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THE MAGAZINE OF THE
EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

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WELCOME

Blessed

It's happened again. I've had another one of those 'oh my days, this edition of *idea* is amazing' moments. I even blurted out "yes!" when I was reviewing copy.

Fortunately I was working from home that day.

It occurred to me how encouraged we'd all be through this edition when I was reading Colin Lowther's article (p. 12). Colin, CEO of Reach Beyond, reminds us of that beautiful scene in Revelation of God's people gathered in all their diversity worshipping the Lamb, as he urges the church to work together to reach the 'unreached' with the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ.

This poignant call to gospel unity runs through this issue, with Dr Rachel Jordan-Wolf, assistant director of HOPE Together, declaring that now is the time for the church to invest in evangelists so that 2020 can be a year of powerful mission which sees many around the UK turn to the King of kings (p. 4).

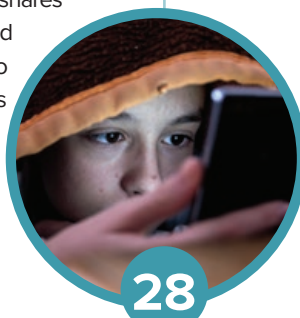
We also hear from my colleagues Danny Webster (p. 14), advocacy and media manager, and Peter Lynas (p. 18), director of Northern Ireland, who rightly highlight the turbulent times that we as a country are trying to navigate. Whilst easy to fret, they urge us to cling to the hope that we have in Jesus and be the good news that people are desperately searching for.

In his last 'last word' Steve Clifford shares how we have endeavoured to be 'good news people' as we have responded to some of these challenges, and he urges us to remain committed to working together to make Jesus known.

May we rejoice in the truth that God is good news.

Yours truly,

Naomi Osinnowo,
Editor



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FOUND IN *Jesus*

Jesus is unmistakably and undeniably good news to everyone, so let's make this truth known, says **Glyn Jones**, co-principal of the Light Project College.

I was 28. I had a life and death decision to make, literally. This is how I found the good news we call Jesus Christ.

As with most of us, in my life I had experienced a lot of news, both good and bad. However, this was different. I was in a valley of the deepest despair. I was not looking for Jesus; I was looking for hope. Ironically, a kind and well-meaning Muslim gentleman inadvertently pointed me to Jesus in an attempt to dissuade me from exploring Christianity. Until that point, Jesus had not been on my agenda. Tell a child not to do something and what do they do? I went straight home and dug out a dusty Bible I had been given in primary school, and there I found the good news I had been looking for – hope in the promises of a carpenter from Nazareth.

Finding that good news, finding hope and finding Jesus saved my life, literally. However, as the months went on, I came to realise that throughout my life I had caused people dear to me, including God Himself, great pain and sadness. This became a weight in my own heart and quite naturally I experienced a cocktail of guilt and regret. And so, I sought another type of good news, forgiveness and release.

Through friends in church and reading the Bible I came to understand the good

We live in a country which is in desperate need of good news.

news offered through the death of Jesus on the cross – I experienced forgiveness and change. “Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation, the old has gone and the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17). At other times in my life I have experienced great pain, both physically but also emotionally, and have sought yet another type of good news – healing and restoration. Once again, these I found in God through the prayers of brothers and sisters and the God-given skills of gifted people.

When my life lacked focus and meaning I sought another good news, direction or purpose. These, too, I found in God, through the wisdom and the counsel of good friends and scripture. One day, I will face the ultimate black door of death and I will reach for a good news called eternal life. What I am trying to say is that at different times in our lives, good news looks different.

Why is Jesus the good news?

It may appear different at different times but essentially, all that good news is found in one person, Jesus. He is hope: “The people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned” (Matthew 4:16). He is forgiveness and new life, a central theme throughout all scripture finding its ultimate expression in the cross and resurrection. He is healing: physical, psychological, emotional and social healing all pepper the life and ministry of Jesus in the gospel accounts. He is purpose (Philippians 2:12-13), release from captivity (Luke 4:18), and many more expressions of good news: reconciliation, adoption, creation – the list goes on. In fact, I would like to suggest that the good news is not a thing at all – it is a person; it is the person of Jesus that we are all seeking. It's just that most people don't know it.

I was a typical example of the vast majority of people in this country who have no clue who Jesus really is. Furthermore, they don't have any idea of what a true and growing relationship with Him offers. That, for me, is a scandal. It is a scandal because just like me, all these people at some point in their lives are seeking good news and for every single one of these people, Jesus

has something marvellous to offer. Just like me, they may not know they are looking for Jesus, but they will know and recognise good news when they find Him. So, if we are all seeking the good news of Jesus but don't know that, then it is our role as Christians to live and speak out about that Jesus-shaped good news so people can make the link themselves. How do we do that? I'd suggest that there are four ways in which God powerfully expresses Himself through us.

1. Everyday evangelism

There is a growing realisation in the church in Britain that with all the organised events and activities the church can deliver, the witness of the everyday Christian reaches the parts that no other can. This is everyday evangelism or a missional lifestyle. A chat at the bus stop, conversation in the doctor's waiting room, small talk with the cashier, walking the dog or on a tea break at work. If you, like many of us, don't know where to start, there are some great resources out there to get you thinking creatively. The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity is good at this and The Light Project thrives on it. My own book *The peg and the pumice stone* is all about how to develop this in your own life.

As a simple starter, I would encourage everyone to leave the house each day with a small object that they are prepared to give away should the occasion arrive: a wooden holding cross, a Bible verse, a prayer on a postcard. I wouldn't worry about looking for opportunities, they will find you. The object will remind you of who you are and the good news that dwells in you. I assure you that sooner or later, the occasion will

arise for you to share that with someone. When it does, then do it your way, in your own words. Share the hope that you have, with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15). But if you never have the reminder in your pocket, you will most probably forget, so be intentional.

2. Scripture

Most people have no idea what scripture says. While our pop songs, films and everyday expressions are all peppered with scriptural references to this powerful source of truth, most of us are blissfully unaware and have become biblically illiterate. We can bemoan it or hearken nostalgically for bygone days, or we can find fresh ways of bringing scripture back into the mainstream. If we believe that scripture is breathed by God, then let's share it. Get a t-shirt, wear a wrist-band, buy some postcards, make a screen saver, paint a picture, give someone a Bible. Whatever your thing is, start to believe that scripture speaks powerfully to people and stands in God's authority, not yours, so be confident in it – be bold.

3. Local church

Get involved in the mission or outreach of your local church. When I say mission, I mean the aspects of the church activity that relate to those outside the church. That may be welcoming newcomers, helping with the foodbank, bringing a friend to an Alpha course, or however your church engages with people who do not know God. Ultimately, we are called to make disciples and it takes a church to nurture a disciple, just as it takes a village to bring up a child. People experience the good news

in church in a particular way, so taking part in that communal expression of good news is essential. Participate in the church; don't just attend.

4. Work of the Spirit

The truth is that God doesn't need any of us to do His work for Him. He is ultimately capable of expressing His good news without us. Through a sunset, a dream, odd circumstances, the Spirit of God can reveal His person and purposes with no one else present. However, there is something wonderful about the God we follow. He is a Father, a loving parent, and He loves to involve us in His business.

Time and time again the Spirit invites us into His work of revealing the good news Jesus to people who don't yet know. Responding to that still small voice of God is a scary thing for me, but in stepping out as He prompts me, I have seen Him impact others powerfully, often through the smallest gestures. Offering to pray for someone, asking a question and listening, reaching out to someone in need or distress, stopping for a stranger – be led and respond.

We live in a country which is in desperate need of good news. If you are in any doubt, check the news. People will look everywhere to find the good news they are seeking; they need no encouragement for that. So be free with the good news that you have received. Stop worrying about what people will think of you; let God be God, you be yourself, and if anyone is interested, let them know. They may have valid questions and objections to religion, but when they truly meet Jesus, He is unmistakably and undeniably good news, to everyone.



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Now is the time to invest in the evangelists and encourage them to go into the world and preach the good news, says **Dr Rachel Jordan-Wolf**, assistant director of HOPE Together.

ADVANCING TOGETHER

Jesus had a great plan to release His disciples to be like Him. He filled His close followers with His Spirit, equipping them to carry the message of the Father's love to all, to speak of His life, death and resurrection, and to offer the great invitation to come home to God both now and forever.

He started this great movement with a group of ordinary people. The first disciples were noted for being "ordinary men" and He chose them to fulfil the next piece of the story of God. It was a small group, not worthy of note in the world's eyes, except for one qualification: "These men had been with Jesus."

Today it hasn't changed. God continues to call people to Himself using the voices and lives of ordinary people. There is one simple qualification: that they have been with Jesus. If we follow Jesus, you and I are given this incredible opportunity to speak of God and to live as witnesses to His love.

Peter and John, filled with the Spirit of God, announced to an unsuspecting world the fantastic news that Jesus is alive. This news spread, together with the invitation to a new life: God's intended life for all who follow Jesus; an invitation to full life, abundant life, which is freedom from death. This is freedom from death now as it creeps in on life, and freedom from death in its finality at the end of our time on Earth.

Many today still live in the shadow of death during life. I don't mean because they are suffering from life-threatening illnesses, but because they are hostages on their way to death whilst living: enslaved to themselves; to their own desires, needs,

“*Jesus didn't send just one person; He formed a group, a family of followers.*”

wants; to all the whims of the world and all its promises for quick fixes to happiness and fulfilment. We are those who take the message of true life, only found in Jesus, to this dying world and to those who are enslaved in it. This is our great calling.

Advance2020 is committed to encouraging these messengers of life: those who have a specific calling, some like Peter, to stand out in the crowd and announce the amazing news of real life, others to speak to individuals or small groups, but all to announce life in all its fullness that only Jesus brings. Advance2020 is also calling on ordinary followers of Jesus to be extraordinary messengers of this same message in 2020 right through our land – to find a renewed voice and encouragement and energy from doing this together.

Jesus didn't send just one person; He formed a group, a family of followers. There is so much encouragement when we do this together. Advance2020 is all about gathering those with a calling in evangelism together, to encourage and equip and cheer each other on. It's about raising the profile of those with this calling, as it says in Ephesians 4:11: "Christ Himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and the teachers..."

At different points in history the church has emphasised different ministries, for example pastors and teachers to care for those in the church. The Advance2020 team feel that now is the time to invest in the evangelists and encourage them. Right now, we have one of the biggest missionary challenges here in our country and we need evangelists. In an age of declining church numbers, we need those whose passion is to share the great, wonderful message of Jesus with those outside our churches. Those who will ask the awkward questions: how much focus do we give to those outside our church? How much resource do we give to reaching them? And how much do we prioritise sharing the greatest news of all? We need evangelists to lead the way and demonstrate, encourage and enable others to join them as they share the good news of Jesus.

