

A photograph of two hands, one slightly larger than the other, cupping a bright red, textured heart. The hands are positioned in the center of the frame, with the fingers gently curled around the heart. The background is a solid, light blue color. The overall composition is clean and minimalist, emphasizing the theme of love and giving.

idea

THE MAGAZINE OF THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE
AUTUMN 2024

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A time
to give



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Welcome

Whenever I am faced with the request to give, often my instinctive response is to contemplate what I can 'afford' to give and how much I will be left with in reserve once I do; if I stay late after church to help with hospitality, what time will I get home; if I bless the person in the queue behind me by buying their groceries, how much of my weekly budget will have to be curtailed; if I invite my neighbours over for tea, how much of my introverted creature comforts will have to be suppressed for the evening? We are all human and these are very human responses to the request to make a sacrifice... But God. The God we serve requires us to not just respond to the invitation to give in our flesh, but as Jesus did; whole-heartedly, sacrificially, withholding nothing – easier said than done!

Thankfully we have the ultimate example of what giving looks like by a Father who gave

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up His most precious Son for us, and giving is an expression and extension of His love. So however God is ushering you into a posture of giving this season, I pray that this edition, entitled 'A time to give', encourages you to look harder with love, go deeper in faith and live more compassionately. God bless.

Nicola Morrison
Editor

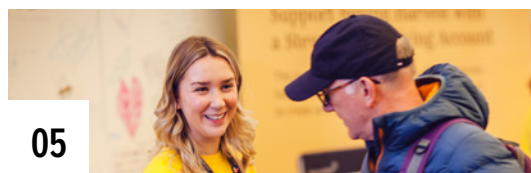


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Where is your treasure?



Eunice Lee outlines the many ways in which the Bible

demonstrates the sacrificial heart of Jesus and how He wants us to follow in His example.

How can we live a life poured out for other people in sacrificial giving?

When I first arrived in the UK, I heard many stories from fellow international students who had learned to adapt to British culture over time. Although seemingly strange to me at first, these quirks were things I became accustomed to, whether it was fascination with the weather, the ‘proper’ way to make tea, or how describing someone as ‘interesting’ was most definitely not a compliment! I grew up in the warm and humid tropics, where people would spontaneously arrive at your house with an abundance of homegrown fruits that could only be finished if we called more friends and family to help us eat everything together. Imagine my confusion after moving here when I learned that I’d have to book a coffee with a friend weeks in advance despite living in the same city, seeing young parents raise babies without an army of community aunts providing practical support, and families encouraging their children to pursue their personal dreams, even if it didn’t provide a stable income. Coming from a culture of interdependency,

I assumed that everyone shared everything together. Coming from a relationship-oriented culture, I did not perceive pushing back daily tasks to give time and space for spontaneous conversations and relationship as an interruption to my day. I hadn’t realised how difficult it would be to adapt to an individualistic, time-oriented culture upon arriving in the UK.

As dearly loved children of God, we are called to imitate Him in living a life of love, following the example of Christ, “who loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Ephesians 5:1-2). Jesus is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15) in whom the fullness of God dwells (Colossians 1:19) yet gives of Himself abundantly and generously. He empties Himself in a sacrificial life, poured out for others in His life, death and resurrection. He humbles Himself in making Himself nothing, taking the nature of a servant, and being obedient even to death on a cross (Philippians 2:5-8). This example of humility is a radical challenge to any



society. If we are to follow in His footsteps, how is the act of giving counter-cultural to the society we live in? What does God invite us to in the act of giving, and what attitudes are we to have? Ultimately, what does it look like for us as the church to live counter-culturally? How can we live a life poured out for other people in sacrificial giving?

There are many ways we can give, be it our time, compassion, hospitality, forgiveness, generosity, wealth, service or skill. Throughout the gospels, Jesus highlights examples of marginalised individuals whose attitudes in giving are praised, despite being naturally overlooked or scorned by society. In giving to the temple treasury, it is not the rich who are commended for throwing in large amounts of wealth, but a poor widow who gives all she has to live on – two mere copper coins (Mark 12:41–44). In Luke 10:25–37, Jesus commends the Good Samaritan for his actions and generosity towards a man in desperate need of help. In this context, Samaritans were foreigners, despised for their physical and religious

beliefs, yet it is not the Rabbi as the religious leader, nor the Levite, but the Samaritan who is praised. In Mark 14:3–9, a woman is rebuked harshly by onlookers for her ‘wasteful’ action of pouring costly perfume to anoint Jesus, yet Jesus honours her prophetic and symbolic act of deep devotion to Him. He also encourages us to give to the ‘least of these’, or those unable to return the favour: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the ill, the prisoner, the poor, the blind, the crippled, the lame and the blind (Matthew 25:34–40, Luke 14:12–14). Who are the people that are often overlooked that God is calling you to demonstrate radical giving towards?

We are all created to worship, but we often worship idols – created things – rather than the Creator Himself. Sacrificial giving can often feel deeply uncomfortable, as it is an invitation to a posture of worshipful surrender, acknowledging His Lordship and choosing to trust expectantly in His character and provision. Jesus reminds us that “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:21). Through giving, we return to God what rightfully belongs to Him, as we acknowledge Him as the ultimate giver. In an individualistic culture that prioritises the self, we can be counter-cultural in laying down a sense of entitlement. We instead recognise we are not owners, but stewards and servants of what He has blessed us with. We surrender our rights, desires and idols to the One worthy of it all, with hearts of joyfulness and gratitude. Take a moment to pause and reflect. Are there particular areas you struggle to let go of and surrender to His Lordship? How can you practice thanksgiving on a regular basis?

Through giving, we recognise that all we have is created and sustained by Him for His glory, not by our own efforts, strength or systems. In a self-reliant culture that encourages us to have a stiff upper lip, we can be counter-cultural as He invites us into a position of dependence in sacrificial giving to others and unto God. We also place ourselves in a position of vulnerability

Sacrificial giving can often feel deeply uncomfortable, as it is an invitation to a posture of worshipful surrender.

as we express need, trusting in His provision. In expressing our need before Him and before others, we are invited to a place of interdependency, as the body of Christ serves each other through our different parts and giftings. How can you express deeper vulnerability before God and the body of Christ? Where might God be calling you to meet others in their place of need?

Through giving, we worship God as our Creator rather than worshipping created things, as we intentionally surrender all we are and all that we have to Him. In a materialistic and consumeristic culture, we can be counter-cultural in having an attitude of simplicity and contentment in His goodness to us. Through giving, we trust in His perfect character who not only feeds the birds (Matthew 6:26), but who sees, knows and meets all of our needs as a loving and generous Father who delights in blessing His children with good gifts (Matthew 7:11, James 1:17). He illustrates this abundant giving in Luke 15, by clothing the youngest son with the best robe and a ring, and throwing a celebration feast to mark his return, much to the anger of the older brother who bitterly views these actions as undeserved. We are similarly called to reflect His generosity and abundance. How do we cultivate attitudes of contentment and joy in relating to material things? How do you see God as a Father, and how does that affect your attitudes of giving and receiving?

In the journey of learning to give sacrificially, may we receive His invitation to depend on Him with joy!

Eunice is assistant to the One People Commission team and has a BA in biblical and intercultural studies from All Nations Christian College.

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Becoming a cheerful giver

Ruth Jackson, head of PR and communications at Stewardship, asks how can we be more cheerful in our giving?

The Bible tells us “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7, NIV) whose heart drives their generosity rather than a sense of duty or obligation. It sounds straightforward but it can be much easier said than done. How can we joyfully give if we don’t have much ourselves and, if we do have plenty and are happy to give, how do we choose which causes to support without getting overwhelmed?

