



Welcome



Like countless other families, anniversaries mean a lot to mine. Whether it's a significant birthday or a wedding anniversary, an occasion to remember a past event or a person who meant a lot to us, these milestones matter. Next year alone in our immediate family we're looking forward to celebrating three 60th birthdays, a 30th birthday and a 25th wedding anniversary!

As a nation, we love to come together to mark major anniversaries – just think of the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebration in 2022 and the events on 6 June this year to mark the 80th anniversary of the D-Day Normandy Landings.

Whether they're personal, organisational or national, anniversaries provide an opportunity to pause and reflect; to remember and reminisce. They can be not just times for celebration but also opportunities to express deep thanksgiving and appreciation, to reflect on where we are and where we've come from. And they can be times to mourn all we have lost.

At a recent 60th wedding anniversary celebration it was wonderful to hear so many people expressing how much the couple meant to them and sharing anecdotes from their long and happy marriage. It was a lovely celebration of them and why they matter. And it was deeply moving a few months ago to hear the memories of veterans interviewed

for those D-Day 80th anniversary broadcasts, and to reflect on the debt of gratitude we still owe them and countless others who fought for our freedom.

This is a special year for anniversaries at BRF Ministries too: having celebrated our centenary two years ago, 2024 marks the 20th anniversary of Messy Church and the 10th anniversary of Anna Chaplaincy joining BRF Ministries. I marvel at how God has blessed and enabled these ministries. In 2010 there was one Anna Chaplain; today there are over 370 across the UK. In 20 years Messy Church has grown into an international movement, with more than 2,000 Messy Churches across the UK and in around 30 other countries too. We celebrate with deep thankfulness all that God has done and is doing through these ministries, and all who are involved with them. Please join with us as we pray for renewed vision and inspiration as we look to the future.

Richard Fisher, chief executive

SEPTEMBER 2024

80 years of friendship

10 years as part of the family

20 years of Messy Church in Cowplain

Parenting for Faith podcast: S10

The Poetry of Pilgrimage

and more...

Pray with us...

In the words of this prayer from *Garden Song*, by Clare and Michah Hayns:

We pray to God our creator:

For the earth itself, that it may sustain future generations.

For the creatures of the earth, the animals and plants,

the seas and oceans, and forests.

For humanity, made in God's image,

gifted so richly and flawed so deeply.

Good Lord, we pray. Amen.

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

Tenth anniversary hike!

If all has gone to plan, just as this newsletter arrives on people's doormats, Anna Chaplaincy lead Debbie Ducille will be walking (15–20 September) from Alton to Abingdon to mark the 10th anniversary of Anna Chaplaincy joining the BRF Ministries family.

Go to brf.org.uk/walk to follow her progress and support her, or if you're reading this later in the month you'll be able to find out how it all went. We're so grateful to everyone who has helped make this possible by organising events and offering support, and to all those across the country who are walking 'alongside' Debbie, in person or virtually.

Go Debbie!

*The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.
There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard;
yet their voice goes out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world.*



Hello from Julie and the fundraising team



Thank you so much to everyone who made a donation to this year's Annual Appeal. As I write this, donations are still arriving online and in the post

which is absolutely fabulous. We need your support to sustain our work and your generosity is greatly appreciated!

October is Make a Will month. A lot of charities are promoting this campaign, whereby many solicitors offer to prepare a will free of charge when a gift to a charity is included in the will. We are extremely grateful to supporters of BRF Ministries who have remembered us in their wills. After you have made provision for family, friends and church, a gift of one percent or more in your will to BRF Ministries is a very special way to support our work.

I am delighted to enclose this year's Christmas cards order form and am pleased to have been able to hold the prices at £2.95 and £3.25 per pack. The price has remained the same for the last five years, with only postage charges increasing in line with Royal Mail prices. I hope the cards are a blessing to all those who buy them and receive them.

Orders can be placed using the order form enclosed with this mailing or by calling 01235 462305

There is a wider selection on our website which you can browse and order at brfonline.org.uk/cards

Greetings cards are a valuable source of income for us: in 2023 we sold over £25,000 worth.