Advance2020 was the vision of Andy Hawthorne, who leads The Message Trust. He launched Advance groups to mentor evangelists and found that this had a dramatic impact on those involved. He dreamt of a much larger group, made up of groups of evangelists, all being encouraged and mentored, to give evangelists a renewed emphasis in the church. Andy called some of those he knew to help him launch and run Advance2020 and grow this crowd of evangelists.

The partners include the Luis Palau Association, HOPE Together, the Evangelical Alliance, the Redeemed Christian Church of God, and the Church of England. Together, this central group gathered a great group of evangelists, from all denominations, agencies and movements, for the Advance

Summit in October 2019. The aim of the gathering was to encourage the evangelists and commission them together to step up for 2020 in their vision, plans and expectations. All the evangelists were encouraged to find more evangelists and to gather them, spreading Advance into an even wider movement.

We have just held a great commissioning day – an incredible start to a year of mission and evangelism in 2020, to share boldly, to equip the church, to initiate new things, to be evangelists, and to not be stopped. We are advancing together, expecting great things.

A new fund was launched at Advance to support specifically evangelistic initiatives in 2020. The fund is also backing evangelism training for 11 to 17 year olds. Called Amplify, this is a year-long interactive programme of residentials, local group mentoring and evangelism masterclasses. The Amplify year begins in September 2020 and will journey with 60-100 hand-picked young people from different churches and denominations across the UK. Find out more at www.advance2020.org/amplify

Many leading evangelists are planning missions during 2020. This year The Luis Palau team visited Edinburgh, London, Bristol and Birmingham, encouraging and uniting hundreds of faith leaders, speaking to local media and in churches, and building relationships with local business and civic leaders with a view to planning missions for 2020. J John and Franklin Graham are among other evangelists planning UK events for 2020.

Some of those at Advance2020 are working with local churches to reach out in missions to their towns, villages and cities through HOPE2020. And for those who wouldn't describe themselves as evangelists, but who have a heart for mission, HOPE Together is creating resources for local church mission champions, who will encourage and resource evangelism in their church. Mission champions might never stand on a platform to talk about Jesus, but they might run Alpha courses or the Talking Jesus course. They might be those who consistently keep the local church focusing outwards on those who don't yet know Jesus.

For more ideas on how your area could

get involved in running missions in 2020 go to www.HOPEtogether.org.uk/missionchampions

Advance is also promoting Prayer2020, a HOPE Together initiative calling the church to pray at 8.20pm on the twentieth day of each month, for 20 minutes throughout 2020: praying that people will come to know Jesus and our churches will grow. If you want to find out more go to www.hopetogether.org.uk/prayer2020

Finally if you know you're an evangelist at heart, or you think you could be with some encouragement; if you know that your heart is for those outside the church; if you're an ordinary follower of Jesus, but you've been with Him and you want others to know the greatest news of all, that Jesus has risen from the dead and that they can

live a life worth living forever, coming home to God, then join us; we want to hear from you. Sign up for regular updates from HOPE Together at www.hopetogether.org.uk/signup



THE

95

“I DON'T GO TO CHURCH”

.....

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How can we work together to reach young people who are not in church but are open to the gospel? asks **Myles MacBean**, national director of Scripture Union England and Wales.

Fertile soil for the Gospel

This summer, I've had the delight of seeing first-hand the passion, gifting and sheer stamina of the thousands of volunteers who serve within Scripture Union through the year.

In particular, I observed a fundamental principle that was summed up so eloquently by a team leader who quipped, "mission can be so powerful when we do it together". In Ephesians 4 Paul talks of the importance of us all working together as one in the body of Christ, and that's a principle Scripture Union has held to over the last 150-plus years.

Indeed, as a volunteer-driven, para-church movement, we exist to bring people together. Focusing on creating opportunities for children and young people to explore the Bible, grow in faith, and respond to Jesus, we invite people to share skills, gifts, perspectives and insights so that each might play their complementary part in the one body of Christ.

Arguably, there has never been a time that more clearly requires us to 'do it together'. So many mission-minded individuals and churches find themselves isolated, only in touch with a sub-critical number of young people, limited in resources, willing to serve but feeling ill-equipped to do so.

You could also argue that there's never been a generation in greater need of God's life-transforming good news. Where so many are wrestling with their identity, living in a perpetually connected world, rejecting of authority, and mistrusting of the establishment. Indeed, a recent study reported that 18 per cent of children and young people don't think life is "really worth living", a number that has doubled in 10 years.

—“
It is a generation wide-open to spiritual conversations, and one desperately seeking real, authentic relationships.
 —”

And there has never been a more challenging generation to be reached by the church. A 'post-Christendom' generation where 95 per cent of young people are not in church, that sees the church as irrelevant with a style and culture that just doesn't work for them, and that sees the church as bigoted, hypocritical, judgemental and close-minded.

However, this is also the most potentially fertile soil for the gospel in generations. Recent studies, and our experience, is of a generation that is not anti-Jesus but anti-church (as they perceive it). It is a generation wide open to spiritual conversations, and one desperately seeking real, authentic relationships.

I believe there is a God-given opportunity for us, together, to liberate ourselves of our cultural expectations of what church looks like and where it happens, to embrace the fact that we are no longer seen as the authoritative establishment, and to be willing to be vulnerable guides journeying with young people to meet the real, life-changing, radical Jesus of the gospels.

So, where do we start? Well, here at Scripture Union we know we obviously don't have all the answers, but with the hands-on expertise of our staff, partners and volunteers, we are making a start. Take Rooted, a new

and innovative Scripture Union mission model that's unlike traditional youth work programmes. It starts with young people – their interests, passions and the challenges they face – and builds from there.

Long-term relationship building is the key, with Rooted groups allowing young people to be nurtured in a safe, committed and compassionate Christian community where they can explore faith in a way that's truly relevant to them. The model was the brainchild of Lucy Pearson, a team member in the North West, and from an initial pilot in Bolton alongside local churches, we're now seeing Rooted groups popping up across the country. We're also making resources available to anyone who wants to give it a try (see su.org.uk/rooted).

Our sports ministry is another great example of working together to meet children where they are. In Birmingham, Scripture Union worker Isaac Rocke works alongside a local church youth minister to run a pop-up sports club in an inner-city estate. As they clear the glass off the grass square, children with no church background flood in, and the leaders use informal football training and weave in God-talk to help these young people begin to explore the difference Jesus can make to their lives. A point of stability in often chaotic lives, they are in it for the long term, prayerfully ready to guide the indigenous worshipping community that we hope will emerge.

Mission really can be powerful when we do it together. And with a staggering 95 per cent of under 18s in England and Wales not in church, but still open to exploring the difference Jesus can make, we need to work together to take the gospel to them. What part could you play? Find out more about Scripture Union's 95 Campaign at www.the95.org.uk

We strive to become an integrated part of our community in order to effectively share the gospel, says **Rev Pete Nicholas**, co-minister at Inspire Saint James Clerkenwell.

A CHURCH for

London is one of the most diverse and influential cities on earth. There are more than 300 languages spoken in the schools alone and it has been consistently identified for the past few years, alongside New York, as one of the two cities in the world with the biggest cultural influence.

These twin realities create both exciting opportunities and significant challenges. There are exciting opportunities because in light of Jesus' call to "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19) we are in a privileged position to have many of the nations and people groups of the world coming to London. Equally, with London's influence, if people in the city are reached for Christ, then it can widen the gospel's impact as "faith is [being] reported all over the world" (Romans 1:9).

There are also significant challenges caused by the sheer diversity in London, however. How do you present the gospel to people from different backgrounds, ethnicities and life experiences, who are often living next door to each other? By the same token, the allure of London and its cultural/political/economic power mean that many people are too busy trying to 'make it', or just cope with surviving, to want to consider Christ.

Our vision at Inspire Saint James Clerkenwell, a member of the Evangelical Alliance, is 'to be a united and diverse

There are also significant challenges caused by the sheer diversity in London.

community inspiring London with the good news of Jesus Christ'. Our focus is on both our immediate community in the Clerkenwell and Old Street areas, but also on the capital's communities more widely.

One of the specific challenges we face is the context of our local community. Clerkenwell and Old Street are densely populated because they are in zone 1, central London, but they are also very diverse, both ethnically and socially. For example, we are in south Islington, where two-bedroom new-build flats are sold for more than £1m. Those who live in these flats are often university educated, upwardly mobile and wealthy. Alongside the few people who can afford these prices are the majority of residents – the so-called 'invisible Islington' who make up about two thirds of the population. They live on council estates, often with generational unemployment, and experience profound deprivation and the resulting social fallout such as drug, gang and knife crime.

How do we communicate the gospel

faithfully and relevantly to these groups, and not just reach them for Christ, but help to bring them together into a united and diverse gospel community? It is not easy.

Part of the challenge is that in London there are groups at different places on the socio-demographic spectrum, but also different ethnicities, most of whom don't mix. Partly it is the city-wide problem of being 'alone together'. People in London are busy commuting, trying to make it, or just trying to make it through the week. Community in our individualistic age is therefore so often a casualty. This is very challenging for mission and gospel ministry because the gospel is shared in the context of relationships and it is nurtured within a community.

There is also the challenge that people today expect to live within an experience of 'preference communities'. Our social media is organised like this, thanks to algorithms, and society is being shaped like this too. Too often the church has unthinkingly followed suit, with the result that genuinely diverse churches that reflect the vision of Revelation 7 are all too rare. Instead, people like me seek to reach people like me, and whilst I might not go so far as to say that is wrong, it is worth reflecting whether it lives up to the biblical expectation of church.

So, how have we sought to address this? One of the things we have found particularly important is not just to seek to proclaim the gospel to people but to become part of the



London

community, and in that context to live out and proclaim the gospel. We encourage the church family that doesn't live in the area to seek to move into the area and, in particular, onto the estates. We don't want a 'them and us' scenario because Christ didn't do that; He became one of us.

Wonderfully, many in the church family have done that and this has, slowly over time, made a big impact. I can recall preaching a sermon where I challenged the middle-class ideals (or idols) of space and education that often mean people move to the suburbs of the city after a few years living centrally. "Stay in the area instead and put your children in bunk beds, share the estate communal space with your neighbours (because no one has much of it in zone 1), and go to the local schools," I said.

