

idea

THE MAGAZINE OF THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE
JANUARY-MARCH 2022

EAUK.ORG

Called to make disciples

through the joys and challenges
of life's journey

Be refreshed, inspired and equipped

– in the heart of the Lake District

Join us
for the
**Keswick
Convention**

16th July
- 5th August
2022

Teaching & Training

Choose from a programme
of courses for pastors,
lay leaders and church
members - designed to
deepen your walk with
the Lord and equip you
to serve.

Church Weekends

Come to Keswick as
a church - for a weekend
of Bible teaching,
sung worship and
fellowship.

Find out more www.keswickministries.org - or call us on **017687 80075**




*We've been around
for 175 years.*

Help us be around for years more.
Give to our 175 appeal.

Find out more at eauk.it/175

evangelical alliance
together making Jesus known



-  evangelicalalliance
-  EAUknews
-  evangelicalalliance

Membership queries and updates
020 7520 3830
membership@eauk.org

Advertising
01892 752 927
sales@eaukmedia.org

Design
Sarah Fisher
sarahfisher.co.uk

Evangelical Alliance leadership team
Gavin Calver, CEO
Peter Lynas, UK director
Fred Drummond, director of Scotland and prayer
Sián Rees, director of Wales
Jo Frost, director of communications and engagement
Rev Dr Israel Olofinjana, director of One People Commission
Emrys Jones, director of finance and operations

Evangelical Alliance offices
Head office
176 Copenhagen Street
London N1 0ST
tel 020 7520 3830
[Mon–Fri, 9am–5pm]
info@eauk.org

Northern Ireland
First Floor
Ravenhill House
105 Ravenhill Road
Belfast BT6 8DR
tel 028 9073 9079
nireland@eauk.org

Wales
20 High Street
Cardiff CF10 1PT
tel 029 2022 9822
wales@eauk.org

Scotland
c/o MAF Scotland
29 Canal Street
Glasgow G4 0AD
tel 0141 353 0150
scotland@eauk.org

The Evangelical Alliance. A company limited by guarantee. Registered in England and Wales No. 123448. Registered Charity No. England and Wales: 212325, Scotland: SC040576. Registered Office: 176 Copenhagen Street, London, N1 0ST

idea is published in accordance with the Evangelical Alliance's Basis of Faith, although it is impossible in every article to articulate each detail and nuance of belief held by Evangelical Alliance members. Articles in *idea* may therefore express views on which there is a divergence of opinion or understanding among evangelicals.

idea accepts advertisements and inserts to offset printing costs. Advertising in *idea* does not imply editorial endorsement. The Evangelical Alliance reserves the right to accept or refuse advertisements at its discretion. Articles may be reproduced only with permission from the editor.

Welcome

Bittersweet discipleship

Fred Drummond, our director of Scotland and prayer, lays the foundation of this discipleship edition. I had to bring him back, as having written the resource *What kind of follower?* he seemed best suited to get us thinking, and talking, about this bittersweet journey.

Fred writes, “The call of Jesus takes us into a wonderful though sometimes challenging life journey”, as he urges us to walk so closely behind Jesus that we end up covered in the dust kicked up from His sandals (p. 2–3).

Other contributors help us explore how to stay close to Christ. They take inspiration from the persecuted church (p. 4–5), tell of their own discipleship habits (p. 6–7 and p. 17), and share a hymn God laid on their heart (p. 10). Meanwhile, others focus on the call to go and make disciples (Matthew 28), including our CEO Gavin Calver,



04

who writes, “Let’s not be those who back down, lie down or get watered down but those who take a stand for Jesus and follow Him wherever He calls us to go.”

This is the last edition of *idea* that I’ll edit; by the time this goes to print, I will have moved on to new pastures. Serving you through *idea* has been a gift in my discipleship journey; I hope the same is true for you. Please also note that *idea* will now be available on a quarterly basis, but you can find loads more news and views at eauk.org

Yours truly,

Naomi Osinnowo
Editor



20

Highlights

02 **What kind of follower?**
How do we stay close to Jesus while living on the margins? asks Fred Drummond.