Many of you have also kindly made a donation alongside card purchases and a remarkable £8,855 was received in addition to our 2023 sales. Thank you!

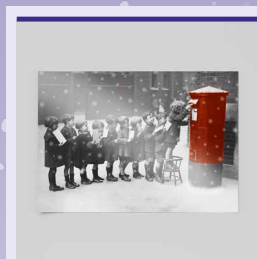
As you will know if you're a regular reader of this newsletter, we need to raise £24,000 a week, 52 weeks of the year, to continue delivering our remarkable ministries. Your support makes a huge difference and we appreciate every gift. As always, we value your prayers for the fundraising team and all the activities that we undertake, and I send my sincere thanks to all of you for your generous support.

Every blessing

Julie MacNaughton, MCIOF (Dip)
Head of fundraising

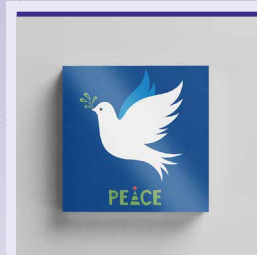
Christmas cards

NEW DESIGNS FOR 2024



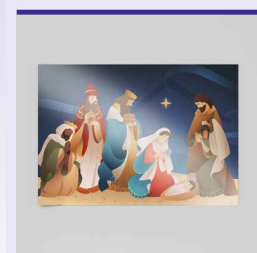
Post box queue

(pack of 10)
£3.25



Peace on earth

(pack of 10)
£2.95



Contemporary nativity

(pack of 10)
£3.25



Last year we sent a little thank-you gift to our regular supporters: a packet of sweet pea seeds. We were delighted to get this message from one recipient: 'The sweet peas continue to flower and look beautiful. So many different colours. They are proving to be a blessing to people who pass by, as well as me. I reckon that will be making God smile. Him being pleased with his creation n'all.'

We consider all our regular givers as Friends of BRF Ministries, and some of you have been friends for a very long time...

Neil Skidmore is in his 90s and has been supporting BRF Ministries for over 80 years, ever since he was at boarding school and began using our Bible reading notes, thanks to his father who was a church warden and his mother who was also a strong church supporter and reader of our notes. Based in Stafford, he loves BRF Ministries and in the past he and his wife Brenda have travelled to our events and met our senior staff and trustees.

'I've supported BRF Ministries nearly all my life,' says Neil, 'and we always will because you do such wonderful, much needed work.'

We give thanks for Neil and Brenda and their faithful support over so many years. If you're inspired by their story, please go to brf.org.uk/give/friends

Anna Chaplaincy: one of the family for ten years



Andrew Micklefield became vicar of the parish of the Resurrection in Alton ten years ago, just as Anna Chaplaincy became part of the BRF Ministries family. It had begun four years earlier when founder Debbie Thrower was appointed to the role of minister for older people in the town, a new post created jointly by the Anglican and Methodist Churches. From that one appointment, there are now over 370 Anna Chaplains and hundreds more Anna Friends across the UK. Andrew

told us how he's seen the work grow and how it continues to be rooted in the place it all began.

'People are very supportive and appreciative of Anna Chaplaincy,' says Andrew. 'That's in large part due to the fact that Debbie Thrower is still a licensed lay minister in the parish and she's kept up her involvement in parish life all the way through, even after the ministry joined BRF Ministries and she took on her national role.' There have been three Anna Chaplains the parish since Debbie: 'They've all been very different and brought different skills and gifts.'

So what difference did it make when Anna Chaplaincy joined BRF Ministries? 'For us locally, I don't think anything really changed. I think it's about joining dots. So, we have this church thing, Anna Chaplaincy, which goes into care homes, nursing homes and so on. And then some of those people who are in touch with Anna Chaplaincy go to a lunch club, so Anna Chaplaincy is represented there. And then they go to the Dementia Friendly organisation, or the library club. And you see how at every turn, awareness of Anna Chaplaincy is just growing within the community.'