The state of Christian giving in the UK

The stats from Stewardship’s new Generosity Report revealed Christians are more generous than the general UK population, giving an average of £73 a month, or 3.2% of their income after tax, compared to the national average of £65 per month¹, but there is potential for so much more!

¹Participants of the survey were asked how much they give to a variety of causes. This figure is the sum of the average donation from all Christians to each cause, including those who do not give. For the comparative data from the Charities Aid Foundation, see their UK Giving Report 2023.

Giving as a response to God’s generosity

Here at Stewardship, we understand generosity as an integral part of our worship to God, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35, NIV), as there is great joy to be released in giving freely; not only does our giving have a positive impact on the causes we care about, it also blesses us in return by teaching us about God’s grace and love for us. After all, He has freely given us everything, including His only Son, so we can trust Him to provide for us.

Our giving can therefore become a natural and joyful response to God’s lavish generosity towards us, rather than a duty-driven transaction.

It starts with our hearts

Take time with God to reflect on your current giving and find out where God is calling you next on your generosity journey. If times are hard, remember Jesus applauded the widow who gave her two coins over the rich who gave out of their wealth – it’s your heart that counts. Giving comes in many forms, including your time and care for others.

Key questions for reflection

- If God owns it all, how does that change my view of ‘my’ resources?
- What would change if I viewed every giving decision I make as an act of worship?
- Where am I being called to trust God more in the area of finance right now?
- How can you nurture a heart of generosity, even when the budget is tight?
- Are there particular causes or issues that God has put on your heart?

Discover our recommendations and resources for donors in Stewardship’s Generosity Report and explore our CauseFinder™ tool for inspiration at: stewardship.org.uk

Ruth leads the PR and communications for Stewardship. She supports causes that are focused on alleviating global poverty and injustice, with a particular interest in supporting vulnerable children.

I'm learning to give God permission to interrupt my plans

Darin Stevens, co-founder of Start to Stir, shares a simple, yet thought-provoking account of what can happen when we are willing to surrender our time.

It was Saturday morning, and I suddenly heard an earnest knock at the door. Up until a moment before, I had been quietly sipping caffeine and strategising my 'get stuff done' list for the day, but now, fully aware of the 'ugh' feeling surfacing in my chest, I reluctantly shuffled to the door to see what was awaiting me. My neighbour, Sara*, was standing there in a panic with tears in her eyes. "My cat brought a little bird into the house and it's going to die. Can you help me?" she said, "I know that you're a person of faith."

As I shoved my feet into my trainers and rushed out the door, I worried that, within moments, Sara would be staring at me and expecting me to resurrect a bird from the dead! I mean, why else would she have skipped all the other houses in between hers and mine to find 'a person of faith'? And what would it say about me - and my profession - if I didn't have a clue what to do?

My wife Joy and I lead a charity called

Start to Stir. We train Christians to find new starting points for sharing faith and to stir up every day spiritual longings that can stimulate gospel curiosity. Our years of working with youth from outside the church have made us keenly aware of the growing challenges that make it difficult for Christians to share our faith.

But the biggest challenge for me, and perhaps for you, is fairly simple: most days I don't feel I have the time and energy to engage with people who are increasingly far from God. I know that most people today need a real, live Christian to show and tell them the gospel. In a culture that possesses little residue of the Jesus story, a simple gospel presentation from the platform or the pulpit - or even a social media post - often does little to overcome our society's simple indifference towards God. This means sharing faith will usually require my time.

When I consider the theme of giving,

Am I willing to be the kind of Christian that patiently paces alongside my friends, their friends, my coworkers, and my neighbours?

by far my most precious commodity is my time and my attention. I find it much easier to activate a bank transfer when it comes to meeting people's needs rather than simply being available. So I wonder: am I willing to be the kind of Christian that patiently paces alongside my friends, their friends, my coworkers, and my neighbours?

I know I'm not alone in my struggle to give what's most important to me. Even Jesus' first followers wrestled with the desire to protect their energy levels. In John 4 we discover that, while Jesus focused on sharing living water, His disciples fixated on restoring lost calories.



But I'm growing. In addition to finding new starting points and learning how to stir curiosity, I'm learning to be 'interrupt-able'. I'm learning to ease up on my 'get things done' list and to be available. I'm even learning to do my weekend projects with my garage door open! Yes, this means my DIY looks like 15 minutes of working interspersed with 20 minutes of talking (which is torture for a task-focused person like myself). But it also means I'm getting to know my neighbours. It means I get the opportunity to mention that we've been at church this weekend and loved it. It means I get to ask how they are doing and offer to pray for them and even say simple prayers with them.

I believe most of us as Christians really do want to share our faith more regularly. Something comes alive in us and actually gives us a charge when we have the opportunity to talk about eternal things. It shouldn't surprise us. Jesus helped His disciples see that

sustenance comes when we "do the will of Him who sent me" (John 4:34).

I wonder if the key to having more of these conversations isn't about mustering up the courage to go out and speak with a stranger on the street, but simply giving God permission to interrupt what we think is most important.

So, what happened with our baby bird? Well, interestingly, in the 60 seconds it took to walk up the street, my neighbour confided, "I'm so glad you are willing to help and that you have faith. I just can't have faith." And when we opened her door, the fledgling chick was thankfully alive and huddled safely in a corner. I scooped him up as Sara held two curious dogs and one offending cat at bay. I asked if she would like me to pray for the bird. As she nodded her head emphatically and grabbed my hands, I said a simple prayer thanking God for seeing the bird and asking God to protect it before we moved it to a safer place.

Before leaving I encouraged Sara: "I understand that it seems difficult to have faith. But you have to start somewhere. Maybe this is a new start!"

I don't think any of this would have happened if I wasn't learning to give God permission to interrupt my plans. Now I'm eager to introduce Sara to the God who knows when a sparrow falls is the same God who knows her and loves her. I'm praying for a journey of faith to start from the simple interruption of a small baby bird.

**name changed for privacy*

Darin is married to Joy and together they direct Start to Stir, a charity that equips Christians to overcome indifference and stir curiosity in the gospel. If you want to learn more and how you can get involved, visit: starttostir.com



SPOTLIGHT!

Wendy Pawsey, head of our giving team, spotlights the amazing work they are doing and why she loves connecting with and serving our fantastic membership.



One of my favourite Bible stories is in John 6:1-14, the feeding of the 5,000 or, to be more accurate when we include the women and children, the feeding of the 15-20,000. I love how Jesus took what the little boy had in his basket, which consisted of five loaves and two fish, and blessed it. The disciples distributed the miraculously multiplied baskets of food, and many were fed. This is fantastic. This is the body of Christ in action, team ministry at its best as everyone plays their part for the good of the community, loving their neighbour as themselves (Mark 12:31).

As head of giving for the Evangelical Alliance, I am convinced that I have one of the best, if not the best roles within the organisation as I get to witness people bringing their offerings to Jesus. I hear firsthand through our wonderful staff team how the financial generosity of our members impacts individual lives, strengthens the church, carries the

evangelical voice into the corridors of power and makes Jesus known. In short, I see people give what they can so others can be spiritually fed.

However, these are difficult times, many people have been affected by the cost-of-living crisis and for some, their income doesn't stretch as far as it previously did.

As our team travels around the UK, reports come back of member churches, organisations, charities and individuals thriving despite the cultural challenges of our day. This is a time of great trials and fantastic opportunities; this is a time for us to step up as a united body and as representatives of Christ.

As we hear about the many breakthroughs, the lives impacted, the mercy of Jesus prevailing and justice seizing the day, I believe this is a season of plentiful harvests and I am so grateful for our generous members who are willing to partner with us as we resource, encourage and equip UK evangelicals. If you are an Evangelical Alliance member, I want you to know

that we are so thankful for you standing with us and making this possible.

