

Prayer diary

1 January–29 April 2023



Pray with us



Enabling all ages to grow in faith

Anna Chaplaincy
Living Faith
Messy Church
Parenting for Faith

I've just been reading Solomon's great prayer at the dedication of the temple as recorded in 1 Kings 8. Several times he includes these words: 'Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive' (NIV).

What matters primarily when we pray is not that we receive this or that particular answer, but that God promises to hear us and forgive us. This is one thing we can always be certain of: our God is a God who listens and who also forgives. Isn't that amazing!?

As you pray with us at BRF for its ministries and its staff, we trust God for answers that will be according to God's priorities and not ours. And whether or not the answers come in the shape we hope for, we can know for certain that God has heard us and comes close to us. If, as an outcome of our prayers, everyone named in this prayer diary experiences this intimate 'being listened to' by, and receiving forgiveness from, God, then our work of intercession is done. Whatever more God's grace gives is a glorious bonus.

So like Solomon, let us pray for specific needs while also being ready simply to receive the assurance that God has heard and that God has forgiven.

With this issue of the prayer diary, we are launching our new BRF Prayer (see back page). It has grown out of the BRF Centenary Prayer from last year, and we hope you will enjoy

using it regularly, alongside the prayers that are offered in the following pages.

Thank you for praying with us.



Martyn

Martyn Payne
BRF volunteer prayer advocate

A prayer for rededication at the start of a new year

Gracious God,
you speak to us through the stories of the Bible
and invite us to hear your voice as we pray.
I rededicate myself this year
to daily Bible reading and prayer,
as part of the worldwide family of BRF
on behalf of its mission and ministries.
Come close to me as I open your word prayerfully,
and inspire my praying as I reflect on your words
thoughtfully,
so that your blessing may rest on BRF,
as it plays its part in growing your kingdom.
For your name's sake.
Amen

For BRF and its ministries in 2023

Prayer is essentially an entering into the knowledge of the divine love that holds us. It is an entering into being loved – and even while we are dirty, broken, battered and may feel unworthy, we are in reality being swept into this tremendous acceptance.

Simon Barrington-Ward, *The Jesus Prayer* (BRF, 2022)

Thought for the week

To pray is both the simplest and also the hardest thing to do. Simple in that it needs no long words, or even words at all; but hard because we can't believe that doing nothing to pay attention to God is the most valuable work of the day.



Pray with us for

- Inspiration for Richard Fisher and his leadership of BRF following last year's centenary celebrations
- Renewed vision for the staff team returning to work after the Christmas break
- Wisdom for BRF's trustees as they fulfil their statutory duties and discern God's plans for BRF's future
- Readers beginning new BRF Bible reading notes, that they might be encouraged and enriched in their times of prayer and Bible reading
- BRF ministry teams meeting to plan and pray over new developments for 2023

Thank you, Lord Jesus,
for your example and inspiration to pray constantly
and to lift up holy hands in your name,
on behalf of your church, your world and all those with
whom we work and live.

We commit ourselves afresh to the work of prayer,
without which all our BRF ministries are worth nothing,
and only with which BRF can bear fruit and multiply,
rooted in your will and the purposes of your kingdom.
Amen



For growth in God's kingdom through Messy Church



In prayer I have a place to run to when I feel down and a firm place to stand when nothing else is working out for me.

Nathan Cox, *The Upper Room*, May-Aug 2022

Thought for the week

Prayer is a language to be learnt, but not from a book. Just dare to have a go, and never mind correct grammar and syntax. The Holy Spirit will teach you what to say and how to persevere.

Pray with us for

- Messy Church ministry lead Aike Kennett-Brown as she serves the BRF team and inspires leaders and volunteers locally and globally
- Jane Butler and Sally O'Hare as they coordinate training and encourage volunteers among the many Messy Churches across the UK
- Messy Church teams who are developing new and flexible approaches to running Messy Church in their local community
- The morning of prayer for BRF that is being observed this Thursday among trustees and senior management at BRF
- God's blessing on the new 'Messiany Church goes wild' initiatives around the country, with their emphasis on outdoor and eco-friendly mission.