But at the same time, the people of Alton keep a close eye on national developments. As Andrew explains: 'What has kept us really, really in this is seeing how an idea that starts in a little market town in north Hampshire, can go big, can grow through the involvement with a national organisation. We are very proud of the fact that Alton is the home of Anna Chaplaincy and that it's been given a life outside of Alton through that engagement with BRF Ministries. When Debbie is asked to talk about it, and she says we now have over 370 Anna Chaplains across the country, you can see, especially those people who were around at the beginning, are just so delighted to think, yes, we did that.'

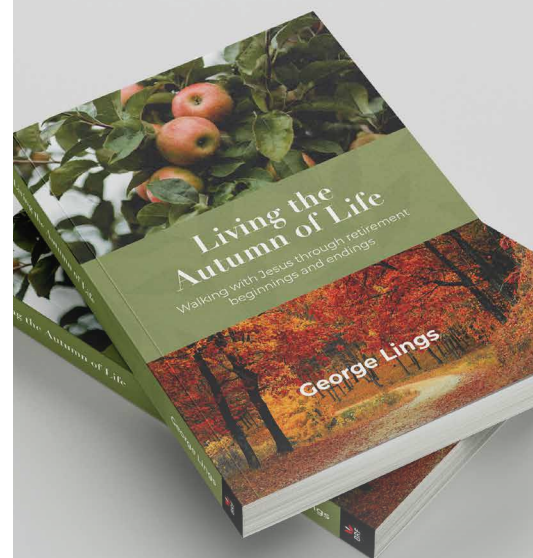


Kate Powell, Alton's fourth Anna Chaplain

The Alton Anna Chaplain baton is now in the capable and creative hands of Kate Powell, whose remit has been to develop a team of Anna Friends and to take the ministry out into the wider community. She says of her work:

'My aim is to try to reach lonely and isolated older people who are not at the community groups I attend, and this collaboration is working well. I have regular referrals from social prescribers, occupational therapists and doctors who see an unmet spiritual need in their patients.'

'I am always aware that there are many older people in Alton who we don't know about, but I pray that God will find a way to put those who really need us in our path. The last two and a quarter years have been an exciting journey. It's a joy to work with a team of volunteers who have a strong calling to come alongside older people, and it is a testament to our teamwork that we have garnered the trust of people in the community, allowing us to reach older people who might not otherwise have a link with church.'



Living the Autumn of Life

George Lings has been a banker, student, vicar, writer, mentor and researcher. From 1997 to 2017 he led Church Army's Research Unit specialising in fresh expressions of church. He retired in 2017 and in his latest book, *Living the Autumn of Life*, publishing in October 2024, he explores how we can best approach the season between retiring and becoming dependent. 'It seemed to me there's quite a lot written about the period immediately around retirement and yet more written about extreme old age and end-of-life issues, but there's not much about the 10, 20, even 30 years between the two. I wanted to make sense of living this period for myself.'

Living the Autumn of Life brings together George's own thoughts and experiences and a good deal of reading round the subject. But he also needed to talk directly to people about their experience of 'the autumn of life', so he chose 16 friends whom he felt he could ask 'hopefully penetrating questions'.

One piece of George's advice for living in the autumn of life is to accept that 'the whole of life is a process of letting go'. At every turn, from birth to death, 'we have to keep being willing to let go of the previous stage'.

Find out more at brfonline.org.uk/living-the-autumn-of-life

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



Messy Church: Where it all started



It's 20 years since Messy Church began at St Wilfrid's Church in Cowplain near Portsmouth. Lesley Baker has been involved from the very start, along with Lucy Moore and others in the congregation who were becoming more and more passionate about finding a way to 'do church' in a different way. As Lesley explains, the original concept of 'messy' had much more to do with theology than with glitter and glue:

'People think it's called Messy Church because we get messy doing things, but the original idea of Messy Church came from the sense that boundaries between the regular congregation and the different people and groups that used the church building during the week weren't hard and fast: they're messy and they're movable. That's the basic theology.'