Despite the many good news stories that I hear on almost a daily basis, of what the staff team are achieving in His name, my soul cries out for the many we are unable to reach through lack of provision and this is where, in my role as head of giving, I can step in and help.



Celebrations at a donor event

We have several ways our members can financially partner with us to make a difference:

1846 PARTNERSHIP

Become an 1846 member

As part of the 1846 group, we invite you to give £1,846 (or £150 or more per month) and to gather and pray with us for the work of the Evangelical Alliance. This regular, known income allows us to plan and strategise for the future. Visit: eauk.org/1846



Regular monthly giving

Many of our members give above the suggested £3 per month for which we are very grateful.

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Respond to an appeal

Our appeals are topical and respond to a current need or situation. Details of our most recent appeal – ensuring that during the general election and in the months and years to come, the Evangelical Alliance is committed to equipping the church to speak out and demonstrate the gospel hope we have for all of society – can be found here: eauk.org/summer-appeal-2024



Leaving the Evangelical Alliance a gift in your will

We have been hugely blessed by the provisions our members have made for us in their wills. Sometimes we have been told in advance by the individual that we have been included, at other times it's been an unanticipated surprise! However you would like to do it, you can find out how at: eauk.org/legacies



Giving a one-off gift

There have been many times when we have prayed for funding for a particular project and a one-off gift has appeared. At these times we have given effusive thanks for His provision! Find out how you can give a one-off gift at: eauk.org/give-a-one-off-gift



Prayer

Another way I love our members partnering with us is through prayer. Prayer is so powerful, and we need your prayers. Please join us as we pray that we always have enough financial provision to do what He has called us to do.

Thank you

Many thanks for your continued faithful and generous support; together we are making Jesus known.

Blessings
Rev Wendy Pawsey

If you would like to learn more about how you can give, or if you have questions, you can contact Wendy at: w.paswey@eauk.org or visit: eauk.org/giving



Wendy is head of giving for the Evangelical Alliance, an ordained Elim minister and author of *Generous with a Capital G*.

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Stepping into the gap

Katie Green, of Acts 435, illustrates why she is so passionate about the essential work they do in resourcing local churches and charities and providing a lifeline for those most in need.



Acts 435 recipient (left) and Ann (right), a local Acts 435 Advocate, from the church-run Byker Pantry

The name Acts 435 is inspired by the Bible verse (Acts 4:35), where the early church combined their resources, and distributed them to “anyone who had need”. Acts 435 is a national online giving charity that connects those who want to help, with those who are in genuine need, by resourcing a network of local partner churches and charities around the UK.

Acts 435 began in 2010, and now provides a free resource to over 650 churches and local charities in the UK, that support individuals in need. In the last 14 years, Acts 435 has directly given £6 million to over 51,000 individuals through its local partners.

One of these individuals was Diane* who suffers with fibromyalgia, anxiety and depression. Her disability benefits were suddenly stopped, leaving her with no income. She was struggling to bridge the gap until our partner organisation (who was supporting her), helped her appeal her benefits decision. She didn’t know where to turn, but thankfully an Acts 435 advocate posted a request for support onto our website and there was a great response. The need was then crowdfunded by donors who wanted to directly support Diane. Following the ordeal she said:

“I didn’t know where to turn for help, but I’m so glad I turned to you. Nobody has ever helped me like this before and I thank you from the bottom of my heart, I can do a big online food shop, and finally put gas on my meter and keep warm.”

There are over 1.4 million people living in poverty in the UK (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2024) who are

struggling to afford everyday essentials, such as food and heating, but also other necessities, such as travel. Tahir* is a refugee and was accessing his local foodbank when he spoke to an Acts 435 advocate. He was desperate to find employment after his previous employer refused to pay him. He needed a bicycle to take on delivery work. Donors gave to his need, and Tahir purchased his bicycle. He said:

“This gift is not just a means of transportation, but a vital tool that will enable me to generate income. With this bicycle I will be able to take on delivery jobs, which will help me build a stable source of income and continue my search for full-time employment. Your generosity has given me the means to improve my circumstances.”

Both Diane and Tahir were supported by donors who chose to give to respond to their requests for help. Donors can choose which request/s they want to give to, and the amount they would like to give. Every donation, however small, helps to fulfil the need, and will make a big difference for someone seeking help. 100% of every gift goes directly to the individual, with all the operating costs of Acts 435 sustained by Gift Aid claimed on applicable donations.

Donors can receive messages of thanks from the recipients they choose to support. Donors often mention how they appreciate giving in such a direct way, which takes away the ambiguity that giving can sometimes have. One donor commented: “our family love being part of helping families in such a direct way.”

As well as enabling donors to give in

this way, Acts 435 exists to serve local churches and charities, resourcing them with the ability to post requests onto the website for individuals they’re supporting. Acts 435 offers a simple, practical, free solution for those churches and charities that otherwise would be unable to fund direct needs, such as this church in Southwark:

“It has been of real help to our church, which runs a lot of community activities in quite a deprived area. I also love explaining the concept to recipients and reference the Acts verse [4:35], which is a real witness to God at work through the church.” – Stephen, an Acts 435 advocate for his local church.

Acts 435 partners are resourced with the ability to practically support individuals in their communities, as well as giving them the opportunity to share the love of Jesus through the gift, which not only brings a practical solution to their need, but also “brings joy, hope and happiness in a world that’s broken”, said an Acts 435 recipient.

If your church, or charity, is interested in partnering with Acts 435, or you would like to donate to the specific needs of individuals, take a look at our website: acts435.org.uk

**names changed for privacy*

Katie Greene has worked as communications director at Acts 435 since 2016, having previously worked for Christians Against Poverty for several years.

Help us to have a heart of generosity, Lord





Stefan Douglas, our finance assistant, leads us in prayer to make room in our hearts for more compassion and charity.

Lord, we thank you for this opportunity to come into your presence and speak to you once again, for the freedom to praise and to glorify your heavenly name.

We acknowledge that you are a good God and that your mercies are everlasting.

Forgive us for the times where we may take these mercies for granted and do not see you working for our good.

As we focus on giving, we want to first submit ourselves fully to you.

We want to see more of you in us, so I pray that you will help our 'self' to decrease so that we can see an increase of you.

Lord, we thank you for your generous nature, for the many blessings which you bestow on us.

As Paul teaches us how to give in 2 Corinthians 9, may we give cheerfully and with a willingness to help further your kingdom.

Help us not only to focus on the financial aspect of giving, but offer up our time, conversation and service to those who need it.

I thank you that you are a God of love and compassion, a God who accepts people of any race, creed or colour.

Lord, I pray for those in the UK who are homeless; may you provide them with permanent shelter.

For those who can't afford food or basic living necessities, may you provide a way to open more foodbanks for those struggling and end the cost of living crisis.

And Lord, may you show us signs in our own daily lives of how we can show compassion to one another.

Whether that's opening our homes to friends or speaking to a stranger who may look like they need to talk, create pathways which interlink us with those that need our help.

Equip us with the tools to help those in need and give us wisdom in our conversations.

In your name we pray,
Amen.

Stefan joined the Evangelical Alliance as a facilities administrator in June 2019 and has since progressed into the role of finance assistant. He has a heart for young Christians and leads the youth ministry team at his local church.



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Giving Christians a month to celebrate and be celebrated

Chris Briggs, of Methodist Evangelicals Together (MET), imparts his vision for dedicating a whole month out of the annual calendar to celebrate being Jesus-followers and share the gospel.

MET is a Christian 'renewal movement' that is Bible-based and prayer-focused and is seeing amazing results in sharing the gospel with those who do not yet know Jesus.