04 **The cost of discipleship**
The stories from the persecuted church force me to question my own discipleship journey – Open Doors UK & Ireland CEO.

06 **My top 7 discipleship habits**
These are some of the things I do so that Christ works in and through me – Usha Reifsnider.

10 **The cross is raised**
Ruthie Thomas: When I struggled on a hard road of life, God laid this hymn on my heart.

17 **10 minutes with...**
What can we learn from Danielle Mcelhinney, public policy officer at the Evangelical Alliance Northern Ireland?

20 **Following Christ across divides**
We should do something to repair our fractured society, says Jon Yates.

33 **Go and make disciples**
Gavin Calver: Let’s take a stand for Jesus and follow Him wherever He calls us to go.



33

WHAT KIND OF FOLLOWER?



How do we stay close to Jesus while living on the margins? asks **Fred Drummond**, director of prayer and Evangelical Alliance Scotland.

I sat in a coffee shop in Inverness in the Scottish Highlands. It was raining. I looked into my Americano and pondered some earlier conversations I had listened to; many of the comments and questions had been echoes of others I had heard when I asked about the challenges of following Jesus.

The major point that came across was that it's not easy to follow Jesus. The challenges are large and many. The benefits of His presence are huge. His grace and love and power are indescribably wonderful. But trying to stay close to Him and live in the radical manner He described is not easy.

If you are struggling to follow Jesus, if you sometimes feel like giving up, if you struggle with the pressure to conform to the cultures we live in, you are not alone. As we seek to follow Jesus, we find ourselves more at odds with the prevailing narratives that dominate culture. To believe in a mega-story and follow the call of God challenges the worlds of secularism, individualism and consumerism. By challenging these cultural norms and the lifestyles they lead to, we can find ourselves being marginalised. It requires courage and wisdom to follow Jesus. It can feel like a lonely place—if you're the only Christian

in a staff room, on your shift or in your university group. Life can feel rubbish.

This is why themes like community and identity, and courage and grace become so significant. In some ways, we are feeling what every radical follower of Jesus feels: we are out of step, misunderstood, our story is sometimes met with suspicion; yet, during the challenges, the love of Jesus floods our hearts. Being a follower of Jesus is life-changing, serious business.

The one who calls

In Matthew 9, we have the personal account of the call on Matthew to follow Jesus as a disciple. He is a tax collector for the Romans. He would sit at a booth all day, probably in a busy area, waiting to collect cash. He is regarded as a traitor, a cheat and impure. He would be despised by his own people. If anyone knew what it was to be marginalised and ignored by his own people and culture, it is him.

For Jesus to call Matthew shows the radical nature of grace and acceptance and the power of Jesus to surprise and shock. Matthew is not your typical apprentice. I wonder how the zealots and nationalists in the group felt about this?

Jesus just approaches Matthew and tells him to “follow me”. Matthew is to get up, leave the past behind, get in step behind Jesus, and start to journey with Him. It is so simple: no road map, no joining ceremony, no college course to get through.

Everything is about the one who calls. It is a personal invitation. It is to enter a relationship of trust and love. At that point there is no room for questions – there is just Jesus.

Let me state as boldly as I can: disciple- or follower-making is always about Jesus first. It is our response to Him. He leads, we follow. He speaks, we listen. He teaches, we learn. But ultimately, by becoming a follower we are saying we are submitting our lives to the one who has invited us to follow.

It is not signing up to a 12-week course and thinking we have got it, that we’ve arrived. To be a follower is to enter

a life journey where we stay as close to Jesus as we can. For the whole of life, we are followers, always trying to watch listen and learn from Jesus.

It is maybe ironic that Matthew left a place of cultural marginalisation to ultimately be part of a group that would be marginalised by his world. Matthew just got up and started to follow—the old life behind him and the new one just a few paces behind his saviour and lord.

Matthew’s gospel tells us that following is less about the follower and more about the one we are following. Jesus calls each one of us, not to religion or even church but to Him. We are submitting our lives to a relationship with Him which is about trust, submission, grace and mercy.

It is interesting that the last words of this tax collector’s story of Jesus is for all those who follow to make followers based upon the call, authority, power and presence of Jesus.