A week after the sermon a couple in our church family came up to me and said, "We have been really praying about your sermon and feel the Lord has put it on our hearts to move into one of the estates for the foreseeable future." I nearly fell over and thought to myself that I hadn't expected anyone to do it!

It has taken time and we have had to be patient, because initially the assumption on estates is that you are going to move on in a year or so. However, after three or four years the community starts to accept you as 'one of us', the barriers come down and opportunities for the gospel emerge.

“*The reality is we have made lots of mistakes and have had plenty of tough times.*”

We have also noticed that our best mission initiatives have been those that have emerged from prayerfully listening. We see that impact comes when we pay attention to the needs of the community we are seeking to engage with.

When we first came to the area, we approached the headmistress of a local primary school and asked her what her biggest needs were. She identified two: anti-social behaviour caused by children being bored after school and parents not speaking English well enough to effectively communicate with the school.

As a result, we started a football initiative, a sports holiday club and classes to teach English as a second language. Both have turned out to be our most effective mission initiatives. This past summer, in its seventh year, we had more than 100 children at our holiday club having a great time playing sports, doing crafts, and enjoying music and hearing the gospel throughout the week. Likewise, our Inspire English classes have had hundreds of

people from so many different nationalities come through them, which has created opportunities for them to hear the gospel. Many now come along to church services regularly as a result.

By contrast, as we have tried to reach young professionals, we have found that Ted talk-style evening events, which engage with issues and areas of interest they have from a gospel perspective, in a high-quality evening with good food, drink and atmosphere, have proved fruitful.

Of course, in providing the edited highlights there is the danger of presenting things as though we have experienced mostly gospel fruit. The reality is we have made lots of mistakes and have had plenty of tough times. We have been evicted from our Sunday venue, different groups' cultural blind spots have led to tensions in the church family, we haven't been good enough yet at training up and releasing diverse lay leadership from within, events we have put on have flopped.

But through it all God has been very kind to us, and we haven't been afraid to learn from our mistakes and seek to change. We may not yet be inspiring all of London with the good news of Jesus Christ, but by God's grace we are making a difference in some of London's communities.

If you would like to find out more about our church and what we are doing, please go to www.inspiresaintjames.org

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friends for life

I keep my non-Christian friends close because I want them to know God's love, says **Sam Pritchard**, public policy officer, Evangelical Alliance Wales.

I am confident we can all relate to leaving school and being adamant that we would keep in contact with all our friends.

I'm sure I am not alone in never seeing the majority of people from school ever again. At least you might share with me a feeling of growing separation. However, since leaving school there have been a few friends that I have remained close to and as a small group we regularly keep in contact and meet up.

I grew up with a generation of children who never attended church. Now in our early 20s, the four friends from school that I have maintained close relationships with are all non-Christians and have no connection or experience of church. This means that their perception of who Christians are is largely forged from our friendship. In many cases, I am living out what it means to know Jesus through the way I interact with them; and this may be your experience, too. In the words of Paul, "we are Christ's ambassadors" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

The reality is that your non-Christian friends probably have never attended church and the closest they get to Jesus is through interacting with you. Your Christian witness to your friends will sometimes be manifest in unlikely ways. For me, a few months ago the conversation resembled something like this: "You know what? I've never heard you swear." And the response from one of my other friends was: "Have

—“
I grew up around a generation of children who never attended church.
—”

you never noticed before?". Here, one of my friends recognised that the way I use language is different to the way the rest of the group uses it. This was then followed up by confirmation that this small moral act of not swearing has been noticed.

From this emerged an excellent opening to discuss my Christian faith: "Why don't you swear as a Christian?". There are a lot of good answers to this question and Bible verses such as Ephesians 4:29 provide a lot of clarity. The way I actually responded to this was a paraphrasing of James 3:10, where I said, "I don't swear and try not to gossip or spread rumours, because with my mouth I worship God and I pray, and I talk about the love that Jesus has shown. It would therefore be a contradiction for me if I talk about how much God values people to the extent that He died on the cross for people and then in the next sentence devalue someone who is made in the image of God."

By my friends noticing that I seldom swear and am often less negative about people, it led to an opportunity for me to

explain that they are valuable to Jesus, too. What's more, this conversation developed naturally, which is, of course, expected among friends. And the more we keep in contact with our non-Christian friends, the more occasions we will have to be open about the good news of Jesus.

As Christians, we can always be open about our faith; sometimes people might not be expecting us to talk about church or our character or the true meaning of Easter, but eventually they will do. Inevitably, when you spend time with people who care about you, they will enquire and ask about your life. Through Jesus we have life and life in abundance, and He wants us to share it.

As I mentioned earlier, a number of our friends would never visit a church event or service. When giving the great commission, Jesus said we should "go out into all the world", but far too often we expect people to come in. It's vital to keep in contact with our non-Christian friends because we need to be a people who make an effort to share the hope that we have. We cannot expect people to come into church when their opinion of church is shaped by a secular culture; people have various prejudices and reservations about coming to church due to untruths.

The reality is, someone is more likely to attend a church if personally invited by someone they know and love. But we can always take the good news of Jesus to them in the meantime.

As people hanker for something more, especially in turbulent times, how can we embody the good news? asks **Peter Lynas**, director of Evangelical Alliance Northern Ireland.

YEARNING FOR MORE

I went to university more years ago than I care to remember. As I entered the legal profession after uni, life was good.

Economically, my friends were easily finding jobs with clear long-term futures. Politically, it was the time of Tony Blair, Bill Clinton and the Good Friday Agreement. The general attitude amongst my non-Christian friends was: if you want to follow Jesus that's fine, but I don't need Him. Twenty years ago the world felt a lot more politically and economically certain.

Today we live in a world of much greater uncertainty, chaos and fear. Few are saying that life is good, economically or politically. A job for life is a thing of the past. Politics changes by the hour, let alone the day or the week. I have no idea who will be Prime Minister, or even which party will be in government, by the time you read this. At the same time, faith is much more likely to be contested or actively resisted in the public square.

And yet, the declaration that "God is good news" has never been more relevant. It has always been true, but in many ways these turbulent times make the good news of the gospel all the more important.

Faith in crisis?

My dad recently suffered a severe stroke. We were on holiday in Canada at the time and had to rush home as he was put into an induced coma. On the flight home I wrote my notes for the funeral. The words flowed easily and quickly: Dad was a legend who loved Jesus, had lived life to the full and influenced the lives of many. It was a strangely cathartic experience.

What struck me most was the variety

The world awaits a people who can recover the frightening beauty and awesome truth of the gospel.

of people getting in touch about Dad. The responses were in three broad categories: those who shared our belief that God is good news and so were praying for Dad; the second also said they were praying but were hesitant – they wanted to believe in prayer, or perhaps used to or knew that we did; the third seemed at a loss in this moment to know what to say – and so they resorted to "thinking of you" and "wishing him well".

I don't doubt their sincerity, but there was a hollowness to their words. Wishing is not the same as hoping, and thinking is definitely not the same as praying. There is so little to say in moments of crisis if you don't believe there is something more, if you don't believe in God and His goodness.

A secular age

Charles Taylor is a Canadian philosopher and theologian who has written extensively on living in a secular age. He explores how we moved from a time 500 years ago when not believing in God was unthinkable to today, when belief in God is almost unthinkable. Taylor paints a picture of how we have become disenchanted, stuck in our limited perspectives with no room for the transcendent.

I think of it in terms of the film *The Truman Show*. Jim Carrey plays Truman, who is the star of a reality TV show broadcast live and continually. Finally, suspecting he is caught in a tiny artificial world, he gets into a boat and keeps going until he finally bumps into the edge of the set and climbs out and discovers a whole new larger and more real world. People today, like Carrey's character, live in a metaphorical enclosed little dome but are haunted by the sense that there is something more.

Taylor points out that we used to live much more porous lives, open to the spiritual and the supernatural. But over the last 500 years we have discarded, sometimes willingly, though more often not, our spiritual clothes and beliefs. Everything now has a scientific, rational or natural explanation. In short, people don't see any need for God.

But most people want there to be something more. When a tragedy happens, as with my dad, or death strikes, no one wants to say that a collection of cells have simply come to end in their current form. Instead, they go on social media proclaiming #prayforManchester despite not believing in God or the power of prayer. We might be inclined to critique the incoherence of their actions, but this reflects the hope for something more – what Taylor calls a sense of haunting. He notes, "The secular age is schizophrenic, or better, deeply cross-pressured." All beliefs are more fragile and contested as each of us feels pushed and pressed and tugged by alternative, rival stories of who we are and what we are for.

Julian Barnes, the English author and atheist, comments, "I don't believe in God, but I miss him." This seems to me to be

the cry of so many. There are cracks in the foundation of secularism, and it won't work in the long term. The world awaits a people who can recover the frightening beauty and awesome truth of the gospel. Not a privatised, personal faith hidden from view. As theologian Tom Wright reminds us, "The whole point of Christianity is that it offers a story which is the story of the whole world. It is public truth."

Prayerful hope

So, how do we live into, and incarnate, the good news and hope of Jesus today? Brexit is causing deep division in our society. I live in Northern Ireland, but I can look out the window of my house and see Donegal in the Republic of Ireland. The backstop and the threat of a hard boarder are very real. In the midst of all this, Westminster has liberalised abortion law in Northern Ireland and redefined marriage without the consent of the people, circumventing our democratic processes.

As regular readers will know, we have

sought to reframe the abortion debate in Northern Ireland, partnering with others to set up Both Lives Matter and emphasising the importance of mother and baby. We have run a positive campaign showing that 100,000 people are alive in Northern Ireland today because we did not bring in the 1967 Act along with the rest of the UK. In response to the proposed changes, we have encouraged others to send more than 100,000 postcards to local members of the legislative assembly, encouraging them to get the Northern Ireland Assembly up and running again. We have also gathered people together to pray. With others, we filled St Anne's Cathedral in Belfast, with hundreds more kneeling on the street to join us. Thousands gathered at Stormont for a silent protest for those who have no voice.

Prayer is key. In the first days after my dad's stroke we prayed that if it was time God would take him, and if not that we would see healing. Dad is slowly on the mend, but the staff are intrigued as we pray over him each day. Moments of crisis often lead us to

contend in prayer in a new way. So, we need to contend for our country, for our politicians, for reconciliation regardless of our views on Brexit, for the unborn in Northern Ireland and across the UK. Prayer opens a portal for the presence of God to break into the secular.

It is easy to despair with all that is going on in the world around us. If you are stuck living in Truman's enclosed little dome, this is all there is, and despair is hardly surprising. But as the night gets darker, the light shines brighter. In one sense, it has rarely been easier to be missional – to stand out.