A recent initiative, which involved the creation of Christianity Month, yielded amazing results in creating opportunities to evangelise and help people encounter Jesus. Chris Briggs, founder of Christianity Month tells us more...

During a holiday in 2022, I felt God laid on my heart to create Christianity Month; a dedicated, special time of observance and celebration of the gospel. I wanted Christians to have the opportunity to celebrate the Christian faith and all that God has done through Jesus to already transform His world. I firstly shared the vision in a more local context at Littleover Methodist Church, Derby, (a member organisation of the Evangelical Alliance) where I minister and in the wider Methodist church where I am a mission enabler. We tried it out, seeing very good fruit. Husband and wife, Dave and Liz, who participated said: "We visited over 20 neighbours with whom we had some previous contact. First, we put a flyer through the door on the Friday, offering prayer, which said we would collect it on Sunday. We visited them all on the

Sunday and spoke with about a dozen people. We invited a few over to our house on Pentecost Sunday who were curious or had questions. Looking forward to next year!"

All around us Christians have made an impact on the world. Just think of the origins of schools, hospitals and charities to name but a few things. Think of the Evangelical Revival and the impact it had on society. Think of what Christians and churches do now through foodbanks, debt counselling, street pastors, and chaplaincy. Hand-in-hand with these transformative initiatives goes our responsibility to share the good news about Jesus, and Christianity Month also acts as an opportunity for intentional witness and evangelism. Our God has been at work transforming the world because we have been salt and light. Celebrating that and sharing the difference Jesus can make in lives and communities is something that is at the forefront of our vision.

My hope is this vision continues to build and that more and more people will get on board each year and find ways of sharing about faith and its impact on our world.

So even though the next Christianity Month is a little way away, this gives you plenty of time to think about how you could mark the event (next May) and get

planning. Maybe you could sing praise and worship outside a supermarket, visit a local prison or residential home and minister to those in need who feel forgotten, or do a free car wash and do it for the love of God. Perhaps you could run a small coffee morning in a chapel with some information about the Christian faith or maybe you could go large and organise a big concert with a Christian band for schools in your area!

Christianity Month works at any level with small or large groups. It could be a small six-person church in a rural setting or a huge church in a city.

Christianity Month is:

- **a vision** – something God-given;
- **a vehicle** – that can be used by God to deliver the good news of the gospel; and
- **a voice** – we are advocates and ambassadors for Christ.

It's not too early to start planning for Christianity Month 2025. If you want to know more, do get in touch.

Rev Chris Briggs is a mission enabler in the Methodist church and chair of MET:Revive. To get in touch, contact: chris@briggsworld.co.uk



Reflecting the
**GOODNESS
OF GOD**



Tim Rowlands, pastor of Festival Church and head of Evangelical Alliance Wales, inspires us with stories of witnessing great acts of generosity big and small.

My annual trip to the dentist had been going well. The bus was on time, I was feeling surprisingly relaxed, and the sun was shining. All was good with the world until the passenger whose ‘card wasn’t working’ was unable to purchase her ticket. If this was a game of chess, it had reached a classic stalemate. The driver refused to drive on. The passenger refused to step off.

We sat in this predicament for what seemed like an eternity – an especially stressful eternity for anyone hoping to get to the dentist on time! I sat there yo-yoing between thoughts of, *why doesn’t he just drive on?* and, *why on earth did she get on my bus?* In the end, however, the deadlock was broken by a simple act of generosity.

A stranger on the bus stepped forward, presented his card to the machine, and paid for the passenger’s ticket. There was a word of thanks, a few looks of surprise, the driver seemed happy, and we were on our way – finally!

The book of Proverbs seems to have a fair bit to say about the power of generosity, often grounding it within the relatable narrative of what it means to be a generous person. For example, we read in Proverbs 11:25:

“A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.” (NIV)

And it’s the preceding verse, made even more famous through Eugene Peterson’s translation, *The Message*, which reads:

“The world of the generous gets larger and larger; the world of the stingy gets smaller and smaller.” (MSG)

I wonder if you’ve ever noticed this

to be true? I think I have. One of the many blessings of being a pastor is the opportunity to participate in the lives of others. It doesn’t always feel like a blessing, but at the intersection of life and pastoral ministry, you meet all sorts of people with all sorts of stories to tell. And there’s so much to learn.

My first real meeting with Graham was at his invitation for a coffee. I’d just taken on the leadership of a church and was slowly working my way round to everyone. He’d taken the initiative and, rather than waiting for me to arrange something, he’d got in touch saying he’d pick me up from church one afternoon. He didn’t tell me he’d be picking me up in his classic 1960s Aston Martin sports car! I’ve never really been a car person, but after going out for coffee with Graham, I decided I could become one quite easily!

One thing I’ve learned about generous people like Graham is that their generosity somehow encompasses their whole way of life. It’s not just limited to one aspect or dimension. The world of the generous does indeed appear to be big, only limited by the extent of the many ways their generosity is shown.

Graham was one of the kindest and most generous people I’ve ever met. His was a rags to riches story in which his humility and gratefulness to God was abundantly evident. He spent time with people, got stuck in helping others, opened his home to those in need, and shared his faith with everyone he met. He was most definitely a faithful and generous steward of all that God had given him – including the Aston Martin.

Graham had made a promise to God that whenever a wedding was announced at church, he would offer the

We do though have the ability to reflect the generosity and goodness of God through the everyday conversations and things he has blessed us with.

bride-to-be the opportunity to be driven to her wedding in the Aston Martin. This arrangement worked brilliantly, until one of the ladies in church announced she was getting married in Poland. But guess what, Graham, undeterred in his generosity, drove to Poland and made sure the bride-to-be made it to her family church on time! Wow! That’s the world of the generous.

Most of us don’t own classic sports cars or have the time for a road trip across Europe. We do though have the ability to reflect the generosity and goodness of God through the everyday conversations and things he has blessed us with. And I guess that’s where it’s at. It starts with an attitude, a decision to reflect something of God’s love towards the lives of others.

“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (1 John 3:1)

Tim Rowlands is head of Evangelical Alliance, Wales, and senior pastor of Festival Church, with congregations in North Wales, mid Wales, and Chester. He is married to Emily, he has four adult children, and enjoys music, poetry, and mountaineering.



Radical generosity

Clare Doughty, at Lifewords, shares why giving is a heart thing.

Giving is at the heart of what Lifewords does. In Matthew 10:8 Jesus reminds us of all that He has given and calls us in turn to be radically generous: “Freely you have received; freely give.” Jesus is speaking to His disciples, reminding them of all that they have received from Him and calling them to give in a way that mirrors His generosity, His radical love and His proclamation of the good news that the kingdom of Heaven has come near.

Giving isn't just about money. Giving is kindness, compassion, time, grace, prayer, wisdom, comfort, possessions, opportunity, hospitality, respite, shelter. We can give practical expressions of support, tangible demonstrations of hope, selfless, lavish, overflowing acts of

service. Lifewords gives of the resources we have to extend an open invitation into the radical love found in Jesus.

Our founder, William Walters, was passionate that cost should not be a barrier to people connecting with the Bible, and that an ability to “read the captivating story of God’s love” should not be limited only to those who can afford to pay. That was in 1888, and it continues to form the basis of all we do today, 136 years later.

Working in print, in person, and online, Lifewords still shares the Bible’s words of life freely around the world today. But there is of course a cost to making our resources freely available; we rely on the generosity of our supporters, both those who use our resources in their ministries and those



who simply give so that more people might come to know Jesus.

The generosity of others enables us to give our support, resources and guidance to those who need it most. It allows us to make those life-giving words available in contexts where the numbers just don't add up – among the poor, the marginalised, minority languages, with children in difficult situations, with women who have experienced sexual exploitation, with those in prisons and hospitals, or with those who, in the midst of their suffering, are searching for hope. Sustained by the radical generosity of our supporters, we long to keep helping people engage with the Bible's words of life.

