

idea

How to be
a mentor

p27

uniting to change society | july/august 2009



**Churches model life discipleship
in everyday places**



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www.uccf.org.uk/freshers

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Editor's note

Living out your faith in Western society can be a challenge, especially when work requirements clash with time we'd rather spend with friends or family, or volunteering for a good cause. Even more stressful are those instances where our jobs strain our ethical and moral standards.

But Jesus' example is bracingly clear and simple: we make the most difference in the world when we live out our message. As He went about His ministry, He was literally salt and light in a society that was hurting. He offered hope at everyday places like water wells and marriage feasts, from smelly fishing boats to bustling temples. Everywhere He went, He was the message.

This is a concept that ripples right through this issue: churches stepping into the gap to speak up for migrants (p4), Christians adopting a simpler life to benefit people poorer than themselves (p8), farmers in Zimbabwe helping their nation find its footing (p18), a young woman using her gift of dance (p18), bright leaders-in-training learning their way around the halls of power (p20).

This is the core of the Square Mile's life discipleship strand, and it's also profiled in the third part of our M-I-L-E series (p22), where writer Seren Boyd profiles people who simply live out Jesus' message in places that are both unusual and mundane.

I may never have tried jumping from building to building like the Parkour for Jesus guys. And for a California native I'm ashamed to admit that I've never tried surfing anything like our cover boy Tom Good of Christian Surfers UK. But I try to live out my own walk with God wherever I find myself. And as a Londoner, I'm not too bad at surfing the Northern Line, if I do say so myself.

evangelical alliance
uniting to change society

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idea is published in accordance with the Alliance's Basis of Faith, although it is impossible in every article to articulate each detail and nuance of belief held by Alliance members. Articles in idea may therefore express views on which there is a divergence of opinion or understanding among evangelicals. Story ideas from members are welcome, and will be considered by the editorial board. Unsolicited material will not be returned unless a stamped, self-addressed envelope has been provided. Articles may be reproduced only with permission from the editor.

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Challenging immigration myths

The Alliance will host a second day of interactive training in July for churches that are working with asylum seekers. As part of the *Don't Be a Stranger* initiative, the London training day will examine false assumptions about refugees and discuss ways churches can support asylum seekers as they cope with complex legal issues.

The first training event in Cardiff in March was attended by 18 representatives from churches in Swansea, Cardiff, Newport and Bristol. "For most churches involved in asylum work, it hasn't been a case where they thought beforehand, 'Should we consider getting involved in this area?'" said Jim Stewart, who coordinates the training from the Alliance office in Wales. "Experience has been that refugees have just started to turn up at their services; they've been thrust into it. So a lot of the pastors in particular are on a steep learning curve, often with little or no experience of representing asylum seekers in court and yet aware that their testimony could have an important effect on the outcome of cases."

The event will be led by Sian Summers, who was trained though Asylum Justice, a charity comprised



Jim Stewart

wholly of volunteers that has processed more than 2,500 cases in Cardiff alone and also works in Newport and Swansea. Summers also headed up the March event, at which refugees from Sudan and Pakistan mixed with representatives from Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostal and Arabic churches.

"I once met an Ethiopian in Tredegarville, who said that in his country, and other African nations, if you ever have any kind of problem you go to

a church, because no one trusts anyone in suits or uniforms. But when they get to this country, they rarely find any useful help at churches because the churches don't know what to do or who to go to," said attendee Neil Phillips. "It is useful to discover just how many other churches are involved in the plight of these people. It helps to find one is not an isolated case, and it's good to know there is a recognised way of seeking help."

nostrangers.org.uk



At the first *Bible by the Beach* event, held over the first long weekend in May in Eastbourne, Nigerian Archbishop Rt Rev Ben Kwashi told his audience that they should not be afraid of suffering if it comes. Having survived the burning down of his house and his church, death threats,

Archbishop welcomes suffering

an attack on his wife and one occasion where men came to his house to kill him, Kwashi said that these experiences had strengthened his faith.

"Persecution has enabled me to be sharpened in my focus to get people into heaven. Every minute is extra time; I should have been dead long ago, so anything I do I have to do urgently," he said, noting that persecution is often necessary for Church growth.

After thanking the West for missionaries who went to Africa in the past, Kwashi commented on the state of the Church in the UK, apologising in advance for his harsh words. "Western culture has grown to such an extent that it is above the Gospel – and it is hard to get your people moving," he said. "Their joy

ought to be seen and known, but it is suppressed. Fervour and zeal for the Gospel seem to be dying out."

Bible by the Beach drew more than 1,100 people to the Congress Theatre for worship, Scripture readings, seminars, a concert and meetings for children and young people. Sessions challenged attendees to break out of "safe" Christianity and avoid the subtle idolatry that exists both inside and outside the Church.

The event's chairman, Bishop of Lewes Rt Rev Wallace Benn, led a session on the supremacy of Jesus. "It was a fabulous first event and the feedback has been hugely positive," he said. "We can build on the enthusiasm for the event now in future years." Plans are already underway for 2010. biblebythebeach.org



EQUALITY BILL. The Government finally published its long-awaited Equality Bill at the end of April. It contains a wide range of measures, many of which are controversial. The Alliance has been closely involved with the lengthy gestation of this bill, working with Government and other bodies over several years and making its case for the form the bill should take.

The Equality Bill will apply mainly to England, Wales and Scotland and revisits every aspect of historical equality legislation to consolidate it into one place. It will also introduce new duties to promote equality for public bodies and all those who receive public funding to deliver services.

Existing equality legislation will be extended from gender, race and disability to include sexual orientation, religion and belief, and transsexuality. Virtually no aspect of society is left untouched by the proposals to extend the outlawing of discrimination and include areas such as employment, the provision of goods, facilities and services, and clubs and societies. All public bodies and those who benefit from public contracts will also have a duty to promote and practise socio-economic equality.

If the bill succeeds in consolidating existing law without creating additional red tape, this is a positive move. Likewise, we welcome the extension of equality to include religion and belief if this results in a more constructive framework for engagement between faith communities and public authorities.

Nevertheless, it is important for Christians and others to remain active as the bill progresses, since there will inevitably be attempts by strongly motivated interest groups to disrupt a fair balance between the various strands of equality rights. In particular, we are concerned that the bill narrows the employment exceptions that currently allow churches and organisations to specifically hire Christians. In its current form, the bill's "general occupational requirement" would effectively be limited to ministers.

CORONERS AND JUSTICE BILL. Currently under consideration by the House of Lords, the Coroners and Justice Bill, which aims to deliver more transparent and responsive services, has received its second reading and is currently being subject to detailed scrutiny in committee before the final votes. In the Commons, supporters of free speech included a Labour backbencher, Tom Harris, who had never voted against the Government before despite a three-line whip. A number of gay MPs still voted in favour of free speech, as did David Cameron.

The result represents a small shift in favour of a free speech clause. When the House of Commons debated the same issue in January 2008 in the Criminal Justice Bill, a similar clause was rejected by 338 votes to 169. The Commons amendment proposed in March to keep the free speech protection was tabled by Labour MP David Taylor and had cross-party support.

Insisting that the Government had failed to justify removing the protection, Taylor said, "It simply makes it clear that discussion or criticism of sexual conduct is not caught by the homophobia law. We need free speech about sexual conduct to be put beyond doubt. Joe and Helen Roberts, the Bishop of Chester, Iqbal Sacranie, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Glasgow, and Lynette Burrows – I could go on – are all names synonymous with vexatious complaints to the police and with heavy-handed police intervention against people whose actions were not inciting hatred against anyone." eauk.org/pq



Child poverty on the rise

Alliance member charity Care reports that government statistics are showing that child poverty in couple families is on the increase. A recent analysis from the Institute for Fiscal Studies demonstrates the changes in child poverty over the last three years for which detailed figures are available (2004/05 to 2007/08). It says there has been a large rise in the risk of child poverty for children in couple families while the risk for children in lone-parent families has remained virtually unchanged. The percentage of children in poverty who live in couple families has risen from 57.4 per cent in 2004/05 to 61.8 per cent in 2007/08, and the percentage in poverty who actually live in couple families with someone in work rose from 48.5% to 51.4%.

Care Fiscal Policy Consultant Don Draper said, "This should be no surprise. Care has been pointing out for many years that most children in poverty live in two-parent families and that the tax credit system is failing these children. Government measures of poverty take account of the needs of all family members but, bizarrely, tax credits – the solution – only have regard for one parent."

Dan Boucher, Director of Parliamentary Affairs, added, "While we appreciate that it will be difficult for the Treasury to find extra money for families, it is surely unacceptable that this problem can be ignored until the public finances are on a sound footing. Failure to act will cost more money in the long run." care.org.uk



A gift for life

Leprosy Mission

The Leprosy Mission has launched a new catalogue to help supporters choose how their money is spent to help people coping with leprosy around the world. The *Gifts for Life* catalogue includes a range of items to support the Leprosy Mission's hospitals, from patients' food and medicine to doctors' and nurses' salaries.

One recipient of this assistance is 8-year-old Ritu (pictured above) in India, who experienced the early warning sign of numb patches on the skin. "We saw a spot on her cheek and we took her to hospital," said her father Rohit. "Some laboratory tests were done there: a blood test, a skin test and they diagnosed leprosy."

Thankfully multi-drug therapy can cure leprosy in the early stages, avoiding the nerve damage that causes disability and deformity. Because Ritu's family recognised the signs and took her to the Leprosy Mission's hospital in Champa, she was able to get the treatment she needed and is now cured.