**Life-giving,
love-bringing,
home-making God,
may the shelter of your presence
bring hope and healing
to all those who have been
alienated and abused, disturbed and damaged
because of the brokenness of this world. Amen**



For BRF's advocacy of intergenerational mission

Prayer... should be fundamental to all that we do, the first thing that we turn to rather than the last. I recall a preacher saying, 'We don't pray for the work of God; prayer is the work of God.'

Murdo Macdonald, *New Daylight*, May-Aug 2022

Thought for the week

When God made us, the ability to pray was built in. It may be lying dormant through neglect, but it is still in working order and waiting to be used. Calling on the name of Jesus can jump start it into life.



Pray with us for

- A shared vision of working together for the kingdom of God between the BRF ministry teams
- Renewed commitment to listening to and learning from each other in the church
- Creative initiatives around how BRF can best support churches wanting to enable all ages to grow in faith
- An ever-greater interdependence among BRF staff, supporters and volunteers as they stimulate each other to live out the gospel
- Humility and willingness among all Christians, in this week of prayer for unity, to work together and make Christ known in our day



Covenant God,
 you promise to bring to fulfilment
 the gift of faith you have sown in our lives.
 Prompt us daily
 'to get a move on spiritually'
 and to keep our eyes on Jesus
 throughout our lifelong journey of following you.
 Amen

For growth in discipleship through Parenting for Faith

For Jesus the priority is prayer. He needs to get away alone with his Father and to clarify his vision of the task he has come to fulfil. If Jesus needed this, what does that imply for the rest of us?

Dick France, *The People's Bible Commentary: Mark* (BRF, 2022)

Thought for the week

Prayer isn't a competition about how biblically you can speak, how fluently you can express yourself or how holy you can sound. True prayer is like an authentic conversation with a beloved and respected friend.



Pray with us for

- Parenting for Faith ministry lead Anna Hawken, as she listens to the Spirit about God's priorities for this BRF ministry
- The Parenting for Faith team – Iona Gray, Kate Irvine and Becky Sedgwick – and the work they do to support parents and church leaders
- For the influence of Rachel Turner's books, including *Comfort in the Darkness*, *Comfort in Uncertain Times* and *It Takes a Church To Raise a Parent*
- The regular podcasts from the team, that they might equip and inspire parents to live out their faith with confidence
- The planning of new publications, digital seminars, training and blogs

Thank you, Spirit of God,
for calling us to belong to the family of God
as part of the body of Christ,
where all are welcome, all are valued and all are equal.
We commit ourselves afresh to the work of the kingdom
where the youngest and the oldest,
those with different abilities and gifts, backgrounds and experiences,
can encourage and inspire each other on their spiritual journeys.
Amen



For growth in spiritual care through Anna Chaplaincy

The first movement in prayer is always that of being received into the welcoming embrace of one who is waiting to receive us gladly and of realising afresh that we are loved and cherished.

Simon Barrington-Ward, *The Jesus Prayer* (BRF, 2022)



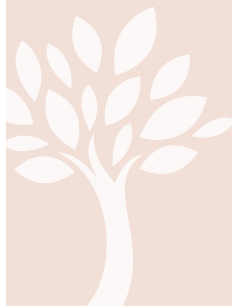
Alton expands its team of Anna Friends, September 2022

Thought for the week

Prayers are answered according to God's timetable, not ours. One prayer might need a thousand years from our perspective; but from God's point of view it is answered immediately.