They had a lot of skilled people in the congregation and a lot of people who were into various crafts, so they wanted to include these. They also wanted to appeal to all ages, and decided to offer a meal right from the start: 'We thought about what might stop people coming along and we realised that if they went home to cook tea it would be hard to get them to come out again.'

They began meeting once a month and a good number of people came from the very first session. Although they talked about meeting more often, they simply didn't have the capacity. As Lesley remembers: 'I used to crawl up the stairs when I got home after a session and just lie down on the landing I was so wiped out! Basically, that's why we only did it once a month.'

Gradually, other churches in the area heard about what they were doing. To begin with, it was just the very local churches but then the interest spread, soon reaching out beyond Hampshire, and that's when they decided to do their first training day. 'That was a real milestone,' says Lesley. 'We ran the training like a Messy Church session, where we gave them a meal and we did some crafts and then had a talk and a celebration. After the talk there was a Q&A and there were so many questions:

people were so enthused and excited, they just wanted to know as much as possible!'

The next major milestone was when Messy Church became part of BRF Ministries. 'Lucy had gone to work there and after a while she asked us what we thought of the idea of us coming under the BRF Ministries umbrella. We all said it was a brilliant idea because by then we realised that God had given us something that was going to be useful for other people as well, even though at that point we still had no idea how it would work out.'

And the rest, as they say, is history. Messy Church went on to flourish and grow into an international ministry recognised in a number of independent reports and evaluations as having a major impact on reaching out and growing disciples of all ages beyond traditional church.

Back where it all began, Messy Church is thriving as leaders from both St Wilfrid's and the nearby Hart Plain Church work in partnership to deliver Messy Church at its home, St Wilfrid's, Cowplain. So what, looking back, is the biggest change Lesley has seen in the 20 years she's been involved?

'The biggest thing of all is that we are now an Eco Church. St Wilfrid's is a silver Eco Church and Hart Plain is a bronze Eco Church. So we're a Messy Eco Church. We used to go around looking for nice things to buy for Messy Church but now we hardly buy anything. Now we use what we've got around us and we try to go outside as much as we can and use what we find. We're trying to see God in nature, in everything around us, which fits the Messy Church ethos so well.'

Messy Church Goes Wild

In July we featured a Messy Church Goes Wild project that's thriving in the most urban of areas, close to London's O2 Arena. Since then, we've been hearing 'wild' and exciting stories from all over the country, including rural Wales and the more home counties setting of St Mary's Ewell, in Surrey. Linda Staff has been involved in children's and young people's work almost all her life and has been working almost single-handedly to establish Messy Church Goes Wild in her church.

'I though we needed to think about what children and young people seem to be interested in these days and there's a real buzz around how they are very concerned about the environment, very concerned about conservation and very concerned about the climate.'

So Linda did a Messy Church Goes Wild Masterclass in June 2023 and held the first session in October. They meet on Saturday afternoons in the churchyard, in a park or in the woods.

'We've done Messy Church Goes Wild once a month since October and there's certainly two or three families who are very committed and then others who come and stay more on the fringes. It's still early days but we're encouraged by what has happened so far.'

'We have the War Memorial in our graveyard so that was a natural focal point for our November session, but we also planted bulbs around the front entrance to the church and talked about the resurrection: how a bulb seems to be dead during the winter and then bursts into new life in spring. The little ones were so engaged in digging holes to plant the bulbs. We had some lovely snowdrops and also daffodils so in both the February and March sessions everyone could see their handiwork and reflect on things growing and flourishing.'