Ritu's village is an ex-leprosy colony; both sets of her grandparents have been affected by the disease and were exiled there. Facilities and standards of living there have been fairly low for the family in the past, but they now have a

lovely home, built with help from the Leprosy Mission. *Gifts for Life* lets supporters pay the cost of someone's entire house or pay for part of it, like the roof or the installation of water and electrics.

At the hospital Ritu was also recommended for education support (another Gift for Life), which pays for school resources and fees where required. Rohit is very enthusiastic about his daughter's education: "She's intelligent and good in her studies."

Suchita (pictured below at the Leprosy Mission's hospital in Naini) says, "I have been blessed so much working with people affected by leprosy. What a beautiful experience to serve people who have been rejected by the community and their own families. I feel proud and satisfied when I am doing a daily dressing for an infected ulcer or sharing in a patient's social and emotional pain.

"Although giving good holistic care every day is a big challenge, at the same time I am full of joy that we are following in the footsteps of our master, the Lord Jesus Christ. He cared for people affected by leprosy during His ministry – they were special for Jesus and He paid special attention to them."

tlmgiftsforlife.com

A 950-mile challenge

At the end of May, five brave men cycled the length of the UK to raise funds for Youth for Christ's work among young people. YFC's National Director Gavin Calver joined the team, which set a goal of £25,000 in sponsorship and stopped to pray together in locations along the route for the young people of Britain.

The gruelling two-week ride from Land's End to John O'Groats required serious training. Before departing, Calver said, "The training has been really hard, and it is a huge challenge, but one that we are excited about tackling and that we hope will make a difference to the ministry of Youth for Christ. We want to raise as much as possible so that more young people can be given the opportunity to encounter the love of Jesus."

www.yfc.co.uk

Good news online

The fifth annual Internet Evangelism Day in April was received with a wide range of coverage, not just online but also in print and by radio, as it examined the power of the Gospel on the web. The goal is to help the Church make better use of digital evangelism to reach society.

Outside the UK, Christians in Singapore arranged a whole week of meetings and seminars in the run-up to the day itself, and a Portuguese-language version of the website was launched in Brazil in association with Ministério Avivamento Já.

The Internet Evangelism Day website is a year-round resource for online evangelism, including access to speakers, networking, web-based seminars, an issues-oriented blog and downloadable video clips, PowerPoint presentations, newsletter articles, drama scripts and music.

internetevangelismday.com



my name is

Munni


I am nine years old and I live in Bangladesh. I want to be a nurse when I grow up.

I love going to school and learning poems and stories. If it wasn't for the support of my Compassion sponsor my parents would never be able to afford to send me to school.

For less than 70p a day you can ensure a child like Munni receives education, healthcare, food, clothing and the opportunity to hear about the transforming love of Christ.

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Munni Akter,
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Choosing to spend less

During a recession, many of us feel the strong instinct to cling onto every penny we have, but one church has been leading the way in a counter-cultural move that has inspired the whole Evangelical Alliance. A group of Christians from Southampton chose to spend less for a completely different reason: to identify with the poor.

Sacrificing daily comforts by deciding to live as if receiving benefits for a whole month, the individuals and families discovered a new dimension to what it means to live simply, ethically and generously. This has inspired the Alliance to challenge other churches to do the same thing.

The leadership team of Southampton Vineyard and more than 40 church members committed themselves to the Fab Feb challenge, earlier this year, as part of a Jubilee 2009 series with a focus on justice, radical giving, ethical audits and distinguishing need from greed. Participants signed up to donate leftover money, once their budget limit had been reached, to a selection of agreed local and international charities.

Senior Pastor Matt Hyam said, "We chose to live on need rather than on want and we made sacrifices in the way we lived our lives in order to identify with those who have to choose what to sacrifice rather than whether to sacrifice. At a time when the country is struggling financially, now is the time that the Church must step up not step down."

"Living this way made us realise how much we spend money just because we can. Everyone who took part has been left seriously reviewing how we spend our money, and some have even taken the radical step of continuing with it."

So as not to betray the whole ethos of Jubilee 2009, participants agreed that they would endeavour not to compromise ethical principles just because it was cheaper. Therefore they continued to purchase fair-trade food and drink and shop at more ethically minded businesses, incurring an even greater financial sacrifice.

Impressively, more than £23,000 was raised over and above regular giving to the church. This was distributed between such international causes as children's homes in India and Zimbabwe, as well as local

charities in Southampton, including Christians Against Poverty and Basics Bank.

Take the challenge

What would this kind of giving look like if churches and individuals across the UK took up a similar challenge? It would most likely challenge our lifestyles and cause us to re-align our priorities.

These are all issues addressed by the Breathe network, which encourages people

Now is the time that the Church must step up not step down

to take space to think about how to handle money, time and possessions in a Christian way. Its aims are to help us appreciate life more fully, refuse the consumer dream, connect with others and choose a more generous lifestyle.

At the Breathe Conference in April, more than 150 people committed to look towards breaking the consumer mould together and accepted the promise of life prayer. A significant benefit from this kind of collective commitment will be stories of the impact living more simply makes on individual lives.

Inspired by and based on the example of Southampton Vineyard's Fab Feb

campaign, the Alliance is encouraging churches and individuals to take part in *Simplify*, the challenge of living as if on benefits for the month of October. Alliance General Director Steve Clifford will be leading the way and blogging about his experiences. And the Alliance will collect inspiring stories from participating churches and communities across the country.

Simplify is a practical outworking of Square Mile (see p22); the mercy strand highlights our calling to give generously and address the needs of others, while life discipleship encourages us to live simply, become financially disciplined and go about daily life in God's way.

Resources will be made available to address occurring questions and outline expenses that are included and excluded in the scheme. There will be assistance in calculations, as well as tips concerning budgeting to help people address what this will mean in practical terms for them.

Lucy Cooper

► **Watch for more on *Simplify* in the next *idea*.**

► **For help with living simply, visit: lifebeyonddebt.org**

► **To find out more about other campaigns in this article, visit: southamptonvineyard.org.uk and ibreathe.org.uk**



DesignPics



The face of inequality

Rev Roger Gayler, the vicar of St Mark's Church at Mark's Gate in Barking and Dagenham, went about his normal weekly schedule with half his face shaved as part of Christian Aid fundraising week in May. "Half a beard is a reminder of how the other half lives," said the 65-year-old, who preached in his church, met the Scouts, studied with the Bishop, spoke to schoolchildren and collected envelopes door-to-door like this. "It's a bit of a shock when I look in the mirror," he said, "but I don't mind as much if people laugh at me at this age."

Barber Jason-Lees Riches wielded the razor for the stunt, saying he had never before been asked to shave just half a face. Gayler grew his beard when he was at college and says he hasn't been clean-shaven for 42 years.

Christian Aid works in some of the world's poorest communities in 49 countries where the need is greatest, helping people build the life they deserve. caweb.org

New members

The Alliance welcomes the following members...

ORGANISATIONS

Abaana, Bangor, County Down
Assemblies of God Property Trust, Nottingham
Be Who You Can Be in Christ, Wolverhampton
Caleb Ministries, Pontypridd, Rhondda Cynon Taff
Derby City Mission, Derby

Kings Arms Around the Valleys, Abertillery, Blaenau Gwent
Open Arms International, Stockport, Cheshire
Scripture Union Northern Ireland, Belfast
This Way Up Youth Project, Solihull
Turning the Tide, Hove, East Sussex

CHURCHES

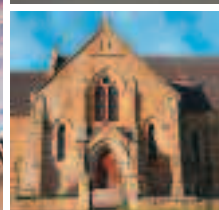
Arran Baptist Church, Brodick, Isle Of Arran
Artos-Zaho Global Vigil Christian Ministries, Croydon
Barnwell Baptist Church, Cambridge
Bearsted Community Church, Maidstone, Kent
Centro Cristiano de Alabanza y Adoracion, Manchester
Charis Christian Centre, Leyton, London
City of Peace Community Church, Isle of Dogs, London
Connections Church, Machen, Caerphilly
Disciples of Christ Ministries Inc, Clapham, London
Dominion House International, Thornton Heath, Surrey

Faith, Hope and Love Christian Centre, Wolverhampton, West Midlands
Gateway Church Ashford, Ashford, Kent
Harvest Community Church, Leicester
Hope Church - Greatham, Liss, Hampshire
House of Judah (Praise) Ministries, Croydon, London
International Ministries for the Living Word, Tottenham
St Giles Christian Mission, Lower Holloway, London
The Lighthouse, Witney, Oxfordshire
The Potters House Croydon, Thornton Heath, Surrey
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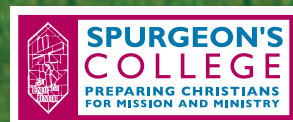
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Leaders call for a fresh approach

A recent survey of churchgoers indicates that our understanding of the Bible and our confidence in its trustworthiness is poor. And when we think of both the lack of availability of the Bible in many parts of the world and the cost by which the Bible came to be in our language, this is surely a tragic situation.

The survey, which was commissioned by the Alliance and Bible Society, revealed that only 14 per cent of non-leaders were "very confident" (and 51 per cent "fairly confident") about their Bible knowledge. This is perhaps no surprise when only a third of churchgoers read the Bible daily and only two-thirds reported that the Bible was regularly taught at their churches. Crucially, only 39 per cent of people in the pews stated that the Bible had affected a decision they made in the previous week.

Against this, the overwhelming majority recognised the value of the Bible and wanted it to be more of an influence in their lives and wider society.

To help address this situation, the Alliance is working in partnership with 40 agencies, including Bible Society, Scottish Bible Society, London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, Scripture Union and Wycliffe Bible Translators, to entice, excite and intrigue people into turning back to the book.

At a consultation with Bible agencies and colleges on 28 April, Rev Joe Kapoloyo of Edmonton Baptist Church delivered a keynote address challenging the Church to

remove its cultural blinkers and read the Bible with a global perspective.