Pray with us for

- Debbie Thrower, Anna Chaplaincy pioneer, in her advocacy work and leadership of this ministry
- Alex Burn, Julia Burton-Jones, Debbie Ducille and Marian Muskett in their own ministries and as they support Debbie Thrower
- The growing Anna Chaplaincy network, that each volunteer will be inspired with ideas for their work within churches and alongside local care homes
- Local churches as they celebrate and support older people in their congregations and community
- A better awareness of the importance of older people this Candlemas



Faithful God,
whose purpose of love for the world
is the same yesterday, today and forever,
we come before you with gratitude and humility,
as we remember the ways you have already blessed us.
Help us this day to go on trusting you with all our heart,
and so experience your presence,
as you direct our paths in the ways of peace.
Amen

For growth in biblical literacy through Living Faith

Trusting God amid sorrow and suffering is difficult. Even now, I still have days when it is hard to get out of bed or when I feel like a hamster on a wheel – going through the motions, oblivious to my surroundings. Starting my mornings with prayer, a devotional and some scripture helps to keep me centred.

Patty Sears, *The Upper Room*, May-Aug 2022

Thought for the week

Prayer is respite for our soul, rest for our spirit, refreshment on our journey, reorientation for our lives. To pray is as important as to breathe.



Pray with us for

- God's blessing today on the readers of *New Daylight*, *Day by Day with God*, *Guidelines*, *Bible Reflections for Older People* and *The Upper Room*
- Olivia Warburton, and all involved in developing our Living Faith ministry and encouraging vibrant Christian faith through Bible reading, prayer and fellowship
- All our media projects as an organisation, and for creativity for our media producer Adrian Serecut and media assistant Ben Bloxham
- Our Bible reading notes editors – Gordon Giles, Jackie Harris, Eley McAinsh, Daniele Och, Rachel Tranter and Olivia Warburton – as they commission themes, work with contributors, edit submissions and respond to feedback
- The content creation team as they produce print and digital materials

Lord God,
 from you come all good and lasting ideas.
 Multiply the resources produced by BRF writers
 so that their words
 might challenge, teach, disciple and inspire readers across all generations,
 to the end that together
 we might better build your kingdom on earth. Amen

For the growth of God's kingdom through Holy Habits

Prayer can be a difficult business to understand and practise. We cannot simply tell God how things ought to be.

John Proctor, *The People's Bible Commentary: Matthew* (BRF, 2022)



Thought for the week

‘When we pray, we participate in the most dramatic partnership of creation and recreation.’

Archbishop Justin Welby, Facebook post, March 2022

Pray with us for

- Andrew Roberts, founder and pioneer of Holy Habits, as he teaches at conferences and promotes the concept of Holy Habits
- God's blessing on those using Holy Habits and their walk with Jesus
- Churches who are using the Holy Habits books with home groups to equip their congregations to grow in faith and be more confident in their witness
- Karen Laister, Holy Habit's lead at BRF, and her team as they promote these discipleship resources
- David Kitchen's *Bible in Ten* book and audio package, praying that this resource will open new ways into the Bible for old and young alike



Thank you, Father God,
for your story of love and faithfulness towards us,
which is recorded in the Bible.

We commit ourselves to study it afresh in our day,
exploring its depths and heights with sensitivity,
scholarship and in a spirit of humility and service.
May we draw ever closer to the mind of Christ
and ever onward in Spirit-filled discipleship. Amen

For discipleship initiatives in BRF ministries

The prayer of Jesus is a return to his Father, a moment of peace, when he can be truly himself, and linked to the ‘ground of his being’

Henry Wansbrough, *The People’s Bible Commentary: Luke* (BRF, 2022)

Thought for the week

Let prayer and Bible reading complement each other. Words from scripture can create the safe space within which we can listen to God; while words of prayer can connect us with the truths within the stories of the Bible.