Find Messy Church events here:
messychurch.brf.org.uk/latest/events

Parenting for Faith podcast

Season 10

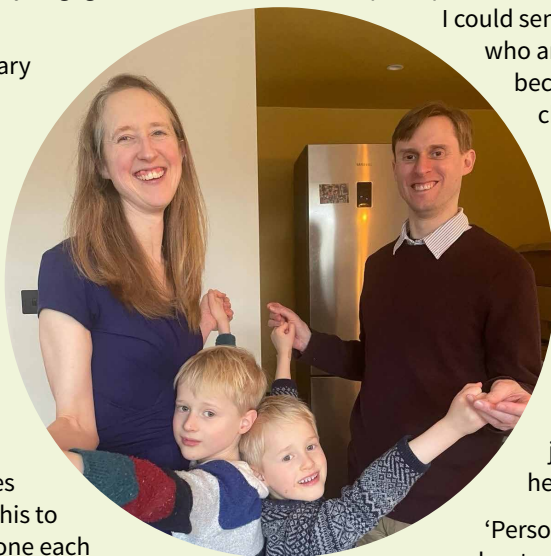
September 2024 sees a significant milestone in the life of the Parenting for Faith podcast: the start of the 10th season of the hugely popular podcast. Regularly attracting over 5,000 listeners a month, the podcast has established itself as a 'go-to' resource for parents seeking information, insights and trusted commentators. Edwina Swann is a busy mum of two young boys, very involved with her husband Allen in a thriving city centre church in Cambridge, and currently preparing to go back to work as a teacher in a new SEN role. She's also a huge fan of the podcast.

'The Parenting for Faith course came up at church some time ago, so I knew about the organisation. Then a couple of friends recommended the podcasts and because I knew the course was good I thought it would be really interesting to listen to the podcast as I tried to walk the challenges and joys of being a parent. I need all the help I can get and I found it so helpful that I've just kept listening.'

Given how many parenting resources there are, what is it about the podcast that has particularly engaged Edwina?

'It's an extraordinary treasure trove of wisdom and encouragement from a Christian perspective. It's accessible and down to earth, and realistic and sensitive and thoughtful. I know there are many wonderful Christian resources out there but for this to drop on to my phone each week, presented by people who really come alongside feels amazing. I never feel preached at: the speakers have a very grace-filled approach and the breadth and range of topics they cover – including really difficult ones – would be hard to beat.'

'I keep coming back to this podcast because of its range and because the approach is so supportive and encouraging. There's a real understanding of people's different contexts and different challenges, and I feel very much that these people are coming alongside to support us as we try to be Christian parents.'



Edwina has occasionally sent a particular episode of the podcast to friends who aren't Christians because she feels some of the content is 'extraordinarily wise for anyone'. One of her standout episodes was 'The one with the first phone' by Andy Robertson (season 7, episode 3).

'It was a really helpful Christian perspective on how to handle this difficult tech issue which I feel quite daunted by. And although it was in the context of a Christian approach, the principles were so helpful I felt

I could send it off to friends who aren't Christian, because they have children of the same age and are struggling with some of these questions too.'

Edwina finds that the podcast is significant for her own faith journey, as well as her children's:

'Personally, I find the podcast very encouraging faith wise, so not only in terms of my parenting, but in terms of reminding me that what I do as a mum can be grounded in Jesus, and that there are lots of ideas out there to help us root every aspect of our walk as a parent in God.'

And ultimately, the podcast has an even wider dimension as a resource for mission: 'I don't think the podcast is just there to encourage us as Christians. It does help to point people to God and I feel it's got a very, very broad outreach.'

■ parentingforfaith.brf.org.uk/podcast



Embracing Humanity

If you receive this newsletter in the post, it'll be accompanied by a leaflet detailing all our Advent and Christmas titles, including our 2024 Advent book *Embracing Humanity* by Isabelle Hamley. We're so excited about this book and hope you will be too. As Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, says in his Foreword:

'Isabelle has written a wonderful book of preparation for Christmas, a book to build excitement, open the eyes and relish the paradox of a God who loves us so much that he whispers his words of comfort and joy, heard only by those who listen.'

To order *Embracing Humanity* go to brfonline.org.uk/embracing-humanity



Halloween postcard

If you have families in your church, Halloween can be a difficult season for them to navigate. Why not download, print and hand out this free postcard, which has some encouraging and reassuring tips, regardless of where they land on the festival?