The event was also the launch of Biblefresh, an initiative that will culminate in a year-long campaign in 2011, focusing on four tracks that churches can sign up to:

1. Bible reading. How can Christians be encouraged to read the Bible more regularly? This track will provide suggestions and resources for reading through the whole Bible, reading together as a church, in groups, one-to-one and individually, as well as sifting

through the wide range of Bible notes and translations.

2. Bible training. How can Bible teachers deepen and enrich their knowledge and understanding? In 2011, festivals around the UK will focus on training people in handling, applying and teaching the Bible through a variety of courses designed for those who want to improve their understanding of the Bible but can't do a full-time course.

3. Bible translation. How can we translate the Bible into our biblically illiterate culture? This track will help the Church gain confidence in conveying the message of the Bible, especially in the face of secularist arguments. Beyond the UK, Biblefresh will leave a legacy by encouraging a proportion of churches' charitable giving in 2011 to fund a Bible translation project.

4. Bible experiences. The Bible isn't just words on a page – it's a living text. This track will encourage churches to be involved in creative experiences to help people engage with the Bible in a variety of ways, including music, art and drama. A short-film contest will not only provide people with an opportunity to immerse themselves in a particular book in the Bible, but also offer a YouTube-style Bible resource.

Backing Biblefresh are a number of high-profile Bible champions, including Rev Dr Chris Wright, Canon Dr Christina Baxter, Rev David Jackman, Rev Dr David Wilkinson, Rev Dr Martyn Atkins, Rev Nims Obunge, Rt. Rev NT Wright, Dr Robert Beckford and Terry Virgo.

Field Director of Friends International Dr Olu Ojedokun said, "Biblefresh is an important initiative because the Bible is the key tool for reaching contemporary society".

Rev Greg Haslam, minister at Westminster Chapel, said, "Decades of sceptical scholarship and popular books like *The DaVinci Code* have marinated both the public and the church in the deep suspicion that the Bible is no more inspired than *Aesop's Fables*, full of errors and dangerous beliefs – so why bother with it? Biblefresh will let the Bible loose again in the minds of both rookie novices and jaded old hands. Masses of people will be enchanted to rediscover the big picture of the Bible's world-shaking worldview."

Alexandra Lilley



“The Church must remove its cultural blinkers and read the Bible with a global perspective”

► A Biblefresh website launches this autumn, followed by events around the UK and a resource manual in 2010.



The Bible and money

A new course has been launched by Jubilee Centre to help Christians develop a biblical understanding of money and how to use it. *The Bible and Money: Managing One's Money in the End Times* is a practical course of eight lessons asking such questions as: how can we fight a desire to acquire material things? How does an attitude of stewardship change how money is to be used from that of the world? And how do we accumulate treasure in heaven?

The social reform charity came up with the course in response to the current economic meltdown as well as questions of integrity in the financial industry and, more recently, the government. The course was designed by international economist Dr Paul Mills, who found that the Bible has a lot to say about use of money today. He suggested that Christians should take a lead in using money to build relationships within extended families and their communities, for instance by investing in local businesses or providing housing equity for family members or others in their congregations.

Further issues explored in the course include whether it is acceptable to default on debt payments in order to tithe and whether a local church should borrow to fund missions or to buy property. The course is free to download at: jubilee-centre.org



media matters

by Charis Gibson, Senior Press Officer

Christian jargon and customs can often be confusing to journalists, questions asked of the press office in recent months show. "How many creationists are there in the UK?" "Can we interview an evangelist leader?" "What do Christians do when they take a vow of chastity?"

Religious correspondents often have the necessary expertise, but they are few and far between, particularly as financial constraints on the media industry make paying for specialists less attractive. So general reporters are flung headlong into the murky depths of religious stories, sometimes expected to explain a theological controversy within the hour when they last saw the inside of a church at their own christening.

Lapido Media, a charity that aims to improve religious literacy in public affairs, recently published a book arguing that the media's lack of religious understanding can have much more serious ramifications than confusing the words "evangelical" and "evangelist".

Blind Spot: When Journalists Don't Get Religion says religion is a major, growing factor in human affairs around the world, and thus in major news stories. However, it argues that the media often miss or misunderstand major news stories because the secular industry does not take religion seriously and fails to grasp the religious context of the news.

So how can this change? *Blind Spot's* challenges to news editors include hiring people who are sensitive to religion and giving reporters the right training. At the Alliance, we're also developing ways we can help journalists by providing training and an easily navigable web resource to help them report on Christianity.

And the Bible Society's Ruth Gilson, speaking at the *Blind Spot* launch, also put out a challenge to Christians: "It's not just journalists who have no theology; believers have none either. The problem for the Church is that we just don't know how to live our religion."



The last issue of *idea* makes a surprise appearance on the 2 June episode of *Blue Peter*, as actor Anthony Head reads up on injustice.

Head of Channel 4 Andy Duncan, who attends a Baptist church in Croydon, has also been challenging Christians to engage better with the media. He told *The Baptist Times* that churches need to be more aware of rapidly changing media technologies and the influence they are having on the lives of youngsters. "It's really important for churches to be media savvy, to understand the importance of things like social websites for the younger generation," he said.

The Alliance staff team has been looking at online technology and how we and our members can best utilise this. As well as hosting a day for Christian bloggers last year, we have set up two Facebook groups and two Twitter feeds.

We have also begun producing video for the internet, which we are offering as a service to our members at reduced cost. Our videographer uses industry-standard equipment and editing software to produce videos, including vox-pops, illustrated feature interviews, case studies, speeches or sermons, promotional videos, conference highlights packages and more. For information about the Alliance Video Service, contact Lucy Cooper: l.cooper@eauk.org



REDMAN IS ON SONG. British worship leader Matt Redman was named Christian Songwriter of the Year by the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (Ascap) at the Christian Music Awards in Nashville in April. In addition to the top honour, Redman and his wife Beth also received awards for the most-played songs on Christian radio, *Blessed Be Your Name* and *Never Let Go*. The Christian Song of the Year trophy was awarded to *You Are Everything*, written by American singer Matthew West and Sam Mizell. Ascap is the world's leading performance rights organisation.

Leaders discuss biblical challenges

On 30 April, a group of 30 theologians and church leaders from across the country met to discuss how to help people in churches better understand and interpret the Bible. The Alliance's Head of Theology, Dr Justin Thacker, said, "Much lively debate and discussion took place and we look forward to seeing how this work can feed into the wider work occurring in this important area."

Two papers were presented at the meeting. The first looked at challenges people face in reading the Bible and how it can be understood as relevant for today. Small group discussion then considered ways to increase confidence in reading and interpreting the Bible. In the afternoon the focus was on the issue of violence in the Old Testament, particularly in the book of Judges, and how to help others interpret this.

This was a joint event between the Alliance and Bible Society and will contribute towards the Biblefresh initiative (see p11), as well as Bible Society's work in this area.

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Christian film festival hits London

The *I Will Tell* Film Festival ran over five nights at the end of May in several London cinemas with films, speakers, special performances and post-screening discussions designed to challenge audiences. The festival, run by Christian production company Jericho Films, was set up to raise awareness of global and local issues, giving a voice to people who need to be heard. Key issues addressed through the films include poverty, hunger, violence, disenfranchisement and racism.

The opening film was the documentary *What Black Men Think*, in which filmmaker Janks Morton (pictured, right, with Nadia Denton of the Black Film Makers Association of London) examines stereotypes and misperceptions that have affected black relationships and culture. Tearfund, Jubilee Debt Campaign, Christian Aid, Divine Chocolate and other charities participated in the event. jerichofilms.com

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events

Keswick Convention 11-31 Jul, Keswick

In an age of spin, people long for authenticity. Do Christians offer an attractive example of faith that works? The Keswick Convention confronts this challenge. keswickministries.org

Asylum Seeker Training 11 Jul, London

Hosted by the Alliance, this event is led by Sian Summers, co-ordinator for Displaced People in Action, who will challenge myths about refugees and talk about how to support asylum seekers (see p4). j.stewart@eauk.org

On the Road Together: A-mazed by Migration 17-19 Jul, Swanwick

The annual Justice and Peace Network conference will bring together people from all denominations to discuss the migration issue. The Alliance's *Don't Be a Stranger* photo exhibit will be on display. justice-and-peace.org.uk

New Horizon 18-24 Jul, Belfast

This year's theme is *Enjoying God*, led by Ray Ortlund and Don Carson. The aim is that those who attend will discover afresh the grace of God for the world and His joy in His Church. newhorizon.org.uk

The Big Lunch

19 Jul, nationwide

Imagine a summer's day on which millions have lunch together on every patch of common ground in the UK. Use this day to remind ourselves that charity begins at home, or at most a couple of doors away. thebiglunch.com

New Wine Conference 25 Jul-8 Aug, nationwide

This year's conference, *Step Out*, is about being envisioned, equipped and empowered to overcome fears and engage in fruitful mission to change lives, churches, communities and our nation. new-wine.org/summer

Greenbelt Festival 28-31 Aug, Cheltenham

Expressing love, creativity and justice in the arts and contemporary culture in the light of the Christian Gospel. Activities include music, film, literature, talks, art workshops, comedy and performing arts. greenbelt.org.uk

Building Foundations 18-19 Sep, Belfast

The 95th Irish National Christian Endeavour Convention will feature Rev Alan McCann, rector of Holy Trinity Parish Church, Carrickfergus, plus activities for children, young people and seniors. ceireland.org

Charities address food crisis

Alliance member Trans World Radio has joined forces with child-advocacy agency Compassion International to help combat the global food crisis. Working to raise awareness and resources for the world's poverty-stricken countries, Compassion recently held a one-day radio campaign that was carried by more than 1,000 Christian radio stations in North America. The effort raised more than £2 million toward a global food relief initiative.