Our role is not to fold, to fight or to take flight. Instead, we must be formed and fortified to call others into the flourishing, thriving, hope-filled life found in Jesus. This is no easy task; the good news of Jesus jars with the plausibility structures of our world. He disrupts, de-centres, convicts and reforms. But in the chaos, uncertainty and fear, the secular story is starting to crack. There is a deep spiritual aching. Doubters are tempted to believe. And God is and always will be good news.



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OUR EVER-PRESENT HOPE

How can the church offer hope in a chaotic world searching for certainty? asks **Danny Webster**, advocacy and media manager, Evangelical Alliance.

Christian hope is rooted in the resurrection of Jesus and the promise of eternal life with Him.

It is not about present circumstances or what is currently in fashion or causing consternation to society. The hope that we have is the grounding for our lives, and the basis on which we can offer hope to society.

In challenging and uncomfortable times, this should bring comfort because we know that God is not fazed by the circumstances we are facing. We can look to history and remember that the church has navigated far more turbulent times in past. We can look to the church across the world which experiences persecution for their faith.

In the three years since the vote in June 2016 to leave the European Union, politics has been dominated by attempts to achieve this and efforts to frustrate it.

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I think we should recognise the idolatry of politics in our present moment.
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The relative stability of British politics has been overturned with resignations and defections. We have seen the rise and fall of political parties seeking to step into the gaps created. The uncertainty has led to anxiety and fear for many about the future. We cannot dismiss or ignore the discomfort many are feeling outside and inside the church.

The story we are told by the world is defined by winners and losers, success

and failure, seeming chaos and the search for certainty. The extraordinary political moves of recent years have offered us one version of the story we are collectively living through. But we should not fall into the trap of accepting it, whether that's in support or opposition to political events. As a church we can offer a narrative of hope for the future that goes far beyond contemporary political debates.

This isn't to say that Brexit and the place of the UK in the world are not important questions, nor that as Christians we shouldn't be involved. It's to say that, as we are involved, we seek to tell a better story for society. We cannot be defined by the story the world tells, but we can fix our attention to the God story that we are a part of. While there is much to fear in our world, we are commanded not to fear. While it can be hard to understand the times we are in, we can understand God's place above all

things, and our place in His plan.

So, how can Christians offer a better narrative for our society? How can we put aside fear and replace it with sure and certain hope?

Recognise the idolatry of politics

First, I think we should seek to recognise the idolatry of politics in our present moment. This has often been the case, but increasingly politics is looked to as the ultimate power, the cause and the answer to all of society's ills, the only remedy for entrenched disagreement and provider of the way forward. Idolising politics is unhelpful; it doesn't work. Politics is important but when we give it more power than it can handle it places a good thing into a position it cannot sustain. It can only fail to live up to our expectations and demands.

Government is a God-ordained institution – not any particular form, and certainly not any specific governing party – but as the right ordering of our society. While the Bible is ambivalent about the form of government, and recognises the limitations of earthly rule, it also establishes it as legitimate. When Jesus flummoxed the Pharisees with His answer of what to do with the coin bearing Caesar's image, He not only affirmed the overall sovereignty of God but also the delegated role that earthly institutions have. Likewise, before Pilate Jesus reminded him that the authority Pilate had came from the Father in heaven.

Idolatry grows when we take something that is good in its place and ask it to do something it is not designed for. Whether this is money, relationships, our roles and responsibilities in this world, or the systems we live in and through, each have their appropriate place. When we misplace these things, we turn them into idols.

When our idols disappoint, we lose faith in them. When we expect laws to resolve all problems in society and they do not, there is a wider distrust in the rule of law. When politics does not adequately arbitrate disagreement and help us find a way forward as a society, we doubt the good that can be done through the process.

Time and again the scriptures remind us to rely not on politics or people for our future, but to trust in God's love and His

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At times of political chaos, we should be the people who offer hope to society.
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faithfulness. Perhaps the first step in offering hope to society is to recognise the idols in our own thinking, to repent and seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness, knowing that all things will follow in their proper place.

Know where we want to go

We need to have a vision of where we want to go. It is not enough to recognise the current frustration or accurately analyse where it has come from. We need a vision for the future. You may want freedom from the laws of the EU, but to what end? Or freedom of movement of people, goods and services, but why?

Christians have a significant contribution to offer here. We know that what is achieved here on earth is only ever a part of all the good that is to come. We know that whether we leave the EU or not, that isn't the end of the story, so we have a role to play in encouraging our friends and neighbours to lift their heads, look beyond the immediate, and think about where they and we are going.

This is where hope comes in. Hope isn't about denying the challenges of the present or ignoring the disappointment many experience; it is about looking beyond that. We offer hope in the person of Jesus, and as His followers we offer hope to society. Just as we believe that one day God will reconcile all things to Himself, we work in

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Hope isn't about denying the challenges of the present or ignoring the disappointment many experience.
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the world He created to do the work that He called us to.

Hope calls us to a vision of how things could be. As Martin Luther King Jr. said: “We should be as maladjusted as the prophet Amos, who in the midst of injustices of his day, could cry out in words that echo across the centuries, ‘Let justice roll down like waters...’”

Witness to an alternative

It is not just for individual Christians to speak up for hope. We need Christians in all areas of our society, whether that is politics, business, the media, education, healthcare – the list could go on – but we also need the church to offer an alternative to society.

The church is a vital public institution and not just a collection of Christians. In the local community it provides stability, in the physical fabric of buildings it offers space, in the open arms of a welcoming community it demonstrates love. But the church is more than a service provider, more than a body with volunteer capacity to plug the gaps left by the state.

It is an alternative to the public ordered by secular values and organised through the secular state. The church provides a witness to what society could be like, in the relationships between generations, in the centrality of family life, in the care and compassion for each other, and in the commitment to worshipping and honouring God.

The church doesn't achieve this by ignoring the world or separating out from it, and nor is it achievable if the church is co-opted into the world or just tries to copy the world's ways. As the church sets its hope on God and His glory, it can walk in the world with confidence of God's goodness.

As followers of Christ we are His church. This is not about other people. It is our role to be God's ambassadors; at times of political chaos, we should be the people who offer hope to society.

Our vision for society isn't defined by party politics or frustrated by current events. It isn't affected by political realignments or dependant on favourable coverage. We hold fast to the truth of God's goodness, His intent, and His desire to work through us. We offer hope and speak truth. We pour love into a climate of bitterness, and we pray for God's kingdom to come.

FIVE LIVES, ONE FLIGHT

Imagine how it would feel to save someone's life. Now think about having that feeling again. And again. And again. And again. All in one day.

Saving one life is a privilege few of us may ever experience, let alone saving five. But it happened to two MAF pilots not long ago.

Meet Ester

Ester gave birth early one morning in a small village called Yapsie deep in Papua New Guinea's Highlands. After a difficult and complex labour, her retained placenta caused life-threatening complications. By sunset, staff at the small aid post were still battling to stop the bleeding.

Tragically, Ester's baby died.



As night fell, Ester was left fighting for her life. The team needed urgent medical help — but who could reach them in time? By foot, it would take days to reach the city hospital, travelling across treacherous mountain paths. Ester probably wouldn't survive until morning.

The team prayed, and radioed Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) — Ester's only hope.

Receiving the call, pilots Mathias Glass and Ryan Cole planned a medevac (an emergency medical flight) to the Yapsie airstrip at sunrise — it was too dark to fly as it was now night-time. They prayed that Ester would hold on until morning.

Meet Osa and her unborn child

As the pilots slept and Ester clung on to life, Osa was writhing in labour.

Struggling to deliver a breached baby, the midwife at the Telefomin clinic knew both lives were at stake. An emergency operation was needed at the city hospital if mother and child were to survive. The midwife prayed and radioed MAF — Osa and her baby's only hope.



The plane could land at Telefomin en route from Yapsie.

One patient had become three.

Meet Kolina

As the pilots woke, Ester clung to life, Osa writhed in labour, her unborn baby fought to enter the world, and Kolina battled with excruciating pain from intestinal problems at the Telefomin clinic.



It was clear to staff at the clinic that Kolina needed to get on the same flight as Ester and Osa, to receive the help she needed at the city hospital. She too was in a critical condition.

Three patients had become four.

Meet Lucy

As the pilots prepared for take-off, Ester clung to life, Osa writhed in agony, her unborn baby battled to enter the world, and Kolina struggled to manage the pain, Lucy was diagnosed with tuberculosis. It was a miracle that MAF was on the way!

This too was Lucy's only way to receive medical treatment. Because of her age, she would never have survived the overland journey.

Four patients had become five.



One aircraft, five survivors

Thanks to the expertise of MAF pilots Mathias and Ryan, and the aviation charity's ability to respond, all five patients reached Tabubil city hospital in time. Each woman received the treatment she needed.

Lucy remains in our prayers as she receives life-saving medical care.

Kolina's intestinal pains were due to an unexpected and complicated pregnancy. She will remain in hospital until the birth of her baby, safe in the hands of a midwifery team.

Osa gave birth to a healthy baby girl named Rosalind. Both mother and baby are doing well.

Ester continues to mourn the loss of her baby but has now returned to

Yapsie to continue her recovery after the surgery that saved her life.

MAF carries out more than 4,000 medical flights each year, bringing life-saving help to those without access to hospital care.

For almost 75 years, MAF has helped thousands of isolated people receive the life-saving help they needed to survive.

Please help us fund more flights. Just £5 a month could help fuel one medevac each year, saving at least one life.



I WANT TO FUEL MORE LIFE-SAVING FLIGHTS

It costs just £60 to fuel a flight like the one Ester, Osa, Kolina and Lucy were on. **Please consider giving a gift today.**

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An ethnically diverse heaven awaits us, but the work begins here and now. Will you help us reach the 'unreached' with the gospel? asks **Colin Lowther**, CEO of Reach Beyond.

TOGETHER IN *mission*

Like many people, my ideas of what heaven will be like are probably way off the mark.

I think most of us have moved past the fluffy clouds and harps stage and may have upgraded our image of eternity to include some more modern accoutrements. As Adrian Plass outlined so well in his book *The Final Boundary*, there may even be cricket in heaven. And why not?

But one mistake I often make is to imagine that heaven will be populated by people just like me. What a scary thought. In Revelation chapter 7, John has an eye-opening vision which puts this idea to bed once and for all. He says, "I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb."

The Greek word used for 'nation' here is 'ethne', which is the root of the English word 'ethnic'. There are around 16,000 ethnic groups on the planet, so John is saying something outrageous: that every one of those ethnic groups will be represented in heaven.