Melissa is a mental health chaplain for a large trust that works across a number of hospitals and rehabilitation centres and has been using Lifeworlds resources for four years now. She is one of over 200 individuals who have received our brand new Little Brick of Little Books. She shared: "I can assure you the ripple effect of your generosity far outreaches your imagination. Our patients will return to their communities with the knowledge that hospital is not the end of their journey but a small part, and that God did not leave them alone at a time when they felt the most vulnerable."

Speaking of Lifeworlds' Little Books, Melissa shared: "We have many people who are seeking to continue their faith in difficult and often confusing and painful circumstances, as well as those

who because of those circumstances are looking to renew their seeking. These resources are just right for individuals whose concentration is highly compromised as they recover. Time and again, the responses from those using these books is they find God within the pages. So, on behalf of our patients and our non-funded department, we want to say a very heartfelt, thank you."

In John 14:27 Jesus says: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives." Let's continue to find ways of giving that are different and distinct from the way that the world gives. Jesus gave us no money, no materialistic vices, but He gave us a new hope with His sacrifice. He said, "I give you peace not like this world gives." Now we show we're His followers by the life we each live.

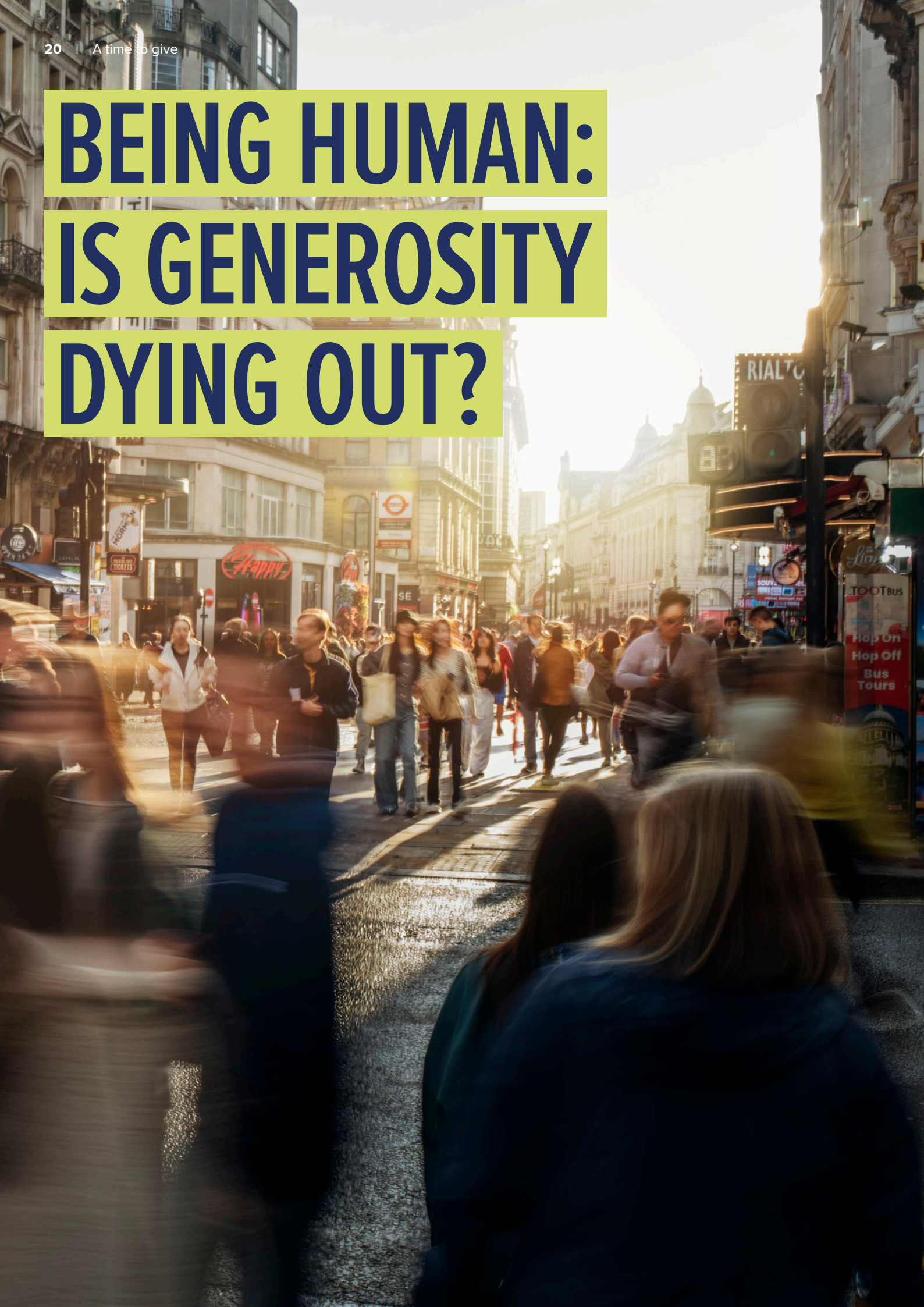
Lifeworlds exists to help people from all walks of life share and experience the Bible in person, in print, and online. Through our resources and a range of programmes and projects, Lifeworlds' worldwide ministry is all about creating ways to make the Bible available for everyone, everywhere.

Join the adventure as we partner together in radical generosity. Find out more at: lifeworlds.global

Clare Doughty is the communications executive at Lifeworlds, a global charity that creates engaging ways into the Bible.

"I can assure you the ripple effect of your generosity far outreaches your imagination."

BEING HUMAN: IS GENEROSITY DYING OUT?





Emma Sowden explores whether the fragility of life and scarcity culture are causing us to make more individualistic decisions as opposed to the generous, conscientious and sacrificial life of the God story?

There was a marketing campaign launched by L'Oréal two years ago called 'Lessons of Self Worth', and part of this campaign included a TV advert by actress Kate Winslet talking poignantly to camera. She opens with the classic line: "I'm worth it". She then proceeds to slowly remove her make-up. With every wipe of mascara and foundation, she continues, "our worth isn't about the look of our face, our body shape, or how popular we are or what others say about us. It's not about any of that. 'I'm worth it' is about owning your right to be you."

The definition of individualism is the philosophy/ideology/outlook on life that emphasises the worth of the individual. It's about self-reliance, independence and self-sufficiency. And in the West, individualism is the water we swim in. It is the air we breathe. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, we have all been shaped and formed in some way by individualism.

A life turned inward on oneself

It's not hard to see why; from countless news reports on the state of our economy, to rising mental health demands and global conflict, we are constantly bombarded with the notion of fragility and scarcity. There isn't much to go around, what we do have is on shaky ground, and the antidote to both is self-protection: 'you do you, you put yourself first and you protect your peace'. To live the 'good life' is to acquire resources and find happiness by independence from others rather than interdependence. We see a similar sentiment rolled out not just personally, but nationally: 'Make America great again' and 'Make America safe again' are just two of the slogans forming the bedrock of the Trump presidential campaign. Again, selling the promise of isolationism, high borders and accumulation against the rest of the world. A scarcity mindset.

To be human is to be generous in a world of scarcity.

Now one might argue, what's the harm? During economic uncertainty and global instability, protecting oneself and prioritising oneself seems sensible, even empowering. But something that strikes me about a scarcity mindset is how anti-generous it is. The kind of independent kingdoms that the Kate Winslet advert or the Trump campaign are trying to create are both in stark contrast to the picture that Jesus paints in the New Testament of God's kingdom: a banquet, a shared feast with "all the people they could find, the bad as well as the good" (Mathew 22:10).