In an interview with Compassion President Dr Wess Stafford, TWR President Lauren Libby focused on the extreme circumstances countless children face due to a growing shortage of food. Libby later proposed that TWR air short feature segments on its numerous broadcast outlets around the globe to promote awareness and advocacy opportunities. "God has given us resources so we can help eradicate hunger from the earth," Libby said.

Stafford added, "We have a golden opportunity to reach out and share God's love, and we dare not miss this chance to live out our faith." twr.org.uk



TARGETING TUBE TOURISTS. Through their annual Tell-A-Tourist mission, OAC Ministries and London City Mission take the Gospel to those who travel around Greater London by Tube. This summer, from 27 July to 1 August, teams will set up sketchboards and distribute leaflets in the hottest spots in the city, including Oxford Circus, Covent Garden, Hyde Park and Piccadilly Circus. Participants come from various locations and represent a wide range of ages and backgrounds, and the evangelists are all trained in how to present the Gospel in the open air, as well as how to handle objections from the public.

"We expect to speak to people from 50 to 60 countries (72 is our record) and tell them of the love, life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus. Many of them tell us that they have never heard this message before," said Peter Kennelly, OAC's London Director. "In the summer months, more than ever, London becomes the capital of the lost world, and *Tell-A-Tourist* is a powerful, productive and spiritually strategic week of mission reaching out to every nation on earth." oacgb.org.uk

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Foundations for farming

The Alliance's Head of Communications Miles Giljam meets with Craig Deall of Farming God's Way in Zimbabwe.

programme, has meant that Zimbabwe can no-longer feed itself. While many clamour for the re-establishment of the commercial farms, Foundations for Farming is showing that with biblical principles such as excellence, sowing on time and working with nature, even subsistence farmers can produce yields as high as commercial farmers.

Its aim this year is for churches around the country to plant enough to feed their surrounding communities, preventing wide-spread starvation. In coming years the agricultural industry of Zimbabwe would be revolutionised through the empowerment of the common man, rather than just an elite of large-scale

farmers. Teaching farmers to make a profit will also help eliminate the current culture of corruption and begging.

According to Steve Blaber of Newfrontiers, Foundations for Farming yields results that are typically 10 times higher than conventional farming methods. "A mobile road show has visited Zimbabwe's major towns and cities ahead of the planting season," he said. "Thousands have been taught these farming methods and have been given instruction booklets. A TV series has been produced and aired at prime times on

Over the past decade, the media have reported the long decline of Zimbabwe. This has included stories of unfathomable inflation, thuggery and corruption, and calls for the removal of President Mugabe.

Yet things are changing in Zimbabwe. In mid-February a unity government was sworn in. And Qobo Mayisa, general secretary of the Council of Zimbabwean Christian Leaders in the UK, has observed signs of hope and renewal in his homeland. Mayisa, a former activist who fled political persecution in 2001, recently visited Zimbabwe with representatives of the Alliance and Tearfund, members of the Love Zim coalition.

"Change is still slow and the new government is fragile," Mayisa said. "Where God is working there is always hope, and seeing the amazing unity and work being done by the Church in communities is a real testimony of God's faithfulness even in the most trying times."

Even as the Church is doing important work at the grassroots level, there is disunity between senior leaders. Many of these relationships have been poisoned by party politics, and accusations of bribery are common. Yet even at this level, new leaders of character and influence are working to rebuild relationships.

Mayisa and his team met with the Prime Minister and other government ministers in Zimbabwe, many of whom called on the Church to lead the process of reconciliation. It is crucial the Church is healed in Zimbabwe if it is to lead the

process of national reconciliation. People in Zimbabwe are calling for the truth to be made known about the past, and the only institution they trust with the truth is the Church.

Forming relationships

The Love Zim coalition is calling on UK churches to form relationships with Zimbabwean churches, as help with practical needs, prayer and encouragement will help churches rebuild their nation from the

It is crucial the Church is healed in Zimbabwe if it is to lead the process of national reconciliation

ground up. Zimbabwean churches can also teach us from their experiences of being salt and light in a nation in crisis.

One of the projects promoted by Love Zim and its member agencies is Foundation for Farming, run by local Newfrontiers churches with support from Tearfund and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe. Designed and implemented by Zimbabweans, Foundations for Farming aims to train a network of trainers, each based at a church, who can train the local community in Biblical principles while teaching them best-practice farming. The goal is to help people – and the country – to become self-sufficient in food production.

The collapse of the commercial farming sector, caused by the land redistribution

Zimbabwe TV. Mission is a fundamental focus of the churches as they seek to demonstrate Christ's love for the people of Zimbabwe." *Miles Giljam*

► **A network of Zimbabwean Christians living in the UK are speaking at churches about how to best pray and support Zimbabweans both here and in Zimbabwe. To organise a visit, email: n.holmes@eauk.org**

► **The Love Zim coalition includes the Council of Zimbabwean Christian Leaders in the UK, Evangelical Alliance, Tearfund, Newfrontiers, African Enterprise, Peace Alliance and Global Connections, with support from World Vision. For information and updates, visit: lovezim.org**

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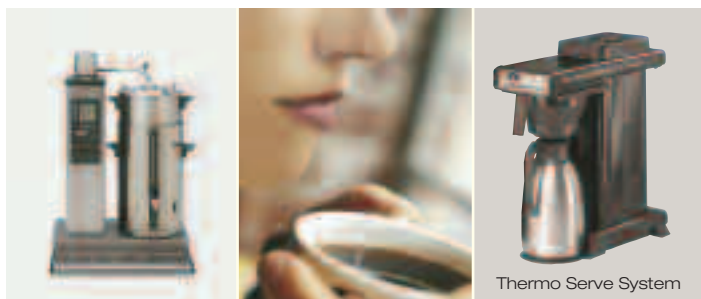
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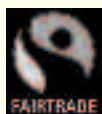
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A firm footing

Fellow Springs Dance apprentice Esther Lim is studying with Emily at Laban.

Emily Sutton is a 21-year-old dance student at the contemporary dance conservatoire Laban. To prepare for her course, she completed a one-year apprenticeship with Alliance member Springs Dance Company...

My hometown is Portsmouth. I grew up in that area and moved away from home for the first time in order to do the apprenticeship with Springs Dance when I was 18.

I started dancing when I was little and went to baby ballet classes, then just kept going, taking more classes in different styles as I got older. When I was about 16 I took up contemporary dance and joined a local youth dance company, where I discovered how diverse the contemporary dance world is.

I had discovered the Springs apprenticeship a year or so before I finished my A-levels, and it stayed in the back of my mind as something I might like to do in the future. By the time I had finished college, both my faith and my interest in dance had reached a stage where I wanted to take a year out to explore them further.

What made my time with Springs so rewarding was the sense of community that the course engenders. In my year, there were 11 apprentices on the course and we met together each day, worked, danced, prayed together and became a sort of family. It was an incredible environment to be in. The long days and schedules were often challenging, but we were all part of this group that was committed to



Simon Richardson



The apprenticeship gave me an idea of what life would be like

idea of what life would be like in a dance company and opened my eyes to different ways of using dance in the church and wider community.

I'm still exploring options for what I'd like to do in the future. At the moment I'm looking into dance movement therapy, which uses dance to further emotional, physical and social integration. However it would be great to be able to continue to perform as well. springsdancecompany.org.uk

caring for each other as well as learning and creating different ways to use dance in the world, supported by our faith.

The year was a great learning step, not only in terms of dance training and the experiences of teaching, performing and touring as a company, but also in our faith. I loved that the apprentices came from all sorts of denominations and backgrounds, and yet we could all still pray together and learn from each other. It enabled us to be more open to different ideas and consequently more creative in our approaches to life and dance.

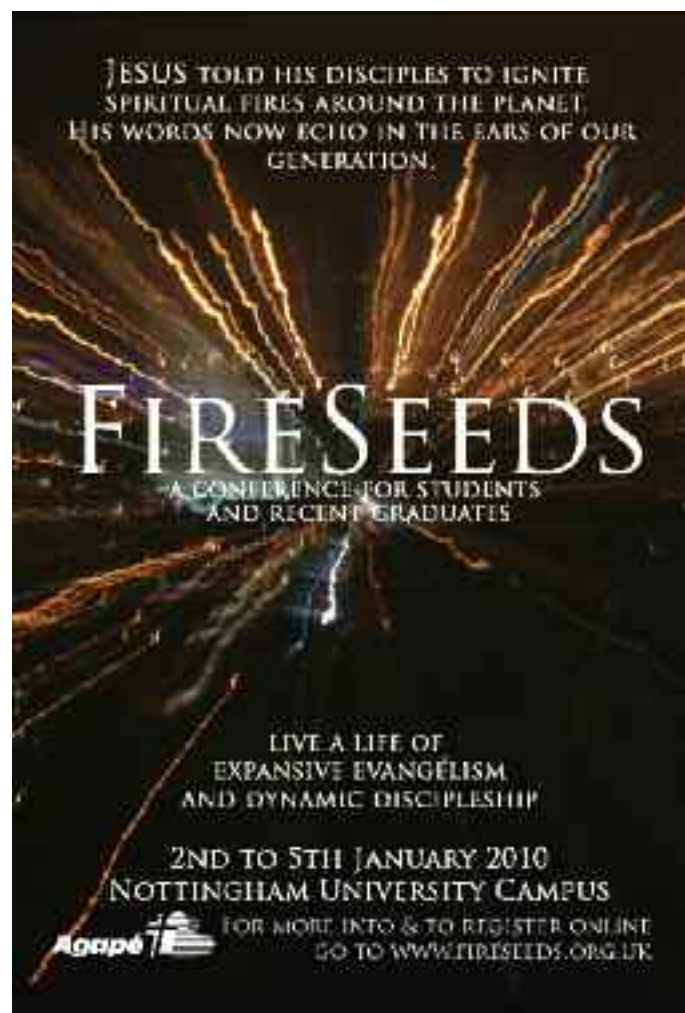
Firsthand experience

Springs was a great foundation for me as it provided me with the technical and performance experience which I am now building on while studying at Laban. It was also incredibly insightful to experience what life is like in a professional dance company, as we were able to assist the Springs Dance Company on tour, watch rehearsals and help in workshops. We experienced firsthand the incredible amount of hard work and time that goes into keeping the company and its projects going, and why those involved really have to do it because they love it.