But there's a problem. Today, more than 7,000 of these ethnic groups are termed 'unreached'. The good news is yet to make an impact amongst them. In fact, more than 3.1bn people on earth have never heard about Jesus. So how on earth (or in heaven) are we going to get from where we are now to John's vision of a super-diverse eternity?

Clearly there's some great commission

We believe that putting proclamation and demonstration together offers a more complete gospel picture.

work yet to do. But can it be done in isolation? In John 17 Jesus prays to the Father that we "may be brought to complete unity". But there's a reason for that. He goes on, "Then the world will know that you sent me". According to Jesus, unity is an essential part of mission; in fact, it's the key ingredient that will convince those who hear our message that He is the Son of God.

Therefore, doing mission together is essential. No one can tackle such a massive task on their own. At Reach Beyond we have three words to remind ourselves of our mission calling: together, voice, hands. 'Together' is foundational. It's important for us to work together with indigenous community partners overseas and with UK churches. On one hand, the indigenous partners can address the greatest needs of local people with real cultural understanding. They can create long-term, sustainable change in their communities.

On the other hand, UK churches can raise up internationally-minded missional believers and equip, champion and support missionaries

serving overseas. They can also pray for, give to and serve unreached peoples around the world, as well as those on our doorsteps who come to live and work in the UK.

Into the mix, Reach Beyond offers expertise in media and community development, plus essential resources to make life-transforming projects happen. Our vision is to be the voice and hands of Jesus to those who have not heard the good news of the gospel.

But what does it mean to be the voice and hands of Jesus? In Matthew chapter four it says, "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people." Notice what He did. He proclaimed the good news with His voice and demonstrated it with His hands. These two things were not separated out for Jesus, so why should they be for His followers today?

At Reach Beyond we use different media channels to proclaim the good news alongside every expression of community development and medicine to demonstrate the good news. We believe that putting proclamation and demonstration together offers a more complete gospel picture. And it is the model that Jesus left us. Here are two examples.

1. Sergei's story: why radio ministry still matters

Sergei* lives in a country in Central Asia. When drunk he would often beat his

wife and kids. But 10 years of alcoholism inevitably took their toll. One night, Sergei had a heart attack. Rushed into hospital, he was told to stay there for three weeks. Feeling rejected by family and friends, Sergei called out to an unknown god: "Why do you hate me so much? What have I done to you?"

One hospital roommate heard this outburst over his headphones and asked Sergei why he was blaming God. "All of your problems are not because of God, but because of you, brother. But only God can help you with them." He handed Sergei his headphones and said, "Just listen for half an hour. This is the only way I can help you."

Reluctantly, Sergei took the headphones and started listening. What he heard was an audio programme on a mobile phone app produced by local believers together with Reach Beyond. Christians are forbidden to broadcast on normal radio channels in this country, but the app means the gospel is freely available without arousing the suspicions of the authorities.

"It was the first positive thing I had heard in a long time," Sergei said. Over the next few weeks, he listened more and more. "I was like a sponge, absorbing everything. I prayed with them; I sang with them. I didn't recognise myself."

Talking about what he was hearing with his roommate, Sergei gave his life to Christ. "I confessed not only to God, but also to

my wife and kids. Now I'm at home, living in peace – thanks to the Lord Jesus." Just a few hours of listening transformed Sergei's life. The voice of Jesus amplifying the witness of local believers.

2. Women refugees' story: because little things matter

At the infamous Moria refugee camp on the Greek island of Lesbos, the women and children often face regular abuse. At night, a simple trip to the toilet can be dangerous for a woman or a young girl, as men can make lewd remarks, expose themselves and, even worse, commit acts of sexual violence. That is why many women and girls in refugee camps have resorted to the indignity of wearing improvised nappies so that they don't have to leave their tents. Others suffer in silence and wait for dawn, or perhaps urinate out in the open next to their tents causing a public health issue.

When we saw this situation, members of a Reach Beyond team visiting the camp set out to find some positive solutions for the women. Together with female staff from two other Christian ministries working there, they sat down with the women refugees to build trust, relationships and to learn. Team leader Martin Harrison said, "This was a huge answer to prayer since we had no idea whether the Muslim women would open up about such a sensitive topic. But there was nothing to worry about."

The women were shown a selection of devices that would make it easier for them to urinate into a container in their shelter at night. The most preferred device was a small silicone urination funnel which was discrete and easy to clean. Thanks to the generosity of Reach Beyond supporters we now purchase and distribute thousands of these devices to refugee women and children.

But this is about more than just a piece of silicone. Often when refugee women receive these devices they feel incredibly moved, almost to tears. They can hardly believe that strangers would be interested in their safety and wellbeing, and they ask our team members questions like: "Why are you doing this for us?" Following Peter's advice in 1 Peter, we share with them the reason for the hope that we have. And we do this with gentleness and respect.

For us, this is the gospel in action, the church as the hands of Jesus serving in dark places, taking His good news to the nations, tribes and peoples wherever they are. But we don't do this alone. Reach Beyond's ministry is made possible through partnerships with UK churches who pray, give and send out teams of volunteers to serve in places like Lesbos. Together, voice, hands.

To find out more about how Reach Beyond is impacting the lives of the 'unreached' with the gospel, and to get involved, go to: reachbeyond.org.uk

*Name changed for security reasons.

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**REACH
BEYOND**

How can the One People Commission's new resource book help the UK church achieve greater ethnic unity? asks **Naomi Osinnowo**.

OUR **UNITY** IS

GOOD NEWS

It was nine years ago, in 2010, when the Evangelical Alliance sensed, perhaps more deeply than it had ever done before, evangelicals' desire to see better ethnic unity and integration within the UK church.

If you take a look at the major cities around the UK, and even many of the large towns, you'll see that the church on a whole reflects the diversity illustrated in Revelation 7, but when it comes to our congregations, there's still a fair amount to be desired.

By and large, our churches and Christian communities can resemble ethnic enclaves, which can stifle God's ability to strengthen His people and His people's ability to reach the lost. Yet churches, Christian organisations and other gathered communities of believers are more determined than ever to more effectively reach beyond the walls of their buildings, their familiar surroundings, the people who look and speak like them, and connect with those who are, frankly, different – on the surface at least.

But how do you do that? How do you, as a, say, Presbyterian minister who has been leading a church of mainly English couples in their 50s and 60s, begin to develop a missional relationship with a charismatic church leader who has not long arrived in the UK from South America? While many may not see the potential challenges posed by this contrast, and there will be examples of Christians from different ethnic backgrounds and denominations who hit the 'missional nail on the head' right away, there are more often than not obstacles to navigate.

I attended a Christian organisation's event recently, and one of the trustees was invited to the stage to bring to a close a presentation with a prayer. The first thing she said was:

"I am a black Pentecostal Christian so I would like us to pray like..." The room of mainly middle-aged white men was asked to rise to their feet, hold the hands of the person beside them, and then pray aloud blessings over one another and over the

This resource shares our experiences, the mistakes made and the lessons learned.

organisation's plans. I've attended a few events in my time at the Evangelical Alliance; not once have I heard the equivalent caveat from a white male Baptist. I assume prayer is prayer.

These experiences are poignant and speak to me about how we might perceive ourselves and assume others see us based on the colour of our skin, our country of origin, the denomination with which we're aligned, or any other characteristic that differentiates us from others. Truth be told, sometimes perceptions aren't the only things at play: one Christian community may downright prejudge another or misunderstand them due to differences in cultural practices or something else. A lot of the time, these perceptions, misunderstandings and prejudices become obstacles to gospel unity and our missional activity.

The Evangelical Alliance has faced these challenges, and many others, and sought to respond through its One People Commission (OPC). The journey towards ethnic unity has been long and challenging, with much learning on the way. But with many others in the church looking to make the necessary effort towards unity, the OPC has developed a new resource book, to share its experiences and help churches, Christian organisations and other communities of believers act on their desire to see greater integration between Christians of different ethnic backgrounds. It also seeks to show how a united church, particularly in a place as diverse as the UK, will stand a better chance reaching the lost with the good news of Jesus than one that is segmented.

Co-written by Steve Clifford, general director of the Evangelical Alliance, and Rev Yemi Adedeji, director of the OPC, with the foreword penned by Agu Irukwu, senior pastor of Jesus House, London, the book offers

a crucial contribution to the conversation around how to support and nurture healthy churches so environments can be created where all people can flourish.

Steve and Yemi speak from their own experiences, not only as colleagues working together the past seven years since the OPC was established by the Evangelical Alliance to demonstrate that within the UK church diversity is good and unity is possible, but in their respective roles as Christian and church leaders.

A number of other Christian and church leaders, including Manoj Raithatha, national coordinator of the Evangelical Alliance's South Asian Forum, Shantelle Johnson, communications manager at London City Mission, and Roy Crowne, executive director of HOPE Together, also share, in the form of case studies, their experiences of developing relationships with people from different ethnic backgrounds, be this within the church community or on the mission field.

The Christian and church leaders who have contributed to this book are keen for you to learn from their experiences, so that you can avoid their mistakes and be encouraged by their successes as you work towards a more integrated church. To this

“*I have witnessed the church's weakness when we are divided and our strength when we are united.*”

end they've also included reflections and practical tips to support you as you consider how you can apply these lessons in your own context.

Available from early December, the book seeks to be helpful, pragmatic and honest, as the Evangelical Alliance looks to raise awareness of blind spots and champion a different community to the world, showing that another, more unified, reality is possible. The bedrock of this hope and expectation is Jesus' prayer for us: "I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you" (John 17:20-21).

Commenting on the resource, Yemi said, "Seven years ago the Evangelical Alliance established the One People Commission

because diversity is good and unity is possible. Since its inception, each and every Christian and church leader within the group has prioritised building even stronger relationships within and outside their communities, keen to reflect the unity we are called to in Jesus Christ and enable God to share His good news through us.

"This resource shares our experiences, the mistakes made and the lessons learned, so that you can learn from us as you act on your desire to see better ethnic unity. We hope this resource supports you as you take steps towards even more integrated communities for the sake of the gospel."

Steve adds, "The One People Commission, but more importantly what it stands for, holds a special place in my heart, because I have witnessed the church's weakness when we are divided and our strength when we are united. It's my hope that this resource encourages us to bring to light some of the challenges we face, hold up our hands where we have been wrong, and show others the love and compassion that Jesus showed the world. I'll shortly be stepping down from my role as general director, but I'll continue to celebrate diversity while promoting unity long after I have."

