recognition that the spiritual needs of older people are as important as their physical and emotional needs. Christians from across the UK want to get involved, inspired both by the needs they see in their own families, churches and communities and by the prompting of the Spirit.

A tipping point

We sense that we have reached an exciting moment in the growth of Anna Chaplaincy: a tipping point of interest in the spirituality of ageing and what it means to 'finish well'.

Who can see the way ahead? Who is directing us as we move forward into the unknown? The answer, of course, is our generous God, our beloved Navigator. And so, we continue to prayerfully listen for his voice, and trust him to direct our path. Thank you for journeying with us.

Never too late to volunteer

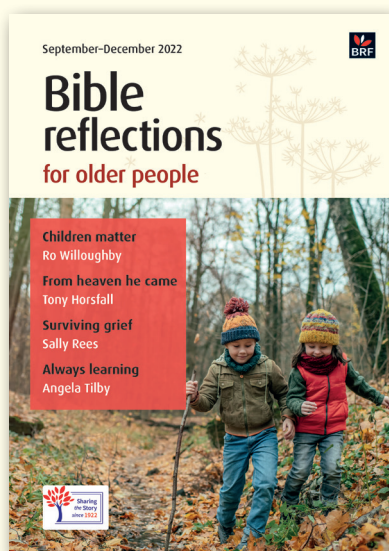


Steve Cowley, chair of Shalfleet Parish Council, presenting Jane with her award.

A few weeks after her 99th birthday, Isle of Wight former teacher Jane Bull wrote to us. She had heard about Anna Chaplaincy and wondered if she could do anything to help. She wrote, 'Being housebound, like so many older people

in our parish, I hope I might be able, through my writings, to offer some help.' Jane has written for her parish magazine for many years and has just begun a second regular column, this time for older readers. She recently received an award from her local parish council for 'service to the community'. Jane reflects the amazing contribution of volunteers across the country. Every charity is dependent on their volunteers, and BRF is no exception. Could you help to spread the word about our ministries?

Find out more at brf.org.uk/volunteer or contact jane.butcher@brf.org.uk



Bible reading notes that 'really resonate'

Anna Friend Deirdre Cornish-Browne always buys three copies of *Bible Reflections for Older People*, two to give away and one to read herself, so she knows what some of the older people she visits and supports are reading.

'Our vicar had led a series of talks on the importance of reading the Bible at home. An elderly lady from church, while I was giving her a lift, said how she had never read the Bible at home but would like to start. I asked if she would like some reading notes to help her and she agreed, so I gave her my own copy of *Bible Reflections for Older People*. The following week, she told me that she had left the notes for a few days and then one day, she started reading them and found that they had really resonated with her, and spoken to her in her life.'

Find out more information and purchase *Bible Reflections for Older People* at brfonline.org.uk/biblereflections

Sharing the Christmas Story

Sally Welch



It has been a real privilege to write for BRF, especially in this year of their centenary. My reflections have been written in response to the BRF vision of 'Sharing the Story', exploring what this means in the context of the Christmas story and the lead up to the 'start of it all', in a stable in Bethlehem. Before we share the wonderful news of Christ's birth with others, however, we must first inhabit it ourselves. This can be done

by reading reflectively, praying thoughtfully and absorbing the message of God's love for all people, so that it becomes part of our daily lives.

Promise, light, mystery...

In thinking how to enable people to do this, I decided not to go with the traditional chronological approach. Instead I explore each week one of the great themes of Advent and Christmas. Over five weeks, the book traces the concepts of promise, light, mystery, love, peace and hope, taking both familiar and unfamiliar stories from the Bible as my inspiration, but always with the

miracle of the incarnation at the heart of it all. My prayer for this book is that, as you journey with me through the days and weeks towards Christmas and beyond, you will gain new insights, a deeper understanding and a renewed engagement with the message of the gospels. Supported by these gifts, may you be encouraged to share the wonder of our Christian story with those with whom you share your lives, so that all may rejoice in the good news.



'My prayer is that you will gain new insights, a deeper understanding and a renewed engagement with the message of the gospels.'

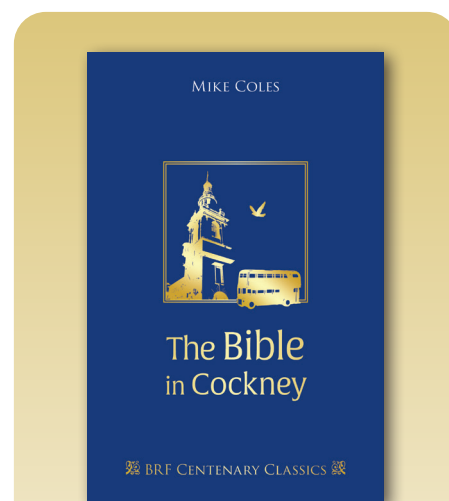
Holy Habits averts a revolution

Lynn Goslin's story perfectly illustrates the lovely, sometimes unexpected, connections between BRF's various ministries and the relationships that are at the heart of all we do.

Born and brought up in Edinburgh, from the age of five Lynn went to school with one of BRF's authors and contributors, Sr Helen Julian CSF, who sadly died last year. When Lynn was looking for study materials 'to prevent revolution' in her home group, after an unpopular choice at her church in Kirkbymoorside, she turned to Helen Julian for ideas. She pointed Lynn to BRF, and in particular to Holy Habits. So successful were the

Holy Habit notes that Lynn has told her group's story on the Holy Habits website, and now, to bring the story full circle, she has just written her own series of reflections called 'Do not be afraid' for a future issue of *Bible Reflections for Older People*.

Find more information about Holy Habits at holyhabs.org.uk



The Bible in Cockney

The penultimate publication in our Centenary Classics range is a special gift edition of the hugely popular *The Bible in Cockney* by Mike Coles.

Order a copy of the book at brfonline.org.uk/products/the-bible-in-cockney

Gift subscription

Why not mark the end of BRF's centenary year by giving a friend or family member a gift subscription to one of our Bible reading notes series. To find out more and to order, contact our supporter services team at enquiries@brf.org.uk or +44 (0)1865 319700.



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