Download from parentingforfaith.brf.org.uk/halloween



The Poetry of Pilgrimage



Michael Mitton introduces his inspiring new book *The Poetry of Pilgrimage* published this month.

For many years now I have accompanied my good friend, Russ Parker, in leading pilgrimages in Ireland, Britain and Assisi. It has been a wonderful and inspiring privilege to travel with people from the UK, the USA and South Africa, all of whom carried a desire to visit places in our Christian history with the intention of meeting with God. Each pilgrimage has been special, and each time I marvel at the delightful way in which our pilgrims have encountered Christ in new and exciting ways at these ancient sites of faith. As Russ puts it, we find God has rubbed something of himself off in these places, and our pilgrims feel it.

I never cease to be inspired as I gather with our pilgrims at these various sites, and we tell again the stories of faith in these sometimes quite remote locations. Early on, I discovered that I was so moved in these places that something was erupting out of me that could only be expressed in the form of a poem. Thus it was that, over time, a collection of poems emerged which I have finally decided to put into print (prompted by an American pilgrim who told me I had to do it!). So I have gathered 23 poems, all composed while visiting various sites in Ireland and Britain. Alongside these poems, I have provided some information about the sites and the saints associated with them. I have shared a few stories and some observations. I have also provided some questions for reflection that have come to my mind as I have considered the themes associated with the various sites, and I have also included a Bible passage linked with the theme.

I very much hope that readers will feel themselves drawn into a pilgrimage experience as they read this book. It is my simple way of sharing something of the treasure that I have found on my pilgrimage experience.

To order go to: brfonline.org.uk/the-poetry-of-pilgrimage

Garden Song

Clare Hayns, on how her artist son Micah persuaded her to write another book after the great success of their earlier work *Unveiled*.

When my son Micah mooted the idea of collaborating on another book project, I was a little hesitant. His idea was that he would create an image for each of 30 psalms, and I would write a reflection on each one, bringing out elements of it that would inspire people to delve more deeply themselves. My main concern was that surely everything that there is to say about the psalms has already been

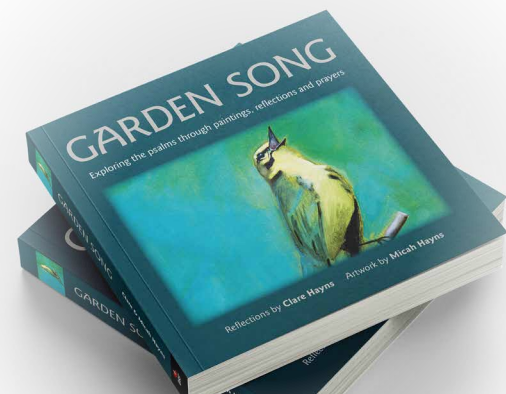
written, spoken and sung by others far more erudite and learned than I. Would I have anything original or different to say? However, he was inspiring in his enthusiasm and has always been persuasive, and so I agreed.

As I read, prayed, researched and pondered this incredible body of divinely inspired literature, I realised that there will never be a moment when everything has been said about the psalms. Every person who encounters them will come away with a different experience of them, and we can read them over and over and each time something unique will capture, challenge, shock or inspire us. This is why the psalms have been used in daily worship for thousands of years, why we are so often drawn to them in times of need and why so many of our hymns and worship songs are inspired by them.

Garden Song contains 30 original images, all created by Micah, and each one emerged from a particular verse from each psalm. In my reflections I aimed to put each psalm into context, bringing out aspects relevant to us today. As so many psalms have inspired so many in worship, we have also put together some suggested music to listen to alongside each reflection: there is even a 'Garden Song' Spotify playlist you can listen to.

Our hope is that the images, reflections, prayers and music in *Garden Song* will serve as valuable companions as you continue your journey with and towards God.

To order go to: brfonline.org.uk/garden-song



As a charity, we rely on fundraising and gifts in wills to deliver Anna chaplaincy, Living Faith, Messy church and Parenting for Faith. Your gift helps us impact thousands of lives each year. Please support our work.

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