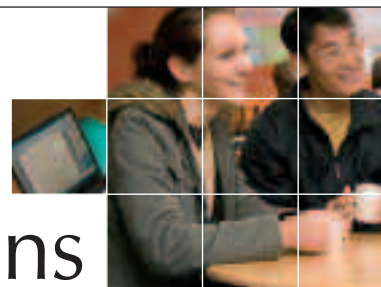
I had the most amazing year with Springs; I learnt so much, met some incredible people and had so much fun. I would really love to be able to go back and do it again.

I am now in my second year at Laban dance college in southeast London, and I still have a year left. The course is very demanding, but it is a great time to consolidate the things I learned with Springs and then go into more training in greater depth.

The apprenticeship gave me an



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Tomorrow's leaders

Daniel Webster writes about an important opportunity for young people...

Every Friday in a corner of Westminster, just a stone's throw from the Houses of Parliament, 20 young graduates try to develop a Christian mind. And no, this is not some strange exercise in eugenics. It's the Care Leadership Programme.

"Care is privileged to be involved in preparing the leaders of tomorrow for a lifetime of Christian engagement," said Nola Leach, Care's chief executive, who gets visibly excited when talking about this subject. "When talking to the 190 who have graduated from the Leadership Programme, it is clear that this was a life-changing year for them, which resulted in their being in positions of influence around the world."

The programme offers young graduates a range of placements for four days a week, which is supplemented by teaching and visiting speakers on a Friday and occasional study weekends. A few years ago I took part in the programme and had the privilege of working for a Member of Parliament from Monday to Thursday each week. Then on Friday I had my opinions and views rigorously tested - and often found wanting.

At its inception the programme focused purely on the political realm, but it now also works with media and non-governmental organisations to offer a breadth of

experience, reflecting the need for a Christian presence in all aspects of public life. Stephen Timms MP, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, notes that it "provides recent graduates with great hands-on experience of working in politics, as well as the opportunity to connect the realities of public service with their Christian faith."

Addressing the gap

Regular Christian activities sometimes leave a gap, meaning that we often struggle to articulate what our faith has to say about the world outside the stain-glassed window. That world, oriented on values and priorities rarely in tune with Christianity, provides us with the challenge of matching the faith that we espouse and the society that we are engaged with. The Care Leadership Programme is one way of addressing this gap.

Communicating a Christian worldview in the public square is no small task. But building on the conviction that our faith should not be sidelined, the programme provides an opportunity to address how our values can be communicated to a world that does not understand the reasons for what we believe.

A critical first step for all of us is simply to be present, because at a time when

politicians are tainted by allegations of sleaze, it would be easy to duck out of politics altogether. But Jesus came to heal the sick, because those who are well don't need a doctor.

The programme focuses on how Christians can have an impact on a culture that doesn't place Christ at its centre. Interns gather together to take an intensive look at what and how Christians think about the critical contemporary issues in the world. Whether this is the justification behind going to war, or considering the ethics of when withdrawing treatment from a dying patient becomes assisting suicide, the difficult questions are not dodged.

Tom Quinn, currently an intern in Parliament, said, "It has been wonderful to be surrounded by like-minded Christians, all passionately committed to making a difference in the world, and consider together how an active faith should influence all of our values and choices, from the small to the eternally significant."

Although for each one of us our involvement in public life will take on a different form, it is often the small, seemingly insignificant, actions that are of eternal value. Paul Woolley, Director of Theos and a senior lecturer for the



Last year's crop of interns and tutors outside Parliament.

programme said, "The course challenges students to really think about what they believe, why they believe it and how their beliefs should shape the way they engage in society."

Lessons learned

On one occasion during my year, we were discussing the establishment of the Church of England. I thought my views on the matter were quite firm, but during the course of the debate my arguments just did not hold together, so I switched sides. I'm still not sure that I've got that particular subject nailed, but the lesson I learned was more important.

The society we live in - our family, our culture, our education - all create a frame through which we see the world. If I am not careful, my viewpoint becomes static, centred on these influences, and I forget that my experiences are peculiar to me. Everyone will have a different perspective on just about every issue imaginable. It is just not possible to articulate a coherent view of the world when we take as our starting point the world around us. This is why developing a Christ-centred mind and a worldview based on the Bible is so crucial.

"My faith is an important part of who I

am, and it affects the way I interact with the world around me," said current intern Tanya Srokosz. By engaging with many complex issues and how the Bible can help us understand them, the Care programme helps young graduates develop a biblical worldview and enables them to see all of life as within the reach of faith.

Reflecting on the programme, Tanya continued, "My understanding of what

"We often struggle to articulate what our faith has to say about the world"

active Christian engagement can look like in public life has increased during the year. It has highlighted to me the importance of Christians being actively involved in all areas of culture and society to ensure that the Christian faith is not privatised or sidelined."

Personally, I still do not have all the answers to how Christians should engage in the public square. In fact I probably finished the programme with more questions than

when I started. But I am absolutely certain that disengagement is not an option.

Towards the end of my year I found myself walking into Parliament astonished that this had become a mundane exercise. It shouldn't be mundane, but it also shouldn't be exceptional to see Christians active every day in Parliament, the media and in all areas of public life.

► The application deadline for the 2010-11 Care Leadership Programme is 7 December. For a prospectus, visit: care.org.uk or tel 020 7233 0455.

Daniel Webster is the Alliance's parliamentary officer.



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is for life discipleship



The Alliance's Square Mile initiative is about equipping churches and individuals to impact their communities through mercy, influence, life discipleship and evangelism. In the third of our four-part series, freelance journalist Seren Boyd talks to Christians who are living out their faith everyday...

We've all done it – hollered ourselves hoarse with Christmas choruses in the shopping mall or burned ourselves out with missions, programmes and projects. And we've all been disappointed when we don't see hordes surrendering their lives to Christ at the mere mention of the annual church outreach event.

Most of us learn the hard way that people out there are not waiting for a tract; they're waiting for a sign, evidence that God exists. But most of us are not yet well-practised in miracles and wonders. So the best evidence most of us can offer is what our lives say about the One who lives in us.

And this is "life discipleship" – living out our faith in the ordinary and everyday stuff of life, whether that's in the office, on the sports field, at school or in the supermarket. It's a key strand of the Alliance's Square Mile initiative, which is helping Christians have an impact on their immediate community. And what life discipleship looks like in practice is as complex and varied as life itself.

In the case of Sam Fowler and Dean McDonald, it looks pretty spectacular. These two 18-year-olds from London defy gravity, leaping over railings and back-flipping off walls in a form of urban acrobatics known as parkour, or free-running. And they are using their extraordinary art to talk to other teenagers about what Jesus has done in their lives.

They've given their movement a name, Parkour for Jesus, and they've had T-shirts printed, but it's nothing heavy. They're just doing what they love to do and pointing people to Christ in the process.

"I love the freedom of parkour because it's all about getting over obstacles," says Sam, who had the vision for a Christian team even before he knew any other Christian free-runners. "God is a very liberating God because He came to save us, and parkour speaks to me about that."

For Dean, his sport has taken on a new dimension since he became a Christian two years ago. "Now parkour has suddenly become about more than just

developing myself: it's become an opportunity to talk about Jesus," he says.

Common ground

Bringing God into what you love best is precisely what Pete Nicholas of Christians in Sport is passionate about too. His job is to persuade and equip amateur and professional competitors to see sport as a mission field. It's as much about honouring God on the pitch as about speaking of Him in the changing room.

"We create secular and sacred divides, but we shouldn't separate our everyday activities from our faith," says Pete, a former Division 1 rugby player. "Many people don't see how their faith relates to their sport, and it gives them quite a sense of release when they see that something they love can be reconciled with the God they love."

Christian Surfers UK was a response to a similar case of "never the twain", an attempt to bring Jesus into a world considered out-of-bounds for Christians. For Director Phil Williams, the work is all about serving the sport he loves – whether that's laying on barbecues or clearing up litter – and building relationships with a community with whom he shares a common passion.

"A lot of surfers have some kind of spiritual thoughts at some stage," he says. "It's often said, 'There's never an atheist in Hawaii when the waves get above 20 feet.' Further out, between the waves, it can be very peaceful and very beautiful, and you sometimes get the chance to chat with people about creation and God."

"And it's about how you surf too. If someone drops in on you when you're just about to surf a great



Christian Surfers

Above: "Sitting out the back, waiting for the next set, it's impossible not to be impressed by the creation around us."

Opposite: Seva Fowler performs a "kong to precision" manoeuvre under Waterloo Bridge.

On the cover: Tom Good takes on a wave at the Jesus Surf Classic in Croyde Bay, North Devon.

“We shouldn’t separate our everyday activities from our faith”



Christine Bull



Sculptor Christine Bull weaves scripture into the patterns of her work.

wave, there are two ways to respond: you can either tell them where to go or ask them to be a bit more careful.”