Images of Grace
by Amy Scott Robinson

Pray with us for

- Our fellowship of readers and supporters as they start their Lenten journey
- Our Lent book for 2023, *Images of Grace* by poet and storyteller Amy Scott Robinson, to bless many readers this Lent
- The BRF senior management team away days at Stanton House this week
- Churches who are using the BRF Living Faith resources this Lent
- Each other, as we renew our commitment to prayer, rethink our use of time and resources, and deepen our Christian discipleship on the way to Easter

**Thank you, Father God,
that your written word
leads us to Christ, your living Word,
and that through your Spirit
you promise to teach, challenge and inspire us
as we read our Bibles and spend time in prayer.
Rooted in your words and your presence,
may we deepen our discipleship this Lent,
praying for God’s kingdom to come,
and for people of all ages to grow into a living faith,
for your glory. Amen**



For the charity and its fundraising

Some places are undoubtedly special, so steeped in prayer and peace that heaven feels especially close. It is tempting to think that if we could just stay in such places forever, all would be well.

Clare O'Driscoll, *Bible Reflections for Older People*, May–Aug 2022

Thought for the week

Prayer is not an item on a to-do list, a duty to get done, nor a ritual to perform. Prayer is living life in the Spirit, listening out for God and recognising God's presence every day.



Julie MacNaughton, head of fundraising

Pray with us for

- Julie MacNaughton, head of fundraising, and the new initiatives she is pioneering
- The BRF fundraising team: Harry Clouth, David Cowan, Jane Dutton, Matthew Duval, Judith Moore and Alice Willington
- The team as they develop relationships with trusts, churches and individual supporters
- A positive response to BRF's campaigns and appeals for financial support, while also giving thanks for the regular giving from Friends of BRF.
- Creative ideas to raise the finances needed for BRF's ministries, so that they are sustainable and continue to bear fruit for God

Lord of the world,
we face in our time,
not only a climate emergency but also a crisis of identity.
So many no longer know who they truly are,
nor who you have called them to be.
May the stories in your gospel bring us all back to our
right mind
and help us all to rediscover our God-given name
as your children and your holy people. Amen



For the BRF management team

Show me your ways, Lord,
teach me your paths.

Guide me in your truth and teach me,
for you are God my Saviour,
and my hope is in you all day long.

PSALM 25:4–5 (NIV)

Thought for the week

People say that ‘you are what you eat’ or ‘you become what you surround yourself with’. Much more importantly, God says, ‘You are as much as you pray.’ For it is God’s breath into and through you that makes you real.



Sara Sheerin, head of people and culture

Pray with us for

- Richard Fisher as he leads the senior management team
- Jay Elliott, head of finance and operations, and Karen Laister, head of marketing, communications and strategic relationships
- Olivia Warburton, head of content creation, and Julie MacNaughton, head of fundraising
- Sara Sheerin, head of people and culture
- The gift of wisdom, good council, insight and vision for each of the above, so that their combined experience and giftings will bring glory to God through BRF

Lord, we long to see you face-to-face.

But, Child, how could you not see me?

I am always looking out at you:

*in the despairing gaze of the needy and the vacant pain of the lost;
in the longing cry of the oppressed and the tearful eyes of the stranger;
and in the urgent presence of the refugee, who is looking for welcome and healing.*

This is where you may see me, face-to-face.

Lord, open our eyes to see you in the faces of your children,
and may we not turn away. Amen

For the BRF staff team

I began to realise that prayer in Christ is always adoration, resting, rejoicing, thanksgiving and worship. Above all, it is an awareness of being loved.

Simon Barrington-Ward, *The Jesus Prayer* (BRF, 2022)

Thought for the week

Beware the sort of prayers that are ‘the notices’ for those who are listening, a sermon for those you disagree with, a repetition of what God already knows or, worse, an instruction as to what God should do. It would be far better to stay silent.