Incurvatus in se is a Latin phrase coined by St Augustine of Hippo. He used the phrase to describe sin; it means 'a life turned inward on oneself'. Throughout church history, thinkers, church leaders and faithful people of God have pointed to the temptation of looking inward, to live by a scarcity mindset. And yet before the world was created, all that existed was generosity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – a relationship between the three, founded on giving life to one another and out of this relationship came the gift of creation. Generosity is at the heart of God. Therefore, to live by a 'meeting my own needs' or 'life turned inward on oneself' mantra, is to directly reject the generosity of God.

A life turned outward from oneself

In Mathew 19, Jesus meets a rich man desperately asking how he might inherit the kingdom of God. He says, I have kept the law so "what do I still lack?" His question is steeped in the fear of scarcity, nervous that he does not have enough and so asks how he can have more. It is then no wonder that when Jesus tells him to sell everything he

owns, he walks away despondent.

Jesus' life was about divesting. It was never about accumulating. It was not a spirituality of upward mobility but a downward mobility. All power He had, He flushed out of Himself for the sake of others. It was never about protection or prioritisation of self, but only the giving of the self for the vision of a wonderfully generous kingdom.

With a change of government on our own soil and headlines of scarcity fueling our anxieties, it can be easy to point the finger at politicians to provide the generous solutions. And yes, change needs to happen at systemic levels, but generosity is the responsibility of every human. Being made in the image of God means we bear His likeness best when we give. To be human is to be generous in a world of scarcity. The author James Davison Hunter says it better than I: "It is, after all, much easier to vote for a politician who champions child welfare than to adopt a baby born in poverty, to vote for a referendum that would expand health care benefits for seniors than to care for an elderly and infirmed parent, and to rally for racial harmony than to get to know someone of a different race than yours. True responsibility invariably costs." I would add that true generosity invariably costs. But the more we stop holding onto the need for self-protection that grips our hearts, the more we find release in the counter-cultural act of seeing life as a gift.

Emma joined the Evangelical Alliance in 2020, after graduating from the London School of Economics. She worked part-time as the team co-ordinator on the Being Human project until August 2024. Emma is passionate about the discipleship of young adults and is an "unashamed people person".



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Making space for all ages to encounter Jesus

Abby Guinness shares how the heart of Spring Harvest still beats strong after 45 years of ministry.



There are pilgrimages and gathering events all the way through the Bible. There is power in these moments. This is what keeps us energised – knowing that when we come together to encounter Jesus, however young or old, whatever our circumstances or abilities, we are empowered for living out the greatest commandment and the great commission. We are changed to be change-makers. We gather, we grow and we go.

For 45 years, Spring Harvest has created the opportunity to step out of the ordinary and commit time to connect with God.

This year, over 600 children and young people made a decision to follow Jesus at Spring Harvest. Hundreds of others took important steps forward in their journey of faith. We recently met Fraser, whose mum kept the letter he wrote at Spring Harvest as a child, telling her he was called to be a missionary. He now serves remote communities around the world with Mission Aviation Fellowship.

One of our favourite recent emails came from a parent: “My 8-year-old daughter has had an awesome week. She gave her life to Jesus. We go to church as a family, so I asked her what was different. She said, ‘Before, I knew about God, but this week I met Him’. She woke up on the morning after making a commitment to follow Jesus, and immediately was reading her Bible, instead of playing on her tablet.”

We receive so many messages that fill us with hope and excitement. There are testimonies of physical and emotional healing, relationships renewed, faith ignited and callings received:

“We came to SH exhausted and weary. We are coming home with our hearts fed and alive again. Praise God!”

A new joy we have discovered is that it’s not just being at the event itself that can have this impact. We’ve pioneered ways of enabling encounters in the post-pandemic world. Digital spaces have become more important than ever in accessing worship and Bible teaching. Having a livestream as an additional event space has meant that many have been able to meet with God wherever they are, be it the Shetland Islands, a hospital bed or a prison cell.

We’ve also expanded access to encounter and equipping throughout the year. My Spring Harvest is a free web-based resource area, and My Spring Harvest Plus is a subscription site with thousands of hours of great teaching recordings, many with captions and Sign Language interpretation.

We hope that our work looks something like what we see in Nehemiah 8; all ages getting together,

squeezing into a square within the walls of Jerusalem, Ezra reading the scriptures aloud and all the people are helped to understand. They respond in praise and worship, led to tears as they hear God’s word afresh. Nehemiah declares that this is a holy moment – a time to celebrate, share food, share the good news and find their strength in the joy of the Lord. So begins a hearty knees-up, intermingled with mission and evangelism. It’s one of my favourite Bible passages, showing the power of a large group encounter with God.

But right at the start of anything, is an individual discovering how much they are loved by God. This year, we heard from someone who turned up at Spring Harvest reluctantly, following loss and struggle:

“I’d lost any sense that God might love me, be for me, and be with me as a friend... [but that evening] I knew something had changed. The dark cloud that had been hanging over me had lifted, there was a new lightness in my heart that has remained since then. My circumstances haven’t changed much... but I can honestly say that I feel I’ve got God’s smile back.”

Encountering God’s smile is the beautiful beginning of being empowered for the spiritual adventure we are called to live. Those are the encounters Spring Harvest hopes to keep making space for.

Abby Guinness heads up Spring Harvest with a small team, as part of the charity Essential Christian. Find out more at: springharvest.org



Praise and worship at Spring Harvest 2024

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10 minutes with...

LYNNE PATERSON

Welcoming our new head of Scotland **Lynne Paterson**, as she shares her experience, insights and passion to make Jesus known across the nation of Scotland.

Lynne, tell us a little about yourself and your background

Home for me is Glasgow, although I have lived and worked in cities across the UK. Having moved quite a lot in life, I've been a Presbyterian, Anglican, Baptist and Pentecostal! I'm now a member of Hope Church, which is independent. Prior to my role at the Evangelical Alliance, I worked at Tearfund for 15 years in several different roles.

You have been working at Tearfund for the last 15 years. What were some of the things you were involved in during your time there and what are some of the things you learnt?

My first 10 years at Tearfund were as the head of Tearfund in Scotland. My role was to lead the team to engage supporters in praying, giving and taking action to help tackle the root causes of poverty through the church. I had the privilege of taking several groups of leaders and donors from across Scotland to experience this first hand, and have forever been changed by seeing the power of local churches working together to see their communities transformed.

For the last five years I have been the head of prayer at Tearfund. This has involved shaping our spiritual rhythms and practices as an organisation and engaging more supporters to be praying for Tearfund's work. The highlight of this role has been exploring the richness of bringing people together for prayer and worship from so many different cultures and church backgrounds.

What are you looking forward to getting stuck into as you start your new role at the Evangelical Alliance as head of Scotland?

I have this recurring image in my mind as I step into this role. I'm in a small sailing boat travelling at speed across the water with a strong tail wind. The sense I have from God is that my job is to discern where the wind is blowing and steer in that direction. And I say that as someone who is, by nature, a compulsive planner. So what I am looking forward to is doing a lot of listening; to the staff team, to members, to leaders across the nation, to the broader church, and most importantly, to the voice of God. Then to take all that listening and learning and work as a team to see how we think God is leading us to invest our time and energy in the coming years.

How can our members support the work of the Evangelical Alliance across Scotland and what are some of your prayer points for that nation and leading the team there?

Top of my list in terms of prayer is for that listening and discernment process. Please pray for God to give us His vision and heart for the nation, and for wisdom to see how the Evangelical Alliance can best serve that vision in the coming season.