What Phil shares in common with Sam, Dean and Pete is an awareness that we need to think outside the box about how we point people to Christ. Phil, a vicar's son, is all too aware that much of what the Church does makes little sense to people outside its walls. “Surfing can be a pretty hedonistic place,” he says. “You just can't expect surfers to come into church with sand between their toes.”

Words of comfort

Christine Bull has wrestled with the same dilemma, but for her it is art, not sport, that has helped her

communicate God's love in an unobtrusive way – almost despite herself.

Christine had been a potter in West Sussex for years when one day in 2005 she heard God speak to her: “Put my Word on your work.” She clearly felt God was telling her to paint Bible verses onto her ceramics and she knew that her target market should be a secular one.

She started with familiar verses – “safe ones that people might have heard at weddings or Princess Di's funeral” – verses that speak of comfort and hope. Although she test-marketed them through the local Christian bookshop, her pieces were soon being accepted for display in art exhibitions.

And they sold well. One bowl bearing the Old Testament blessing from Numbers 6.24-26 (“The Lord bless you and keep you....”) was shown at a prestigious local art exhibition in 2006 and sold five times in two weeks.

“One lady saw my work exhibited in a local physic garden and she got in touch to say how much it had comforted her to read, ‘The Lord bless you and keep you....’ on one of my pots. She had recently lost her husband.”

One of Christine's most recent projects was to work with a 12-year-old boy with terminal cancer, creating an urn for his ashes. Christine knows the power of God's word to sustain. As a child, she watched her father struggle with MS. Then in 1995, her husband Richard suffered near-fatal head injuries in a car crash. “People are seeking and it's so important to have the Word out there,” she says. “It sinks into people in a way that other things can't.”

Chris Gibson is someone else who has just made the most of where God has put her to direct people to Jesus. But that place hasn't always been a comfortable one. For Chris, a gentle Geordie now living in Hampshire, has been dealing with matters of life and death both as a nurse and recently as a cancer patient.

During her 40-odd years as a nurse, Chris would always pray for her patients, though rarely with their knowledge. Then in 2005, Chris was diagnosed with breast cancer and began two years of chemo- and radiotherapy. During the long hours spent waiting for chemo, she met many people wrestling with fear. Now she was on the other side of the NHS, and she could be open about her faith.

“Often I'd just listen to people and God would show me what to pray for them,” she says. “Sometimes I would get the chance to talk to them about what God had said and they'd say, ‘How do you know that?’ One lady called Carol was dying of lung cancer. One day I prayed with her, then she went down to the chapel. She told me later, ‘I just gave it all to God.’ Her son rang me later to say she'd died ‘a peaceful death’ – as if she knew where she was going.”

I just want to be someone who helps people hear God. The best thing I can do is just be myself. It's much easier when God does it."

An irrational faith

Martin Flatman may not be dealing in matters of life and death, but he treads a difficult line. He is a senior project manager in a major education support services

You just can't expect surfers to come into church with sand between their toes

company, surrounded by rational, professional people. And he is bursting with an irrational faith in an invisible God.

Martin chooses not to let that put him off. He works long hours away from his home in Manchester – his company is based in Surrey – so work, he has decided, should be where he witnesses. He set up a prayer group with a couple of Christian colleagues and with senior management's permission ("as long as there were no tambourines"). They advertised it on the company's intranet and waited. And waited.

In terms of take-up, the prayer meeting was a "wonderful, catastrophic failure": only a handful of people ever came. But then something unexpected began to happen. "People started to sidle up to us in the office and say, 'I saw your ad. I don't believe in prayer, but could you pray for me because I've just been diagnosed with cancer'; or, 'My mum and dad are ill'. Now I've discovered people really want you to pray for them," he says. "I feel I'm depriving people of something fabulous if I don't."

All these Christians have realised that the Bible is just a big old dusty book unless Christians are living out its message through their lives 24/7. Or as the poet John Keats put it, "Even a proverb is no proverb until your life has illustrated it."

You could become burdened by the enormity of this responsibility, but it's best not to look at it like that, says Pete Nicholas. "The real danger is that you can become self-righteous and then you're bound to trip up," he says. "I need to let Him take care of what I look like to other people."

Much better, Martin Flatman says, is to look on every conversation as an opportunity: "It's a privilege, actually. I'm a child of the living God, and how can I not tell everybody about that?"

New term, new challenge

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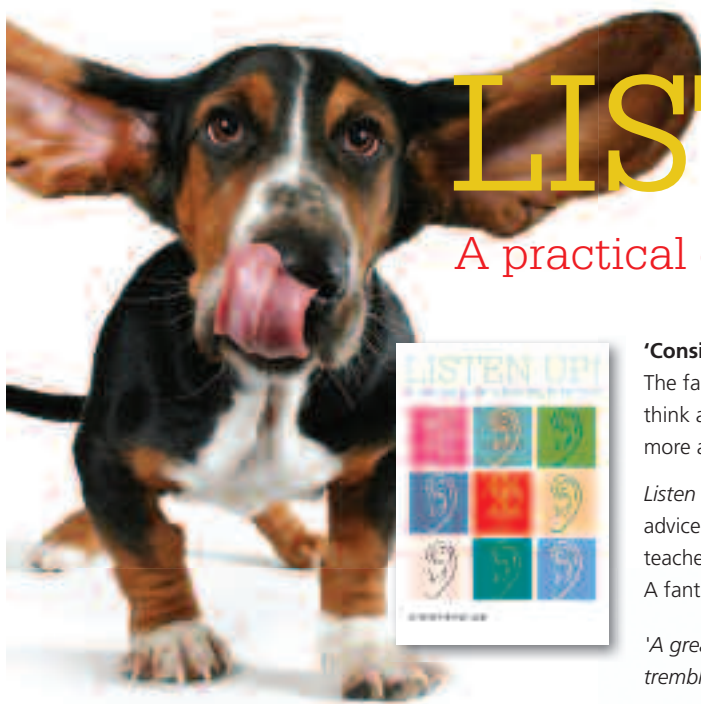
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All of us could benefit from being discipled by someone who is more spiritually mature

Christian life ourselves, then we can help others less far along the road than us.”

The key, he said, is to know mature Christians who have further biblical wisdom or who can point you in the direction of the answer. “Express from the outset that you know enough, care for them, will pray for and love them, and that if they ask something you don’t know, you will do some research,” he said.

The reassurance that God is working through me as I point towards Him, even in my weakness, has given me peace and a sense of the bigger picture. It also made me wonder if perhaps feelings of unworthiness could be depriving the Church of great potential disciplers.

Keeping watch

To prevent common mistakes such as pride or isolation from church life, Andy also stressed how important it is to keep reviewing our situation. “Be careful not to create a dependency on yourself, but help the person think for themselves spiritually,” he said.

“This may take time, so it’s important that it takes place within a range of relationships with other Christians who they will benefit from in different ways.”

He emphasised that every church leadership team should prioritise working out their own strategy of discipleship to fit with who they are as a church: “If a church is not making disciples, what is it doing?”

It excited me to see Maryam’s thirst to understand the Bible and her eagerness for us to study together. Constantly challenged and inspired, this has reignited my own love for the Bible.

In her book *One to One: A Discipleship Handbook*, Sophie Peace writes about the benefits of applying God’s

word in a more intimate setting: “One-to-one studies offer more time for wrestling thoroughly with the big point of the passage, without many voices clouding the issue and making for a more superficial study of the text.”

Andy agreed: “One-to-one work enables a discussion of real-life practical questions and decisions and then a review to assess what worked and what didn’t. It is not one size fits all. It is bespoke, unique and tailor made.”

As Farsi is Maryam’s first language, she prays out loud in her mother tongue, so I must find ways of leading simple prayers. This is unique to our circumstance and each situation will be different, allowing freedom for flexibility. My process of learning to sit more comfortably with silence and take longer to listen and observe has begun.

Friendship-based

As I have talked with people about this issue, many have told me that the best experiences have come when the discipleship relationship has arisen naturally through a genuine friendship. Of course, with life’s busy schedules and communication so often being conducted via Facebook or text, time spent face-to-face sharing life and deepening friendships is an ever more precious commodity.

It may seem obvious, but it is evident that meaningful discipleship for the whole person doesn’t happen through training sessions or a book. It can’t be rushed. Just as children become like those they associate with, investing in someone’s life conveys not only what we know, but also who we are.

As Sophie Peace says, “Much of Christian life is caught and not taught. Through friendship we are modelling what it means to persevere in the Gospel and to strive to live of God in every area of our lives.”

Enjoying social activities together and exchanging culture has become a valuable part of my experience with Maryam, and this is an indication that I see her as a valued and loved person and not a project.

As the sessions unfold I have seen major benefits begin to emerge – the process of discovery for both of us, the accountability we can establish, the trust we can build on and most definitely a mutual encouragement as we learn from God together.

Lucy Cooper is a press officer at the Alliance.



Take it further

These resources can get you started with one-to-one discipleship:

- ▶ **One to One: A Discipleship Handbook** by Sophie Peace (Authentic).
- ▶ **Foundations21**, produced by the Bible Reading Fellowship, is a flexible online course for small groups or individuals, covering the basics and delving deeper into application: foundations21.org.uk
- ▶ **Discipling, Coaching, Mentoring** by Bryn Hughes (Kingsway).
- ▶ **Life Issues** or **Cover to Cover** Bible study guides, produced by CWR – ideal to working through in pairs.
- ▶ **Freedom in Christ: Discipleship Course Workbook** by Neil Anderson and Steve Goss (Monarch).
- ▶ **21st Century Discipleship Course** is run by CWR at Waverley Abbey: cwr.org.uk

Talking about...

holidays

Whether we are talking from a pulpit or over a garden fence, Tony Watkins helps us to give relevant answers to the big issues raised by contemporary popular culture...