We can help you raise the bar of your church comms for the sake of the gospel, says **Jo Swinney**, director of church communications at Christian Publishing & Outreach.

CHURCH

FROM THE OUTSIDE

St Botolph's, in the centre of Boston, Lincolnshire, is open seven days a week. Boston is a diverse and multicultural town with large recent migrant populations from Eastern Europe. There have been clashes between communities and St Botolph's sees its role as one of bringing people together and healing division.

Its vision is clear, but it struggles to communicate that vision: "Our noticeboard and signage was badly damaged during a storm in 2017," explains the vicar. "Our current display is poor quality, broken and uninviting to visitors and passers-by. We urgently need a noticeboard to ensure those who may not feel they belong know that they are welcome in our church." Any funds they might have had for this vital communication tool have been used up on repairing flood damage to the building.

The church is living and active in the UK but the reality is that effective communication can be a struggle. St Botolph's is not the only church hindered in efforts to reach the local community by limited financial resources. Others lack technical skills, design know how, or people with time to give.

Mark begins his gospel by explaining it is an account of "the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God" (1:1). Jesus, God-made-man, lived, died and was resurrected for the salvation of the world – to reconcile us to our holy Creator. He came announcing the kingdom of God, in which under a just and merciful ruler all of creation flourishes. He

—“
Our world is noisy and competition for a hearing is fierce.
 —”

returned to heaven but is present in the Holy Spirit in every believer and active in His body, the church. Good news indeed, in a world desperate for good news.

Christian Publishing and Outreach (CPO) was founded with the purpose of supporting and enabling the local church to share the good news of Jesus effectively, and we still do that today. For some, the idea that eye-catching design, carefully chosen words, or a campaign with a strong visual identity might have anything to do with mission is hard to compute. But Jesus told His followers to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them... and teaching them to obey everything [He] commanded" (Matthew 28:16-20). Our world is noisy and competition for a hearing is fierce. We do the gospel a disservice if we don't deliver it clearly and engagingly.

At CPO we are privileged to be in regular contact with thousands of churches across the UK. We are inspired and encouraged every day by stories of bold, creative and impactful outreach – children's holiday clubs, meals for the homeless, comedy events, parenting courses, meetings in libraries and pubs, church coffee shops and social events for the

elderly, prison and hospital visiting.

Last May we heard from All Saints in Christchurch which does an annual 'walk of witness' through the town on Good Friday. "We create five 'Stations of the Cross' at strategic points, stopping to tell the Good Friday story, say a prayer and sing a hymn. We also take copies of the booklet *One Friday*, which we distribute to many people along the sea front, and we give out Easter eggs to the children." As a result of their efforts, last year several families who had never been to church before joined them on Easter Sunday.

CPO had provided All Saints with posters and booklets for their Easter outreach. To support the church in its communication, CPO also creates customisable designs in multiple formats so there is consistency between the invitation card to a Christmas service someone receives through their door, the banner they walk past on their way to work, and the Facebook ad that appears in their feed. We offer training in communication strategy, design basics, effective church websites and using social media for evangelism.

We have a fund to support churches that can't afford even the most basic communication tools – the Church Communications Improvement Project (www.churchcoms.uk). To find out more about our work and ways we can support your church, please visit www.cpo.org.uk. We would love to partner with you as you communicate the good news of Jesus to your local community and beyond.



AMBASSADORS OF HOPE

We are motivated to care for those who suffer because the gospel teaches us to look after those in need, says **Neil Casey**, director of Medair UK.

More emergencies happen around the world and more people are affected by them than ever before.

Medair believes no one should suffer needlessly in the wake of a disaster or crisis. When emergency strikes, we are ready to meet survivors' most basic needs for shelter, water and healthcare – and then stay until families are back on their feet.

Caring for the poor and marginalised is a central principle of the gospel. In Matthew 25:40 it says, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

Our faith inspires us to give our best in all circumstances. By faith we pray for wisdom when facing difficult decisions, and for courage to live and work in demanding and often dangerous situations. Just as your values are at the core of everything you do, at Medair, Christian faith is at the core of everything we do. The heart of Medair is not health services, water or shelter – it is people.

We believe every person is a unique individual created by God. Medair seeks to listen to people's stories, spend time in their presence, and treat them with the

Our faith inspires us to give our best in all circumstances.

compassion and dignity they deserve.

Earlier this year, between March and April, Mozambique experienced two major disasters in less than two months. Overall, according to the United Nations, more than two million people were affected by Cyclone Idai and Cyclone Kenneth in Mozambique alone. In some locations, our staff on the ground estimated that close to 90 per cent of homes were destroyed, with families having lost most, if not all, of their possessions. Access to drinking water was lost and waterborne diseases were on the rise after the storms.

Medair emergency response teams, partnering with Christian relief organisation

Food for the Hungry, quickly responded, providing people in Mozambique with shelter, household items and hygiene kits, including filters and water treatment solutions. We were able to reach more than 6,700 families with life-saving relief in some of the most remote areas affected by the two cyclones.

To give you an idea of how remote these places are, our teams travelled by canoe, jeep and sometimes by foot for over 17 kilometres, to provide the help communities desperately needed. The two testimonies that follow show that by caring for people and meeting their needs in emergencies, they have the opportunity to experience the hope the gospel provides.

Eugenia Pedro, resident of Chiboma, Mozambique, commented: "Before the cyclone, we were fine, life was good, we had animals, maize, water. Now things have changed so much, we don't have a house anymore; we don't have food anymore. When I saw you coming today, I saw an answer, I saw help, and I thought finally God is giving us another opportunity."

Eminia Joao, resident in Beira, Mozambique, said: "Before today, we were eating once a day, only small portions, trying not to think about how hungry we were.

Tonight, we will have a big meal – beans and rice. Dear, bring pots and pans! Mum will cook for you tonight! And tomorrow we will have leftovers for breakfast and lunch and dinner! Christ is not dead, He is alive, He is with us, and you are the proof of that.”

On a global scale, the need is still great. Medair currently works in 12 countries, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Bangladesh, doing what we can to address their needs.

DR Congo is home to a long-running crisis, and humanitarian needs are escalating rapidly. This is where we come in. The number of people who have died in the current Ebola outbreak in the east of the DR Congo has passed the 2,000 mark (at the time of writing). In response to the Ebola outbreak, Medair supports more than 70 health facilities in Eastern DR Congo, with health, nutrition, water, and sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and related interventions.

Luke and Victoria Hunt, two British medical doctors, decided to take a year out of working for the NHS to spend time providing humanitarian assistance in Bunia, Ituri Province, north-eastern Congo. Luke was assigned to manage part of Medair's Ebola response work.

Part of Luke's role is to prevent the spread of Ebola by supporting infection prevention and control measures in health centres. This includes training healthcare workers, providing protective equipment, and building Ebola isolation units and other infrastructure projects to improve water supply and waste management. These activities are urgently needed in a context where Ebola case rates are not declining.

When Luke hears of a case in one of

our areas of intervention, we send a rapid response team to gather more information, find out where the person has been, and estimate the risk of onward transmission. Then, we identify and support the clinics in that area. We also send our community engagement team to hold meetings with traditional leaders and community groups, answering their questions, encouraging them to adopt preventative measures, such as regular handwashing, and raising an alert when they think someone could be unwell. The project that Luke manages supports infection prevention and control across 12 health centres.

In Bangladesh, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya families have fled Myanmar into the neighbouring country. Our team has worked to help Rohingya refugees by distributing shelter kits, deploying mobile medical teams to provide emergency care, and treating malnourished children.

We believe our impact comes from assembling strong and supportive teams. Our international staff working together with a common faith and purpose are ambassadors of hope – living the key tenets of the gospel by demonstrating the good news. We also work alongside people from other faiths as we deliver aid to everyone in need – regardless of race, creed or nationality.

Humanitarian aid is much more than meeting indicators and monthly targets. It entails upholding the dignity of those in crisis, empowering and walking alongside them as they are carving out a life for themselves during this challenging time. We believe all people are equal and deserve the same opportunities.



WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

- Pray for affected communities and organisations on the ground (Medair has a quarterly prayer diary we can send you).
- Raise awareness about humanitarian emergencies around the world within your family, friends and community (follow Medair UK on social media to receive updates).
- Consider making a donation at donate.medair.org. Your gift will be allocated to current and future emergency responses around the world, making a priceless difference in someone's life.

Whether you give money, raise awareness or pray for our work, you are doing God's work and speaking God's hope into desperate situations. You can find out more information on each of the above on our website uk.medair.org



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We journey with hurting young people for as long as 10 years to give them a hope and a future, says **Tim Sledge**, XLP's director of fundraising.

ACTIONS AND *words*

“**G**o into the world and preach the gospel – use words if you have to.”

These words, often misattributed to Catholic friar Saint Francis of Assisi, have, in my experience, been used as a bit of a cop-out for Christians to simply do nice charitable things and avoid having to speak and preach the good news.

But those words do have some important truths about them to balance out the other rather narrow view which is that we should only use words and nothing else – that preaching alone will win souls and transform the world. It won't.

The early church in Acts was built on preaching the good news but also went about tending to people's physical and material needs and sharing their resources. When I read the miracle of Jesus feeding 5,000 people, it strikes me that Jesus didn't do this to warm up the crowd for a sermon or evangelistic talk; He fed them because He recognised that they were hungry. That day, the good news came in the shape of bread and fish, and there's no record of any sermon or talk; the actions of Jesus and His disciples spoke loudly and clearly. Jesus and His disciples understood the needs around them.

We need a balance of preaching the good news and being the good news. In

the last edition of *idea*, Rev Les Isaacs OBE wrote about the rise in violent crime among young people in the UK's urban centres and called on the church to work together to offer a holistic response. XLP stands with him in this call.

Our response

XLP is a London-based charity which was set up in 1996 as a response to a stabbing in Peckham, south London. We work with more than 1,600 young people each week across nine London boroughs.

Within my first few weeks with the charity, I repeatedly heard stories of the young people we work with being stabbed, being groomed by gangs, and facing challenges at school and home.

Many children and young people who are drawn to gang culture are growing up on deprived inner-London housing estates and experience a poor home life – often with low income, broken or absent parental relationships and underachievement at school. Many are at risk of exclusion, and many exhibit challenging behavioural characteristics and are making poor life choices – such as violence, carrying knives and joining gangs.

These drivers lead them to search for a sense of belonging and a future outside the mainstream family, education and economic systems, and are some of the root causes of

involvement in criminal activity. As you can tell, the issues young people face today are complex, but the simple reality is that gangs are taking lives, devastating communities, and crippling us financially by putting ever-increasing pressure on our police, hospitals and justice system. That's why we seek to provide positive futures to counter the negativity that possesses many young lives.