Walking with others

I became a Christian with no prior church connection and very little understanding. I met Gordon, an older Christian who was my barber. I told him of how I had met with Jesus. Immediately he told me I should come for tea on Thursday. When I got to his house, I was invited in by his wife Nancy. She had a table prepared with food, and the three of us ate together. After the plates were cleared, Nancy left us and went to watch TV. Gordon brought out his Bible and we read the beginning of Mark’s gospel together.

Every Thursday for over a year I had tea at Gordons’s house. He answered questions, taught me to pray and introduced me to other young Christians, including my future wife. He mentored me in the ways of Jesus.

When things get difficult, I still remember those Thursday nights of prayer, simple Bible study and talking about Jesus. They helped shape my journey and showed me how much we need others and how wonderful Jesus is.

We need each other; all of us, no matter the stage we are at on our journey, need others to walk with. We need people to pray and cheer us on.

We need those who will ask difficult questions and keep us close to Jesus. We all need mentors.

Thinking caps on

We all need to think, chat and listen as we plot to tackle the discipleship deficit or follower fallout. I believe that as church we will need to make some difficult decisions about what we think is really important. Here are some questions to reflect on and maybe discuss: Is discipleship-making really one of our major goals? Do we teach and prepare people for the world in which they live? Do we create space for people to share their mistakes, sorrows and pains? Are we demonstrating grace and forgiveness? Do our presentations of the good news of Jesus focus on decisions or discipleship? Are we being mentored, and who are we mentoring?

The call of Jesus takes us into a wonderful though sometimes challenging life journey – it is beautiful, enhancing and exciting. But to go the way of Jesus is to also face misunderstanding, pain and alienation to the world. We are walking against the storm of the cultures and kingdoms of the world.

Senior pastor Peter Morden wrote, “If someone was a committed follower, it shaped their whole lives. Disciples were called to be dusty, covered in the dust of their rabbi—that is, to walk so closely behind their teacher that the dust kicked up from his sandals would fall on them. Being a disciple was serious business” (*The Message of Discipleship*, IVP 2018 p. 4). And it still is.

Where next?

Check out *What kind of follower?* a reflective, easy-to-follow study guide to inspire every believer to have the space for honest conversations about walking with Jesus:

eauk.org/wkof



“The stories from the persecuted church force me to consider whether my determination to cling to Jesus comes anywhere close to the determination of those who wish to eradicate Christianity,” says **Henrietta Blyth**, CEO of Open Doors UK & Ireland.



THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

When I was at school, I remember debating the proposition that history is bunk. Forty-five years later and my nephew keeps this debate alive and well. But history has a way of repeating itself, and we do well to learn the lessons and take them to heart.

The way in which persecutors try to destroy the Christian church has changed very little in the last 2,000 years. They understand the significance of practices which keep our faith alive – sometimes even more than we do.

One of the first moves by totalitarian regimes is to limit access to the Bible. That's how Open Doors started: our founder, Brother Andrew, felt called by God to smuggle Bibles to believers behind the Iron Curtain in the 1950s.

Preventing access to the word of God was also a key tactic during the Cultural Revolution in China. In the 1970s and 1980s there were no Bibles, no seminaries, no church buildings, and no income for pastors and workers. Church meetings were

raided. Pastors and believers were arrested and thrown into prison.

During this time, Brother Song and Brother Fu were both arrested for their faith and publicly shamed for believing in ‘Western superstition’. They were sent to north-west China to be imprisoned in one of the ‘Re-education Through Labour’ camps in Qinghai Province.

Brother Song said, “Conditions in the labour camps were so bad, words can’t describe the physical and emotional torment we had to endure. Nights were unbearably cold. We were woken early each morning to begin long days of hard physical work, mostly pounding rocks into pieces. We had to attend endless political classes to ‘re-educate’ us about loyalty to the New China and Socialism. The ultimate goal was to reform us so we would renounce our old beliefs and conform to socialist behaviour.”