Summer is here at last. We spent the cold, wet winter yearning for it to arrive, and now complain about the cold and wet ruining barbecues, camping trips and cricket matches. Then maybe we'll have the predicted heatwave, and we'll moan about that instead. But at least it's time for a break, which is what really matters.

Many of us crave holidays in the sun. In 2007, Brits took around 70 million overseas holidays, which is more than one each, and a third of those were to Spain. Thanks to the credit crunch, this year will be very different

with many choosing to holiday in the UK, even remaining at home for a "staycation". In his book *The Art of Travel*, Alain de Botton gives a primary reason why people travel: the desire for something different, for the exotic. This is why the average Brit has visited only 2 per cent of UK towns and cities, and why a *Mamma Mia*-inspired Greece appeals so strongly. De Botton suggests that we have this desire because we are dissatisfied with life as it is. "What we find exotic abroad may be what we hunger for in vain at home," he writes.



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Escapism? In *A Perfect Getaway*, Milla Jovovich's Hawaii honeymoon goes terrifyingly wrong.

happiness. The real issue is that our desire for peace has been thwarted.

This yearning is deep inside each of us. It is not necessarily a hankering for quietness, since some of us relish activity. But we all hunger to feel at peace with the world, our families and ourselves, and that

We all hunger to feel at peace with the world, our families and ourselves

can be very elusive in the normal daily round. Time spent in rest and recreation can certainly help us rediscover something of this, enabling us to find some inner calm.

But of course nothing really changes in the long run. Our equanimity is sometimes disappointingly short-lived, evaporating at

the sight of a clogged inbox. Even while we're on holiday, we know that our failings remain part of us.

The truth is that this world cannot deliver the deep, lasting peace we long for. And yet we thirst for it because we were created to experience it in a relationship with God. This is why we travel in search of new places and new experiences. As CS Lewis wrote, "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world."

► Find out more about the issues raised in this article at: damaris.org/ideamagazine
► Toolsfortalks.com contains quotes and illustrations taken from the latest films, music, magazines and TV – updated weekly.

Tony Watkins is managing editor of Culturewatch.org



Changing lives
one by one



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This is the first in a series relating the Alliance's Practical Resolutions to the task of mission. *Justin Thacker discusses...*

We welcome as **Christian brothers and sisters** all who experience the grace of new birth, bringing them to that fear and knowledge of God which is expressed in a life of obedience to His word.

Justin Thacker is the Alliance's Head of Theology



Living out our faith does more to promote genuine Christianity than merely professing it. So we seek to promote good Christian practice, as well as true Christian doctrine, not least by the manner in which we conduct our relationships with each other." So begins the preamble to the Practical Resolutions adopted by the Alliance and the then British Evangelical Council (now Affinity) in 1997.

The preamble continues: "It is intended to stand alongside our Basis of Faith, and to express how we should be treating each other. It should be seen as an integrated expression of the responsibilities we owe each other in the Body of Christ. The Executive of the BEC and the Council of EAUk commend this commitment to members as a reminder of our basic Christian duty towards fellow Christians, and in particular as a guideline when making comments in the media, in book reviews and in public ministry generally."

In John 17.20-23, Jesus directly links our unity with each other and our unity with God to our visible witness in the world. Jesus prays that as believers display such unity "then the world will know that you sent me". In a similar vein, Jesus also says, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13.35).

So if we are concerned about mission, if we desire to reach those outside our church, then necessarily we will also be concerned about visible unity. The first step on that road, at least according to these practical resolutions, is to "welcome as Christian brothers and sisters all who experience the grace of new birth".

Coming to terms

This was the classic challenge that Peter faced as he came to terms with the salvation of the Gentiles. Almost everything he knew until that point had taught

him that those who were not born Jews, or did not explicitly convert to Judaism, were outside of God's kingdom. They were the "dogs" of Revelation 22.15. Yet in his vision in Joppa, the Lord instructs Peter that he should "not call anything impure that God has made clean" (Acts 10.15). So Peter visits Cornelius, witnesses the Spirit fall in power on these Gentile believers, and in that moment his understanding of who is in and who is out is transformed.

When called to defend his actions, Peter says, "If God gave them the same gift He gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God's way?" (Acts 11.17).

Similarly, at the Council in Jerusalem, Peter makes the same defence: "God, who knows the heart, showed that He accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as He did to us ... for He purified their hearts by faith" (Acts 15.8). For Peter, then, it was this gift and transformation by the Spirit that demonstrated their inclusion in the kingdom of God.

In a similar manner, this first practical resolution attempts to capture the truth that we should welcome and recognise "all who experience the grace of new birth". Yet, if we are honest with ourselves, this is far from how we behave. Instead, like Peter, we are quick to decide who is in and who is out, not using the criteria that Scripture provides, but rather by establishing our own walls of division.

Defining boundaries

At times, this can manifest itself doctrinally whereby we specify with such rigidity the beliefs to which people must subscribe that frankly I'm amazed that anyone without a PhD in systematic theology can be saved. At other times, we do it behaviourally in such a way that even Jesus Christ would fail to pass the tests of the most ardent moral purists.

Next issue:
A duty
of trust

To give just one example, in our ongoing debates about sexual sin, one of the things worth bearing in mind is that if we take Jesus' words about lustful looks in Matthew 5.27-29 seriously then most men (and possibly most women) have at some point in their lives been guilty of sexual sin. And if we consider ourselves, despite this sin, as among those who have experienced new birth, then this means we should be cautious before prematurely declaring others to be outside God's kingdom



We are quick to decide who is in and who is out

simply because they struggle with, for instance, same-sex attractions.

The bigger issue in all this, though, is simply the fact that if we preoccupy ourselves with defining ever more precisely the boundaries of who is and who is not a genuine Christian, or who is and who is not a genuine evangelical, then we will be spending our energies on a relatively small number of people and completely ignoring the masses who undoubtedly are at present outside God's kingdom.

It strikes me that our first call is to reach out to those significant swathes of people who do not in any sense know "the grace of new birth", rather than endlessly sweat over precisely how much "new birth" people need to have before we label them as "in".

Moreover, if we got on with that first command and calling – to reach the lost – and if we did it with the unity to which we are called, then it would seem, at least according to Jesus, that this is how people will recognise both that we are His disciples and more importantly that God sent Him to save them.

► **The Practical Resolutions of the Evangelical Alliance can be found at: eauk.org/resolutions**



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Putting it plainly

Congratulations to Justin Thacker on his article (*The Basics*, May/Jun) about the last things. It may reveal the limitations of my reading but I have never before read anything from an evangelical writer that put it so plainly as he does when he states, "It is interesting that the majority of Jesus' discourse on hell was directed either at the Pharisees or His disciples, both of whom would have assumed that they were not especially in danger of going there... Hence, the reality of hell is a reminder that none of us should take our own salvation for granted, and it should also drive us to mission for the sake of others."

The question this leaves us with, of course, is whether we now follow John Wesley rather than John Calvin. Or perhaps we should follow the Scriptures rather than any interpretation?

Brian Pemberton, Barry, Cardiff

Still more options

Under the title *Other Options*, David Taylor (*Your Voice*, May/Jun) addressed the problems generated by the credit crunch. While his arguments were persuasive, the core of the problem lies with the excessive debt mountain of the public and private sectors.

The Christian Council for Monetary Justice advocates the controlled issue of interest-free monies by an independent agency of the government (similar to the Bank of England) and that banks be barred from issuing debt (subtly called "credit") in excess of their assets and monies deposited with them. This move would have a beneficial effect of removing much of debt and the burden of interest payments from the economy, enhancing its efficiency and removing in time the worries of many who are currently in debt and whose problems I try to ease during my duties at a local Debt Advice Centre (not single handedly, of course).

Obviously there is more to this subject than this summary states, but it just outlines the main features. Perhaps *idea* could feature an article from the CCMJ, or readers could visit: ccmj.org
Sam Pearce, Burgess Hill

The burden of debt

David Taylor (*Your Voice*, May/Jun) suggests options he believes would ease the present

economic problems. Sadly, however, the economy is more complex than he imagines. It is wise advice to suggest that those with long-term debt repay some of it. The cost of borrowing is nearly always greater than the interest rate on savings. For that reason, however, most of those who are able to repay part of their debts are likely to have done so. It is not realistic to suppose that everyone with debt will be in a position to repay £1,000.

Furthermore, even where it is possible, we need to consider where that £1,000 would come from. Either they must draw it



from savings, in which case the net effect on the banks' balance sheet is nil, or they must take it out of other expenditure, in which case the banks' balance sheets benefit at the expense of the retail sector. Either way, the net effect on the economy is nil.

Similarly with his suggestion that we spend £1 more a week on UK goods and services instead of imports, we need to consider where that £1 will come from. Either it will come from another developed country, in which case the citizens of that country may well respond in a similar manner, so that the effects cancel each other out, or it will be taken from a less developed country whose citizens are less able to retaliate, in which case we would be benefiting our own economy at the expense of those whose plight is even worse.

That, I suspect, is why he cannot find any mainstream political party voicing his views. Whatever they may promise at election time, most politicians are sensible enough to know that, in reality, you can't get something for nothing.

Mr Taylor is, of course, correct in

pointing out that government debt will eventually have to be repaid by the taxpayer. However, the alternative is unlikely to be painless. The cost of recovering from the recession will have to be paid by someone. The choice is whether we share the burden through general taxation, or whether we allow the burden to fall disproportionately on those who are unfortunate enough to lose their livelihoods. I know which alternative feels more consistent with my faith.
Chris Robins, Kidlington, Oxon

Check the numbers

In your cover story (*I is for Influence*, May/Jun), the writer notes that "fewer than a million people attend weekly Sunday services", but I think you'll find that this refers only to Church of England attendance. The total is actually around 3 million. In a May 2007 Church of England newspaper article, Peter Brierley gives a weekly overall attendance figure of 3.2 million.