We need a balance of preaching the good news and being the good news.



Jesus' two names

Jesus was given two names: Emmanuel ("God with us") and Jesus ("the One who saves"). I believe that we need to know the God who is with us (incarnate) before we know the God who saves us. John 1:14 reads: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...and we have beheld His glory." It is the presence of God that brings glory.

But being Emmanuel doesn't mean just showing up for a while; it means being in there for the long haul. God sent Jesus not as a quick fix but as a long-term commitment to all He created. That's why we may journey with young people for as long as 10 years. Violence, knife crime and anti-social behaviour are deep-rooted, so the solutions must be long term in order to repair a great deal of the damage.

Tangible presence

Take another look at John 1:14: "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us." In the same way, we ensure that we are a tangible presence in the spaces and places where these hurting young people are. Our three double-decker buses, which have been converted into mobile youth centres, can be seen on more than 20 estates across London each week.

These 'incarnational buses' go to places where there is no youth provision nor any community activities. They give us an opportunity to start a journey with young people, to show them by our presence that we believe in them.

As Jesus dwelled among the people, He began to restore them according to each person's need. He provided food, healing, edifying words, and more. We aim to meet the needs of young people, which is why our buses lead to a variety of activities, including mentoring more than 100 young people each year through the provision of literacy and numeracy in schools and pupil referral units.

We run other initiatives, too, and

each is intended to ensure God's good news permeates the minds, hearts and environments of these individuals. We're seeing God break through: on the back of our 'Ready to Work' scheme, which helps young people prepare for employment, get work experience and write CVs, 26 people are now in employment and others are in apprenticeships. (To find out more about these initiatives and others that aren't mentioned here, visit www.xlp.org.uk/what-we-do)

Most responses to the news, research and government reports on young people on our estates have been, in my view, more words and not enough action. Young people don't need more words; they need action. They need us to be there, show up and believe in them. They need the Word made flesh. Incarnation is proclamation, and that's good news! To find out more about us and explore how you can help, visit www.xlp.org.uk



THIS IS HOLLY'S story

At secondary school I wasn't a talkative person. I was very quiet, timid and anxious. I got bullied. For a whole year I didn't really say much. I was jealous because everyone else had a lot of friends. But friends can get you hurt, so I didn't have that many friends. I was on my own a lot.

The environment at XLP was different. I felt safe at XLP. XLP boosted my confidence and helped me communicate more. The way the team spoke to me made me think, "Wow! They actually believe in me."

XLP's arts programme motivated me to look at myself positively. It made me confident and want to do more. When I dance, I don't think about anything; I just let my heart out. My mum is always excited to see my performances and that's just such a nice feeling because I want to make her proud. So, it's great!

But my most powerful moment with XLP was going sailing in Scotland with the 'Ready to Work' programme. It was the hardest thing I've ever done. I've never been away for seven days. I've never been on a plane. I was out of my comfort zone. I was so scared. I had promised myself I would not go on the plane, but I did. I overcame my fears because XLP said, "You can do it."

At the end of the programme, I got an interview to be an apprentice with XLP. I had to work hard for that interview, and I got it. Being on the XL-Sports apprenticeship has taken my confidence and communication skills to another level. I can do things I could never do.

Thank you so much XLP for helping me achieve my dreams. If I didn't know XLP, I wouldn't be doing anything.

Often described as being glued to the latest tech, today's young people need innovative ways to receive and share the gospel, says **Ben Jones**, founder of Missional Generation.

TECH TOOLS AT THE ready

Just over five years ago I felt led by God to start Missional Generation to equip young people to be influential for God in all arenas of life.

We at Missional Generation passionately believe that within the body of Christ, children and young people have as much of a role as adults to share the good news of Jesus as they live out their daily lives. If we are to see all people given the opportunity to hear about our Saviour, we need to build up young people to boldly share their faith with those around them.

In our work with young people we teach three foundational truths: that we are formed by God (Genesis 1:26-27); as believers we are accepted by Jesus (John 1:12); and we are appointed by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8) to share the good news of Jesus through the means that comes organically to each individual.

If we are to see communities changed by the gospel, each of us needs to play our part in confidently sharing the life-changing message of Jesus with those we connect with. We have been challenged to think creatively about how we can reach children and young people with the gospel and

“We see the creativity and innovation young people can bring to enhance the sharing of the gospel.”

with the truths in the Bible. We have heard young people share how they haven't got the confidence to articulate the message of Jesus with their friends. We have worked with many different groups for them to explore how the unchanging message of Jesus' love and salvation can be shared with an ever-changing and evolving youth culture.

As we have got alongside and dreamed with young people, we have helped them to realise the strength and tools that God has placed in their lives. It is incredible to see young people become more aware of how God desires to use their gifts and skills to share the gospel and have a 'kingdom impact' on communities. Within our foundational truths for missional living, we teach that missional lifestyle comes

when we are appointed by the Holy Spirit. We see the creativity and innovation young people can bring to enhance the sharing of the gospel.

Generation Z connects with their smartphones more than any other devices and more than any generation before them. We have been on a journey with Generation Z to explore how we can utilise technology and digital innovation to both reach young people and to give the church an exciting tool that shares the gospel.

We have worked with a games designer and his son (who is gifted in games design and coding) to create both augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) resources that can be used in settings including detached youth work, church services, within schools and, importantly, within friendship groups of young people.

We have seen first-hand how digital resources can be used to reach a generation. It has been a joy to use these resources to explore the truth and meaning of Easter with local primary and secondary schools using our VR resurrection resource. We have enjoyed using our AR David vs Goliath game with youth groups to help them explore how God gives us the tools to

face the giants and difficulties in our lives.

One of the challenges we have looked to address is how to connect current smartphone culture with the true meaning and amazement of Christmas. Each year, we see the communities around us getting caught up with the need to have the best gift and the pressure to organise the perfect Christmas parties and have the best decorated tree and house in the street. With that we see the tension and worry increase as levels of spending increase. In place of this, we want to see peace, joy and hope reignited as people come to see the truth and miracle-giving life that Jesus' birth offers us.

Four years ago, Missional Generation created 25 daily Bible reading notes to help young people to explore the importance of Christmas. Each day young people were given a Bible reading and a short reflection to help them to strengthen their walk with Christ over Advent. It was exciting to see young people connect with this hope-filled message as we made available more than 2,000 copies worldwide and saw both youth groups and schools journeying through 25 days of Bible reading.

However, we did find that several young people struggled to connect with the paper-based resources. We had some young people explain that reading was a real challenge, perhaps due to a learning difficulty or English being a second language. We began to consider how we might make this resource accessible and created an audio format that enabled people to listen to the devotions as they went about their day.

Even with this new audio resource, we felt there was a need to produce a new immersive way to connect with the Bible. This led us to create a new resource called the 12 Revelations of Christmas. We are excited by this resource as it uses AR to explore 12 revelations linked to the Christmas story. This includes miracle, joy, chosen and new life, amongst others. Each revelation comes with an activity card that explores the Bible and encourages the user to consider their thoughts on that particular revelation. For those who want to go deeper in their personal relationship with Jesus, we have suggested mission activities that

encourage them to share the gospel.

For those who are not familiar with AR, it is a digital way to bring animated characters onto the table in front of you or to interact with Bible stories by walking through a digital door (portal). We came to use this level of engagement after reflecting on how secular organisations and marketing agencies have used AR to connect with Generation Z; for example, this year Pokemon Go and Comic Relief used AR to bring their noses to life.

We have a real hope that young people will use this resource to reach their friends. This is an exciting tool that they can confidently use with their friends and that can open up the conversation of a hope- and joy-filled Christmas that is so much better than having and buying the best gifts that money can buy.

“We have a real hope that young people will use this resource to reach their friends.”

To read the accompanying devotion visit www.missionalgen.co.uk/12-revelations-of-christmas and click on the sample button. This will allow you to see how this AR activity could be used to help explore Christmas. We have seen it used by both those who are confident with technology and those who are not, and it is a new way to engage with local communities, schools and youth groups during Advent.

We are more than happy to offer support and chat through how to use the Advent resource and the possibilities of VR and AR to share and explore faith with children and young people.

Email admin@missionalgen.co.uk to contact us or visit our website www.missionalgen.co.uk for more information on the resources we have created to help explore faith, mission and evangelism.



GIVE IT A GO!



We would love to offer you a free sample of Mary's encounter with the angel Gabriel. To do this:

- 1 Download our app to your android phone or iPhone by searching 12 Revelations of Christmas App.
- 2 Open up the 12 Revelations of Christmas App.
- 3 It will ask you to allow the app to use your camera; click agree.
- 4 Place your phone over the image of the present.
- 5 Tap the present three times to open the AR activity.

By **Steve Clifford**,
general director, Evangelical Alliance

LAST 'LAST WORD'

As I sit down to write my last 'last word', I do so with a whole mixture of emotions. Over the last 10 years, it has been an enormous privilege to serve the church here in the UK as the general director of the Evangelical Alliance. When I arrived on the 1 of April (yes, that really was my start date) in 2009, I did so with some trepidation, but also a deep conviction that it was God who had called me to this role. And with that call came a promise of His equipping to fulfil it. It seems highly appropriate that this edition of *idea* should focus on gospel unity. It's been the great John 17 prayer of Jesus that has provided a continual focus and challenge for me over the last decade. Jesus, with His close friends, just hours before He goes to the cross, is praying for them (and indeed for us, who would follow them) that they, "May be one... so that the world may believe" (John 17:21). Jesus is praying for unity, but a unity which carries with it a missional imperative. It's a unity for the sake of the gospel.

Way back in 1846, when the Evangelical Alliance was established, it was this prayer that provided a motivational challenge, and

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The role of the Evangelical Alliance will become even more important in the years to come.
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for the last 10 years, I have been thankful to God for the numerous expressions of such unity that the Evangelical Alliance has been able to encourage and support: GATHER bringing together more than 130 unity movements in towns and cities across the country; the One People Commission and the South Asian Forum encouraging unity across the ethnic expressions of the evangelical church; and numerous gatherings of senior church, denominational, network and organisation leaders, who have met to build relationships, explore differences, and engage in strategic evangelistic planning. As a member of the Evangelical Alliance, you are a member of a unity movement. But we're also a gospel movement. We are evangelicals (there's a clue in the name).

We are about the good news of salvation in Christ Jesus. I hope you've noticed the fresh focus on evangelism in recent years. Take, for instance, the development of our Great Commission hub (greatcommission.co.uk), which has provided an amazing 'one-stop shop' for all those committed to bringing the gospel to those around them.