To read the extended version of this article visit: eauk.org/news-and-views/10-minutes-with-lynne-paterson

The life of a missionary and how she gained more from giving than she could have ever expected



Interview by
Nicola Morrison

Margot* 55, was a missionary for many years. Her story of working with Christians and Christian organisations overseas and seeing people come to faith in remote foreign lands and places of war and conflict is a powerful one that offers hope and inspiration...

Margot was first inspired to join a short-term mission team as a teenager by a friend from her youth group who had done a gap year with Operation Mobilisation (OM). His encouraging stories from his time away and their spiritual discussions were so inspiring for her that she signed up for a month-long OM 'Love Europe' team the following year!

"It turned out to be quite a momentous experience!" says Margot. "I managed to get salmonella poisoning the month before I was due to go, and, after weeks of being very ill and plenty of desperate prayers, experienced a sudden and complete healing. The doctor was rather sceptical and was not too pleased when I said I was going 'somewhere in Europe' for a month!"

It was 1989, and Margot found herself in Warsaw, Poland. Bibles were pretty much forbidden and armed soldiers followed her and her group around the city. But despite the challenges the team gelled. Margot recalls: "We prayed a lot, laughed even more and were privileged to work with a brave and innovative church, who took us to the old town square and translated our hastily thrown-together sketches, songs and testimonies. Amazingly, huge crowds gathered every time, probably out of curiosity about this strange group of foreign young people! We had interesting conversations daily and, in the atmosphere of change and revolution that was evident all around us, many people were intrigued to learn more about faith in Christ. I felt impassioned



“The highs are making life-long friends with people from many different cultures, growing more sensitive to God’s conviction in my own life, becoming ‘less’, so he can be ‘more’, learning about his character and developing greater trust.”



and despite my lack of expertise, felt I could be used by God. I was smitten.”

This first trip led to others and a growing sense of a call to longer-term mission.

“I then looked into longer evangelism and discipleship programmes and left my job to do a six-month discipleship training school with Youth with a Mission” says Margot. “This gave me a life-changing, foundational depth of teaching and discipleship, plus hands-on experience of serving and evangelism in various settings. I would highly recommend it to anyone.”

Along her missional journey, Margot has grown in her faith and her relationship with God, and she has been encouraged by the faith of people she has met.

After completing another YWAM course in 1992 – training to work with children in need – Margot spent three months in the Philippines, working with street children, and there met a profoundly inspiring Catholic missionary who lived amongst Malays in their stilt houses. “I have never forgotten his stories of God leading in his life, the sacrifices he made and his servant nature.

“The frequent threats of violence experienced by the Filipino missionaries also challenged my attitude about safety and comfort, and made the rats, mosquitoes and cockroaches we were complaining about seem less threatening!” Margot recalls.

Fast forward a decade, and Margot was living in Romania, working with children and facilitating training for children’s workers.

I asked Margot what some of the highs and lows of her missional experiences have been: “The highs are seeing God working in people’s lives – when they come to faith or discover something new about God, receive healing or have a breakthrough. Similarly, the highs are making life-

long friends with people from many different cultures, growing more sensitive to God’s conviction in my own life, becoming ‘less’, so He can be ‘more’, learning about His character and developing greater trust.

“The experience has not been without its lows also. The lows are the seasons when nothing much seems to happen, when time is used up in red tape instead of investing in relationships with neighbours. The lows are all the goodbyes – so many goodbyes! – the intercultural tensions and misunderstandings, not being able to help the hundreds of needy people around you, and of course being far away from family and friends,” she says.

But Margot has no regrets. She believes that knowing that God’s love and compassion are far greater than ours frees us up to trust Him to carry the burden.

In leaving various jobs to train for mission and move abroad she went against the common sense of her parents and even many of my friends, but “God has always been faithful,” she says.

Margot would like to encourage those considering how to serve God that this doesn’t necessarily mean travelling to a distant land.

“We are all called to participate in God’s mission to bring His kingdom to earth and given gifts He wants us to use for His glory. Whether we are in paid employment, unpaid activities, at home or on the other side of the world, we are all co-workers with Him.

“Matthew 28:19 says to ‘go and make disciples of all nations’. These days it seems that all nations are coming to us, searching for hope for the future. They are even walking through the doors of our churches, hungry to learn. The opportunity to reach out to the nations is right in front of us like never before.”

**name changed for privacy.*

CROSSING DIVIDES



Rani Joshi shares her personal account of how forgiveness helped

her to be there for a terminally ill family member and why giving should be our love language.

Over the past year or so, as *idea* magazine has landed on my doorstep, I have consistently felt like the theme was speaking to me at the right time in my life.

'A time to give' – what does it mean 'to give?' We often think of giving of our time or money, but sacrificial giving requires us to give of ourselves in more ways than just one. It's the price Jesus paid for all of humanity; He gave of Himself (John 3:16).

Giving is also an act of worship – to give ourselves to God (Romans 12:1-2) and an act of love – to give to others (Hebrews 13:16). I have been very blessed with supportive people in my life, whether that's been financial, with a roof over my head or feeding me. To give of your time and of yourself comes at a greater cost. It can mean being inconvenienced or made uncomfortable. I really learned to give more of myself in December 2022, when my dad was given

a few days to live after being diagnosed with sarcoma cancer.

I hadn't seen him for four years, although we did speak via WhatsApp for two years. We didn't have a close relationship, due to a complex family history. I went to see him the day after he was admitted into hospital and as I walked into the ward, all I felt was compassion for my dad. He was going to die, and he didn't know Jesus. In that moment all I wanted was for him to know the forgiveness I had received. By God's grace and His undoubted love for my dad, he lived another three weeks and died peacefully 2 January 2023 in a hospice. Those three weeks (and the months that followed his death) were my darkest as a follower of Jesus, because there was nothing I or my siblings could do to help my dad, except pray, give our time and of ourselves, for him to know that he wasn't alone in his suffering. That type of giving was not easy and



was muddled with spiritual warfare. Perhaps this was the act of forgiveness and love that he needed.

I am not saying this as ‘hey look what I’ve been through or did’ but rather to encourage you to reflect, when was the last time you really gave of yourself so that it cost you? I’m not talking to the detriment of oneself, but rather from a place of sacrificial love. I am always struck by Acts 2:45 where people sold their possessions to give to others in need – it’s a sacrificial act of giving.

My mum always left me inspired with her generosity and love for others. She wasn’t a Christian when she died; however, she set an example that impressed on me. You could turn up to our house at any given time, and you would be fed. It’s also a cultural gift – being Gujarati there would always be a nice masala chai available along with some snacks. When people came to our house, it was a sense of showing

love to others through hospitality (Hebrews 13:1–3).

As a single, British Asian woman who just recently turned 40, I really understand the need for community, especially as 40% of UK adults are single. I want to be able to give from that place of love and hospitality. In Acts 20:35, Paul reminds us, remembering the words the Lord Jesus Himself said: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

Recently, God has been speaking to me about ‘the table’ – a place where people can come, eat, share and be vulnerable. A place where we can have healthy conversations with people from all walks of life, of faith and of no faith. It’s what Jesus did so generously; He got people together, ate with them and then shared with them. He was discipling them in their togetherness. It was and is a relational ministry.

I wonder what your table looks like. Maybe it’s full of people you know and

love, or perhaps you often eat on your own. In a world where people are taught to put up walls, where could we build healthy relationships with people who are different from us?

There are so many ways to give, that are beyond just the financial. Giving can be uncomfortable but it’s necessary. I encourage you to ask God today, who can I bless and how can I give?

Rani Joshi is the South Asian Forum and public leader UK coordinator at the Evangelical Alliance. She comes originally from a Hindu Gujarati background and came to faith after an encounter with the Holy Spirit in 2012. Rani has a heart for evangelism and prophetic ministry. She enjoys reading, podcasting, praying for others and good conversations.