Please check this, as it is important we don't add to the myth of the marginalised Church.

Richard Mortimer, by email

NOTE: The figures from the last church census in 2005 put Sunday church attendance at 3,166,200. The more recent *Tearfund Churchgoing in the UK* report (2007) puts weekly church visits at 4.9 million, which includes both Sunday and mid-week services.

Continue to pray

Even though the recent events in Sri Lanka may have fallen from the headlines, it's important that UK Christians continue to pray for the country and support agencies that are working on the ground there. By the end of May there were more than 250,000 civilians displaced by the conflict. More than 70,000 have been killed, which is more than twice the number who died in the country's last humanitarian disaster, the 2004 tsunami.

It is the Church that must initiate reconciliation in Sri Lanka. This is the hour for the Church to demonstrate the true love, unity and oneness in Christ across every possible barrier. The whole country has suffered, and the Church has the responsibility to demonstrate the way towards a lasting peace. Working and supporting each other through collective prayer and immediate practical support for those affected in the Wanni area would be the immediate priority.

Pastor Surekha Hulugalle, London

Letters should be sent to idea@eauk.org or *idea*, 186 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BT. Be sure to include your name, address and phone number. The Editor reserves the right to edit letters for length and clarity. We regret that we are not able to engage in personal correspondence. Everyone who has a letter printed on this page will receive a thank you gift.



Is Islam a religion of violence?

Rev Dr John Azumah calls for a balanced approach to a thorny issue...

A theological student in India once said to me, "I am confused. We hear Islam is a religion of peace, but we also read about and see Muslim suicide bombers chanting Koranic verses, Muslims praying with AK-47 assault rifles and teenage girls shot dead or disfigured for not wearing a veil."

One key verse from the Koran often quoted to back the thesis that Islam is a peaceful religion is: "There is no compulsion in religion" (2.256). Yet there are also verses like this: "So when you meet those who disbelieve, smite at their necks till you have killed and wounded many of them" (47.4).

At the very least, this situation is confusing. Some experts argue that violent acts committed by Muslims are deeply grounded in the Koran, traditions, Muhammad's example (*sunnah*) and Islamic jurisprudence. Others say that the roots of Muslim anger and violence are basically geo-political, particularly due to American foreign policies. Islam, they argue, means peace.

Making sense of confusion

There is no question that violence is written into the source books of Islam. Indeed, Muslim societies down the centuries have taken these texts and the conquests they inspired as testimony of not only divine approval but of a divine hand in these acts.

Having said that, it's actually not legitimate to argue that, because there are texts of violent import in Islamic source books and that Muslims have used these texts to justify violent attacks, Islam as a religion is violent. One can't simplistically draw a straight line between an historic text and current practice. Individual human choice intervenes, as do circumstances.

Similarly, not all Muslim anger and grievances against the West are borne out of religious convictions. Many non-Muslims (including Christians) in the developing world share anti-Western sentiments with Muslims. And many non-Muslim minorities in the West share the same grievances and resentment with Muslim minorities towards their host countries. These include perceptions and experiences of discrimination and racism.

The truth is that the Muslims who are willing to engage in violence in the name of

Islam are a small minority. The temptation is to argue that the silent majority is just as responsible for the violence. But that fails to appreciate that many more individual Muslim scholars, imams and groups are now speaking out against the murderous views of the fanatics.

To understand the silence of ordinary Muslims, one has to wonder why ordinary citizens did not turn up on the streets in Nazi Germany or Communist Russia, China



**You can't
simplistically draw a
straight line between
an historic text and
current practice**

and Cambodia to demonstrate against their murderous regimes. The silent majority may be complicit in their silence, but in the end it is the fanatical minority who are responsible for their acts of violence.

A way forward

Those who blame Islam for violence committed by Muslims are by implication suggesting that the Koran as a text, or Islam as a religion, should be banned. But religious traditions themselves neither speak nor act. It is adherents who speak and act in the name of their traditions.

Millions of Muslims around the world recite the same texts daily but do not go out to kill others. There are tough texts and acts

of violence in almost all religious scriptures, traditions and histories. And it must be remembered that, over the period of time that Muslims generally glorified the tradition of jihad as religious war, other religious traditions like Christianity and Zoroastrianism also drew inspiration from their traditions and engaged in violent conquests too.

So the issue is not the mere fact that there are violent texts or examples of violence by religious figures. The issue is the way people of faith have chosen to interpret the source books of the religions.

During the reformation, the Christian Church went through a painful process aimed at redeeming its traditions by challenging the interpretative framework of earlier generations. In 1965, the Roman Catholic Church, in its Second Vatican Council, had to revise and set aside centuries of unhelpful traditions. To redeem the Islamic tradition, Muslim scholars today reserve the right to consider establishing a new interpretative tool that takes into account the realities and demands of the 21st century.

Islam is what Muslims choose to make it. There may be a high price to pay, and whether Muslims are prepared to pay that price to redeem their traditions is their decision to make.

Also there is the need to disabuse young Muslim minds of centuries of indoctrination against non-Islamic ways of lives. For instance, young people in Pakistan are taught in mainstream schools and madrasas that Jews, Christians and Hindus are like pigs: dirty and corrupting. Such prejudices serve as detonators to the poisonous cocktail of extremists' dogmas.

The *Common Word* document issued by a group of leading Muslim figures in October 2007 called upon Christians to dialogue on "love of God and love of neighbour". However, if this is to be a serious overture, the same gesture should be extended to followers of other religions and people of no religion. It should not be treated as a subject of dialogue among specialists but should be taken into schools and madrasas.

John Azumah is director of the Centre for Islamic Studies and Muslim-Christian Relations at London School of Theology.



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A far bigger circle

General Director *Steve Clifford* finds that his personal story is tied in with a noble task...

By the time you read this, I will have been in post at the Alliance for nearly three months. I have received a wonderfully encouraging welcome and I feel profoundly thankful to God. It is a privilege to be asked to bring leadership to an organisation with such a history of significant influence both across our nation and the world.

As I am sure you will appreciate, once the announcement of my appointment was made, I was inundated with emails, letters, texts, phone calls and cards, many of which included invitations to speak. One particular invitation jumped out at me: an invitation to speak at Bradford Cathedral for an across-church celebration on Easter Sunday.

A personal connection

I was born and brought up in Bradford. My father, Albert, grew up just a few hundred yards from the cathedral. As a young lad he attended services there, came to faith and met my mother there. She recalls her first encounter with my father when he was taking up the collection, singing heartily, and she thought, "I could marry that man." I'm not sure whether it was the singing or the money that attracted her, but in due time they were married at the cathedral.

My father was sent from the cathedral to train in theology at Oakhill College, returned and was ordained. He took up his first parish as a vicar less than a mile away, and within a short period my younger brother and I were born.

However, when I was 5 my father was tragically killed by a drunken lorry driver. How quickly life can change.

We were living in a house that belonged to the church and didn't know if we would be able to keep our home. My mother had to go out to work, my brother to nursery, I started school. Life became very different from the one we thought had been mapped out for us.

So when the invitation to preach at Bradford Cathedral arrived, I felt compelled to accept. It would be my first public engagement and, as I thought it through, I realised that it would be 50 years almost to the month from the date of my father's death. What do you make of events such as these?

I arrived at Bradford Cathedral on Easter Sunday evening alongside my mother, brother, wife, son and daughter-in-law, with a wonderful sense of God's endorsement. I felt it was a sign of the amazing truth that He is with us and in a strange way is able to draw a far bigger circle around the tragic events that surrounded the death of a husband and a father.

Our Father in heaven, who has proven Himself faithful

over 50 years, was whispering that there will be a day when there is a new heaven and a new earth and He will make all things good.

The greater context

Of course my story is just a small part of a far bigger story: the story of God. The Bible provides us with a record of a God who didn't abandon the cosmos but has been wheeling and dealing in the affairs of humanity to cause His purposes to be fulfilled. Our little stories begin to make sense only in the context of this big story. And when we gather together as communities of faith, we read the story, we sing the story and we even act out the story.

When I was 17, I had a summer job in a Christian conference centre called Capernwray Hall. One evening I listened to the preacher - I can't remember his name - who simply told the Easter story. Even though I had heard it before, this time it made sense to me. I knew at the core of my being that it was true.

The apostle Paul writes to the Romans, "I am not ashamed of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Romans 1.16). That night the Gospel, through the simple telling of the story, had power to change my life. On the day of Pentecost, Peter's great sermon was a re-counting of the same story, which provoked the crowd to ask the most important question: "What shall we do to be saved?"

Throughout 2008 I had the privilege of travelling the country and seeing the Church at work as part of Hope08. I saw the Church demonstrating the Gospel as well as proclaiming it. We were being as well as preaching the good news through city-wide events and small-scale community projects - schools missions as well as digging neighbours' gardens, clearing rubbish and cleaning graffiti. It was so encouraging to see the Church with fresh confidence, doing the business of Church, positioning itself at the heart of communities.

Part of the Alliance's role is to tell these stories. So often the attitude to Christians and the Church in the press and even in government is negative, but these stories paint a very different picture. I am absolutely convinced that Christians uniting together in their faith is good news for the health and wellbeing of our nation - physically, emotionally and spiritually. Christ has called us to be the hope of our nation, so with prayer and godly confidence let's give ourselves to this noble task.



Ann Clifford

God has been wheeling and dealing in the affairs of humanity



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