Pray with us for

- Maddie Jane and Jenny Smith, supporting the BRF ministry teams, and Chloe Trotman, PA to Richard Fisher
- The content creation team of Ben Bloxham, Rose Edwards, Felicity Howlett, Daniele Och, Adrian Serecut, Rachel Tranter and Becca Turnbull
- Those working in the marketing and communication team – Trevor Budd, Jane Butcher, Debbie Clayden, Iona Gray, Stuart Holley, Tracey Jones and Eley McAinsh
- Lisa Bell, John Chapman, Tabitha Griffiths, Maria Kemaie, Claire Proudman, Taura Wood and Kirsty Yu, in the finance and operations team
- The BRF council, meeting in person this week



Son of Man on earth,
 who had nowhere to lay your head,
 draw near to the homeless and dispossessed
 who struggle to belong
 in our cruel and unequal world.
 Stir up in us compassion for the outsider,
 hospitality for the stranger and love for the refugee,
 seeing in each of them your divine likeness,
 as sisters and brothers for your kingdom. Amen

For the work of Parenting for Faith

Some prayers use grand and stirring language. [The Lord's Prayer] has depth and glory through its brief and direct way of approaching God. There is nothing casual or irreverent here, but there is nothing elaborate either. This clear, compact yet profoundly worshipful style of prayer is typical of Jesus, who knew God deeply and intimately, and could speak of faith plainly and simply.

John Proctor, *The People's Bible Commentary: Matthew* (BRF, 2022)

Thought for the week

Keep a pencil and paper beside you as you pray. God has so much to say to you and you don't want to miss a word.



Pray with us for

- In the week we celebrate Mothering Sunday, all those mothers, godmothers, grandmothers, aunties and carers who nurture faith in the young
- Fruitful relationships between Parenting for Faith and other similar organisations
- Churches to catch the vision of the importance of growing faith in the home and the vital role parents and carers play as models and teachers of faith
- A recommitment to pray for the children in our church, in our wider family and in our communities
- The publication this week of Alison Morgan's *World Turned Upside Down*, and for those seeking spiritual solace in times of darkness



Holy Trinity of welcome,
you come and make your home in us,
and make room for us within the Godhead:
help us to open our lives and homes to those
who are lonely or abandoned, hurt or lost,
so that, while with us, they may find the rest and healing
you promise for all your children. Amen

For the BRF trustees

The essence of the Jesus Prayer is to seek to come into God's presence and to stay there until eventually you are always conscious of that presence and always in communion with God.

Simon Barrington-Ward, *The Jesus Prayer* (BRF, 2022)

Thought for the week

Slowly repeating out loud, and out of love, the name of someone who needs God's help is the most profound intercessory prayer you can ever make.



Richard Fisher, chief executive

Pray with us for

- CEO Richard Fisher as, under God, he sets the agenda for BRF for the years ahead
- Gifts of wisdom and understanding for the BRF council of trustees as they seek to hear what the Spirit is saying to the church and BRF
- BRF trustees Colin Fletcher (chair), Christina Baxter (vice-chair) and Julian Hills (treasurer), that God's Spirit may inspire and guide them
- BRF trustees Andrew Barton, Alistair Booth, Paul Cox, Paul Goodliff, Sarah Hayes, Andrew Howard, Jane Whittington and Mike Wilkinson
- God's blessing on council and sub-committee meetings

Lord amid storms and traumas of life,
 we bring to you those we know who are troubled and tormented,
 in their struggle with poor mental health
 and its consequences for themselves and for those who love them.
 May they find release, hope and peace of mind this day.
 And we ask that you might show us how we can help in this,
 through intentional listening,
 compassionate understanding and patient love.
 Amen



For each other on our journey through Holy Week

In Luke, Jesus is at prayer before all the important events of his life – the transfiguration, the choice of the apostles, the teaching on the Lord's Prayer, in Gethsemane before the Passion.

Henry Wansbrough, *The People's Bible Commentary: Luke* (BRF, 2022)

Thought for the week

Never rush your prayers, but allow silence to weave itself in and out of your words, so that in those spaces God may be heard.