30-year-old **Adam Harding Willis** is the founder of the Christian animation studio Wonderstory (you'll have spotted one of his fantastic videos if you were following our election updates on social media!). Here he shares how he uses his gifts for God's glory and finds his identity in how his heavenly Father sees him...



HEART BEHIND THE ART: AN INTERVIEW WITH ADAM HARDING WILLIS



Interview by
Helen Locke

Video-calling in from his West Sussex studio, a lot of what makes Adam tick becomes immediately apparent; behind him is a minimalistic but well-decorated space, punctuated by pictures of his family, certificates showing his creative skills (he studied graphic design at Central Saint Martins) and his bike hanging on the wall too. This calm-looking space is actually a hive of activity – and the fruit of family teamwork – as the home of Wonderstory, Adam's brainchild.

Friends and family would describe Adam as creative, spiritually led – and a little bit mad – with a ready sense of humour that can catch people off-guard! The themes which emerge as Adam speaks are hard work, authenticity and a clear vision – whether it's the studio which he, his wife and his dad converted from a humble garden shed, or the innovative company which it houses.

Family life is important to Adam, and he has two boys with wife Hope – Oakley (three) and Jagger (one) – who love nothing more than a rough and tumble with their dad in the garden. Adam shares that it was wonderful growing up in a Christian family and experiencing

a relationship with God early on – “to be able to call Him your friend and talk to Him whenever you need – it's that level of being able to just trust in something that's bigger than yourself and in someone even more trustworthy than a family member or a friend – that He's always there.”

Adam's childhood faith has developed into something he now clearly owns and has grown during the 24 years he has walked with Jesus.

“Everybody has questions and goes through seasons of doubting, but I think what's so important is to consider those doubts, and Google them, and try and explore them. What you shouldn't do is say ‘I don't get it!’ and not talk to anyone

“We need to make sure the time that we’re spending is on the stuff that we can bring the most to and we’re not just settling in a role or comfortable in a role, but that we’re called to make radical decisions, and take risks, and trust God.”



Adam spends some quality time with his family

about it – try and read about it.” Being proactive by reading the apologetics book *The Case for Christ* was particularly helpful in strengthening his faith with a historical grounding as a young adult. Taking regular prayer walks and praying in tongues to God have been instrumental in his journey too.

At 18 years old, Adam met an awesome young woman called Hope and promptly invited her to an Alpha course. It was there she ended up giving her life to Christ and the pair started dating. It was a time of growth for both. Adam gives credit to her for how she inspires him with her beautiful faith; he wants to honour her for being an amazing wife and mum, for her support and for being a director at the company as well as her part-time work. “I really am just inspired by how she is... Her faith is a beautiful thing.”

Giving is an important part of

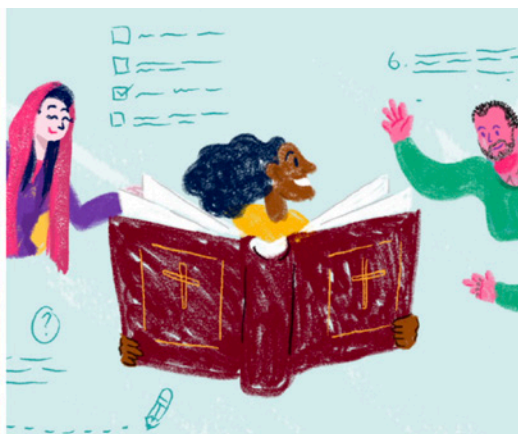
Adam’s story, and he has an attitude of gratitude. He’s grateful for the trust his clients give to him and wants to be a blessing to them by giving them his absolute best work – his preference is to work for non-profit clients as much as possible, even though his previous corporate clients were more financially sustainable for him to take on.

On one of his prayer walks, Adam was talking with God and had a sense about the possibility of animating the Bible, and he ended up launching the company, which he now runs full time. He came up with the name ‘Wonderstory’ because he wanted a new, easy-to-Google word that points both to the wonder of God and the storytelling that is a key part of it. His logo resembles a burning bush to signify the crazy story of Moses and how the company felt like a calling from God: “We need to make sure the time that we’re spending is

on the stuff that we can bring the most to and we’re not just settling in a role or comfortable in a role, but that we’re called to make radical decisions, and take risks, and trust God.”

Adam recently worked on a story about Cain and Abel – exploring why there is evil in the world and ultimately pointing viewers to our steadfast hope in Jesus. Adam is excited to create more faith-based videos and help organisations to communicate what they do.

The Evangelical Alliance itself has recently collaborated with Adam and his gifting, through a Wonderstory animation illustrating how UK evangelicals vote – we are more caring, others-oriented, and politically engaged than perhaps previously thought by media, government and the public. Watch it here: eauk.org/general-election



Would your mission benefit from increased awareness and impact? An explainer video from Wonderstory can help your audience’s understanding and support of your work. The first five members of Evangelical Alliance to get in touch can claim a free 15-second explainer animation for their cause (value of £500). Email hello@wonderstory.net or call 0118 915 2824 or visit: [Wonderstory.net](https://wonderstory.net)

The gift of giving



Gavin Calver, CEO of the Evangelical Alliance, reflects on the amazing impact giving can have on others and why it is essential to living a life that is pleasing to God.



Giving is such a key part of being a Christian. Whether it's our time, finances,

expertise, wisdom or interests, we all have so much to share with others. Our society so often encourages us to get what we can for ourselves but kingdom-living is nothing like that. I find it incredible that our brains are actually wired for us to feel good when we give to others. We are made to be generous.

For many years there has been a significant fundraising component to my ministry. I don't mind doing this as part of my role because vision, ministry and resources go together. It's a joy to give people the opportunity to give and also a wonderful delight to receive. On one particular occasion, I was heading off to see a significant donor to ask for a large amount of money. I was suitably nervous and did my best to dress up for the occasion. My three-piece suit fit well, my shoes were shining, and I was ready to go. I was keen to make a good impression when meeting this individual. I made such an effort to talk about the impact of the ministry I was involved in, and I spoke passionately about my desire

to see this grow in the years ahead. Wonderfully he was particularly stirred by what I was sharing and decided to give very significantly. I was delighted. As I left the building, I had a spring in my step and an overwhelming sense of profound gratitude to the Lord for such an answer to prayer.

I continued walking to the tube station when I passed a small supermarket. In the doorway of the shop, there was a lady crying, but I didn't take much notice. Instead, I kept walking, caught up in the delight of my own current circumstances. As I continued on, a deep sense of conviction from the Lord filled my guts; how dare I make such an effort with the donor and yet walk past someone in need without giving her a second thought. Feeling great remorse, I made my way back towards the shop doorway and asked the lady what was wrong. She told me her partner had been consistently abusive to her and had kicked her out. She was completely broken and desperately needed to get to her mum's house which was a fair distance away but had no money. I hailed a cab and asked the driver how much it would cost to take her to her mum's house. He said £20

and I opened my wallet to see a solitary £20 note inside, which I handed to the driver.

The lady got in the cab knowing that she would be able to make the journey to the sanctuary of her mum's house. I walked away from that encounter feeling so challenged – it is wrong for any of us to behave in a way that highlights some people as being of more worth than others. All people are fearfully and wonderfully made, and I keep asking the Lord to break my heart for everyone.

It's wonderful for any of us to receive, but we must also be ready to give of our own resources, and our own time, and to ask the Lord for greater compassion to bless others around us. Giving involves us putting others before ourselves and my experience with the donor, and the lady afterwards, showed afresh that we need to ask the Lord of endless compassion for more of that for ourselves that we might serve, love, bless and have time for those around us. My prayer going forward is that all of us will know the great blessing it is to receive but will also know the wonderful joy it is to give generously and joyfully in so many ways to those we encounter too.



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