I certainly sense that there is a far greater openness to spiritual things, and we are hearing week after week of people coming to Christ. Invariably, mission involves churches working collaboratively across a borough, town or city, and as they do, the gospel is being preached and people are responding to it. The Evangelical Alliance recently gathered a room full of ministry leaders who are developing UK-wide evangelistic initiatives for 2020 and beyond. It was extremely encouraging to hear their visions and be part of God's plans to bring Christians together to make Jesus known. Of course, unlike in so many parts of the world, we have remarkable freedoms in the UK to proclaim the gospel, and these freedoms need to be protected. I'm thankful for the members our advocacy team, who steadfastly speak on our behalf to ministers, MPs and civil servants

Helped
the church
have confidence
in the power of the
gospel and develop
a clear voice in
public life.



Brought together
the diverse
evangelical
communities
in the UK.

Motivated by the
great John chapter
17 prayer that we,
the people
of God,
might be one.

Described as a
**bridge-
builder,**
courageous leader
and a friend to
so many.

in the parliaments and assemblies around the UK. They are our voice, and among other issues they are fighting to ensure the protection of our gospel freedoms.

It was the *Speak up* resource that this team produced and distributed to more than 80,000 people that was referenced by Theresa May at Prime Minister's question time. The resource specifically spells out our freedoms, and it encourages us as a Christian community to make the most of them. (You can download a copy of *Speak up* online at eauk.org/what-we-do/initiatives/speak-up)

The last 10 years have not been without their pains, frustrations and disappointments, too. We've had to navigate painful discussions around historically orthodox biblical views on human sexuality, and we did not dissuade the government from its decision to redefine marriage. We are currently facing Westminster imposing on the people of Northern Ireland an abortion law, which would be one of the most liberal of any in the world.

We've had to navigate disagreements among evangelical Christians and complaints and concerns about churches and organisations. When we've been interviewed in the media or reported in the press, there are times when our views are misrepresented or dismissed. This is part of the day-to-day work that we do, but our prayer is that we will endeavour to do it in a way that follows the example of Jesus, who His close friends described as "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

So, what of the future? As the UK faces a time of extraordinary uncertainty, who knows what the next few months or years will hold. We as a church in the UK must regard this as a time of opportunity. We are "the hope-filled people". Our hope is not based on the outcome of Brexit, the success of the British economy, or which Prime Minister or party will govern the UK. As the apostle Paul encouraged us, "May the God of hope fill you with joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13). What a wonderful thought that at this time of uncertainty, we the people of hope might overflow with hope to those who surround us.

And what of the future here at the Evangelical Alliance? When Dr Tani Omedeyi, chair of our board, phoned me to let me know the unanimous decision of the



board to invite Gavin Calver, our director of mission, to take on the leadership role here at the Evangelical Alliance, I was absolutely delighted, as I was personally convinced that God had called him to this role.

I'm excited to see where God will take the organisation under Gavin's leadership, building on what has been achieved over the last 10 years, but taking it further and deeper. The Evangelical Alliance, led by Gavin and supported by an amazing leadership team and board, is in good hands. Let me assure you, while I'm stepping down from the role of general director, I do not regard myself as stepping away. The role of the Evangelical Alliance will become even more important in the years to come. So, please pray for Gavin and the team as they continue to serve the church here in the UK.

Together we can make Jesus known for generations to come. Will you join with us and consider leaving a legacy gift to the Evangelical

A LASTING LEGACY

Christmas time, which is fast approaching, presents an ideal opportunity to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

With carol services and nativities abounding, and festive cheer all around, it can be a great time to reach out to our friends, families and neighbours with the true message of Christmas: the birth of our Saviour.

But what about the rest of the year? It's challenging not to let our hearts grow heavy as we realise how little our friends and neighbours know about Jesus. We need only look around us at the uncertainty, division and fear characterising our society today to see the desperate need many have for Jesus' love, compassion and peace. But it's not all bad news. The church is also being faced with a unique opportunity to bring the message of Jesus to those who have never heard the life-transforming truth of the gospel.

At the Evangelical Alliance we want to see a church that is confident in its voice and inspired in its mission so that more people in the UK can hear the good news. This isn't a short-term goal, but a long-term vision, and we need your support to realise it. By leaving a gift in your will to the Evangelical Alliance, you'll be investing in this vision. Your support will enable us to continue our work well into the future, so that future generations of Christians are confident and inspired to share the good news of Jesus with those around them.

Thanks to the generous lifetime and legacy gifts of our wonderful supporters, there have been many milestones and success stories in Evangelical Alliance history. In 2015 we were able to launch our Great Commission online hub (greatcommission.co.uk), an amazing resource that inspires and equips the church every single day. The very next year we were able to produce our *Speak up* resource, which has given tens of

“While we are so grateful to God for all that has been achieved in these areas, our work is far from over.”

thousands of Christians the confidence and knowledge to share their faith and has been commended by former PM Theresa May in parliament. Most recently we have been able to create a pivotal new role to help churches reach the 'missing generation' of young adults in the UK church.

While we are so grateful to God for all that has been achieved in these areas, our work is far from over. By leaving a gift in your will to the Evangelical Alliance, you will enable us to continue carrying out vital work like this well into the future, so that together we can make Jesus known throughout the UK for generations to come.

We spoke to Steve Clifford as he prepares to step down as general director at the end of the year, about why he and his wife, Ann, have decided to leave a legacy to the Evangelical Alliance. He said, “For the last 10 years it's been an amazing privilege to serve God and His church within the Evangelical Alliance, working alongside an amazing team of people that God has drawn together.

“For me and Ann, we are clear that while I might be stepping down from the role of general director, we're not leaving the Evangelical Alliance – our passion, commitment and support will continue. A gift in our will is just one way this can be expressed. It means that even when we are gone, we are able to participate in the work of the Evangelical Alliance through a financial gift. And our children, grandchildren and perhaps even great grandchildren will

benefit from the work of the Evangelical Alliance.”

As it says in Psalm 145, “Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; His greatness no one can fathom. One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts.”

Together we can make Jesus known throughout the UK for generations to come – are you able to help us fulfil this vision?

To find out more about remembering the Evangelical Alliance in your will, please contact Lizzie Thomson on 020 7520 3856 or at l.thomson@eauk.org.

COFFEE MORNING GOODBYE

Steve and Ann Clifford invite you to a Farewell Coffee Morning on Monday, 18 November at our central London resource centre near Kings Cross.

Come along to say goodbye to Steve as he steps down as general director, learn more about leaving a legacy gift, and meet other Evangelical Alliance supporters.

If you're interested in attending or wish to find out more, please contact Lizzie Thomson at l.thomson@eauk.org or on 020 7520 3856.

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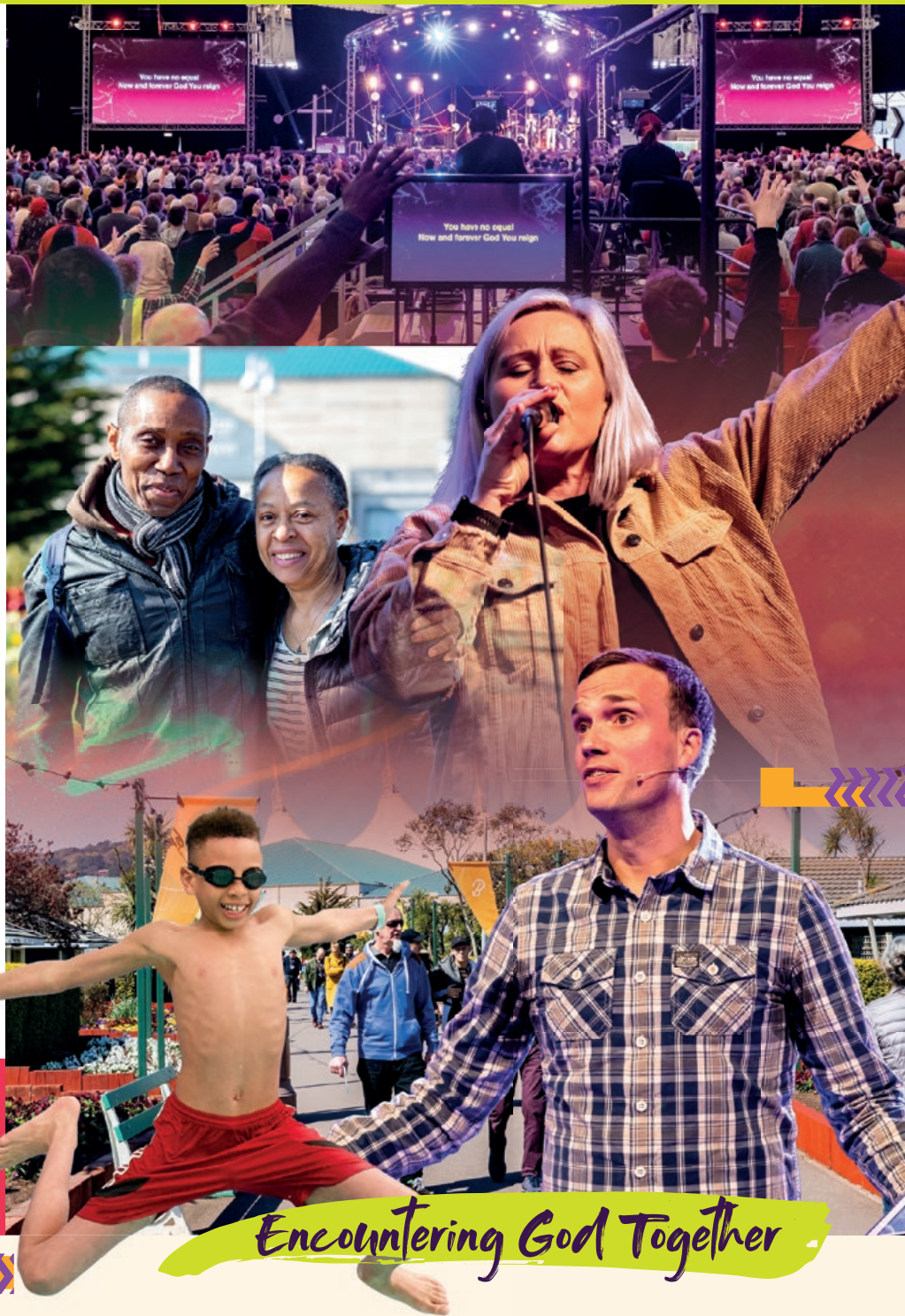
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