Pray with us for

- Those we know who shed silent tears, as Christ did, when all around cry hosanna, that they might be comforted by the scriptures this day
- Those who are faithful in the BRF 'house of prayer' despite the many distractions and temptations in the marketplace of life
- Those who choose to give their best for BRF, like the perfume poured out at the feet of Jesus, and are not be put off by those who might see it as a waste
- Those who break bread and remember Jesus, who was broken for us
- Those who feel abandoned, alone and in a very dark place, that they may know this same Jesus

**Holy and humble God,
in Christ you loved us to the bitter end,
refusing the way of violence, revenge and hatred
and choosing the road of suffering, forgiveness and love.
Once again in this Holy Week,
we pause to reflect, in silence and wonder,
on how you became wholly weak,
to make good our bad.
Amen**



For resurrection joy to fill our hearts and our world

True prayer always begins with who God is before focusing on our present needs.

Loveday Alexander, *The People's Bible Commentary: Acts* (BRF, 2022)


Thought for the week

Father God takes our prayers for others and weaves them into a big plan for them and also for us, which is always much more than we could ever imagine.



Pray with us for

- Those re-reading the resurrection story this week, that they may be encouraged and blessed
- Those coming to the end of this year's BRF's Lent book, that they may have been drawn closer to Jesus
- BRF's contribution, through its publications and online resources, to the proclamation of the good news of the resurrection
- God's blessing on BRF's social communications, particularly in this festival season
- All who are hearing for the first time, 'Christ is risen. He has risen indeed!'



Lord of the empty tomb,
thank you that today we encounter you,
as 'the living among the living'.
Lord of the Easter garden,
thank you that today we greet you
as 'the one we are looking for',
peace-bringer and Spirit-giver.
Lord of the open road,
thank you that today we walk with you
as 'the fulfilment of the scriptures and all our hopes'. Amen

For the work of Messy Church

Often when I speak of prayer to people who don't have an experience of prayer themselves, I talk of it as 'noticing'. Noticing my body breathing, the ground my feet are touching, the way the leaves are moving above my hammock.

Rachel Summers, *Messy Church Goes Wild* (BRF, 2022)

Thought for the week

Have you ever thought that maybe what you have called distractions while you are praying might actually be God breaking into your monologue?



Pray with us for

- The Messy Masterclasses online which aim to encourage those starting afresh or reimagining their Messy Church
- The writers of *Get Messy!* as they put together creative ideas for monthly sessions, including activities that will work outdoors or within the home
- Those Messy Churches who are finding it hard to find new team members
- The publication of *Messy Adventures*: twelve new 'Messy Church goes wild' sessions
- Those planning Messy Church services this month, that they will know inspiration and blessing as they take risks in Jesus' name

Thank you, Lord Jesus Christ,
that you sweated blood so that we might be spotless;
you stood condemned so that we could be set free;
you struggled with pain so that we would not be alone;
you suffered death so that we might be saved;
you stooped low so that, on the last day, we might stand tall.
Thank you, thank you, for the cross. Amen



For BRF volunteers and supporters

**O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer.**

Joseph Scriven (1819–86), quoted by Murdo Macdonald, *New Daylight*, May-Aug 2022

Thought for the week

The Almighty asks us to pray not for God's sake but for ours. God knows that prayer is the way to grow in faith and humility, and to enjoy a closer walk with Jesus.



Karen Laister, head of marketing, communications and strategic relationships

Pray with us for

- Jane Butcher, who coordinates BRF's volunteers, encouraging and resourcing them to be champions of God's work
- Those who volunteer with the ministry teams, asking that God will inspire them afresh with resurrection power and joy in their work
- Those who give their time freely as helpers at BRF events, as distributors of Bible reading notes and advocates within their churches
- Inspiration for those who write articles and blogs for our BRF websites
- Martyn Payne, who with Karen Laister compiles the prayer diary to help us all be part of the BRF fellowship of prayer

**Father God in heaven,
your people are strangers and exiles in this world.
Bring healing to all
who have been forced to flee their country
and to all displaced peoples,
who struggle to find a safe place to be.
Thank you for those who have volunteered
to shelter, serve and support these your needy ones,
and in doing so have met with you. Amen**



The BRF Prayer

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

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BRF, 15 The Chambers, Vineyard, Abingdon OX14 3FE
+44 (0)1865 319700 | enquiries@brf.org.uk
brf.org.uk



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