Sound familiar? There are echoes here in this year’s news reports of Uighur Muslims being

The way in which persecutors try to destroy the Christian church has changed very little in the last 2,000 years.

of learning scripture by heart. This practice literally enables me to read, learn and inwardly digest the word of God. It is like the difference between looking at a view and trying to draw it – memorising scripture makes me understand it in a richer, deeper way.

And now, after nearly two decades of growth, resulting in a Christian population of more than 90 million, history has begun to repeat itself in China. Xi Jin Ping’s government introduced new religious regulations in 2018. Once again, the government seeks to limit access to Bibles by making it illegal to sell them online. It’s now illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to attend church or Sunday school. The government is literally trying to wipe out the future of the Chinese church.

Places of worship must now be registered, which is complicated and difficult, and the government is using new technologies to watch people. Digital surveillance, including facial recognition technology, is required in church buildings and those who don’t comply are being closed down. Once again, pastors have been imprisoned. Once again, Christians find it difficult to meet together.

But our church family is increasingly resourceful. Knowing that the government is listening in through the surveillance equipment, some pastors have decided to preach directly to them. No longer able to meet in large groups, our brothers and sisters walk the street in small groups praying and listening to the sermon online.

During the coronavirus lockdown, Christian friends in the UK said it was great doing church online as it gave them so much more free time at the weekend. This attitude would be completely incomprehensible to our Chinese church family; they understand the extraordinary value of being able to meet together, encouraging each other and building each other up (Hebrews 10:25).

The stories from the persecuted church force me to consider whether my determination to cling to Jesus comes anywhere close to the determination of those who wish to eradicate Christianity. Too often, the persecutors understand the precious disciplines needed to nurture faith more than I do. But the radical discipleship of my persecuted brothers and sisters shows me how to press in and press on.

Today, Open Doors continues to provide written and audio Bibles and discipleship materials for Christians in China, with a particular focus on believers from minority ethnic backgrounds. Visit our website to see what we do: opendoorsuk.org

interned in Chinese prison camps, undergoing torture and forced re-education.

Brother Song said the one thing that kept them going through the 21 years of imprisonment was the word of God which they had learned by heart. “Words can’t express how powerful God’s word is,” he said. “I remember reciting scripture over and over again. I had grown up memorising scripture, so God truly had placed His word in my heart and had written it on my mind. Political re-education was supposed to reform me, but God’s word transformed me every day. Every day, God’s word gave me hope and strength to keep going. His word and His presence in that cold cell truly kept me alive.”

The Bible tells us how powerful God’s word is: “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword” (Hebrews 4:12). Persecutors intuitively know this, but I so easily forget it. One of the biggest lessons I have learnt from my persecuted church family is the value

My TOP 7

DISCIPLESHIP HABITS



These are some of the things I do so that Christ works in and through me. Perhaps one or two might inspire or affirm you, says **Usha Reifsnider**, cross-cultural ministry consultant.

1. I share Jesus.

Sharing Jesus with those who don't yet know Him is an essential part of my everyday practice as His disciple. Being a Christian convert from a Hindu background, this could be through my mission work (I've been a mission partner for many years) or through everyday encounters with people, which are often preceded by prayer for opportunities to witness and to serve.

2. I run.

Now, I'm not a good runner, and I have multiple injuries, so this isn't about chasing athletic goals. For me, it's about the effect running has on my state of mind. I run long distances outdoors, and this discipline helps to clear my mind – it creates 'brain space' – enhancing my ability to come before my God in prayer, especially prayers of intercession.

3. I meditate on unfamiliar scripture.

We often use the same scriptures a lot, drawing a well-known message from a particular verse or passage – so I find a scripture that I'm not used to. I ponder on it and pull from it fresh insight and revelation. Take Psalm 19 for instance; I move beyond the first verse and into the second ("day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge"), and as I run I wonder about God's creative power and how He pours forth wisdom from the skies.

4. I fellowship with my husband.

Before the coronavirus lockdown, I left the US to work and study in the UK. My husband is still in the States, so we haven't lived in the same country for a few years. But we have a daily call where we do Bible study, pray and eat one meal. There's something to be said about bringing together spiritual and physical sustenance.

5. I limit clutter.

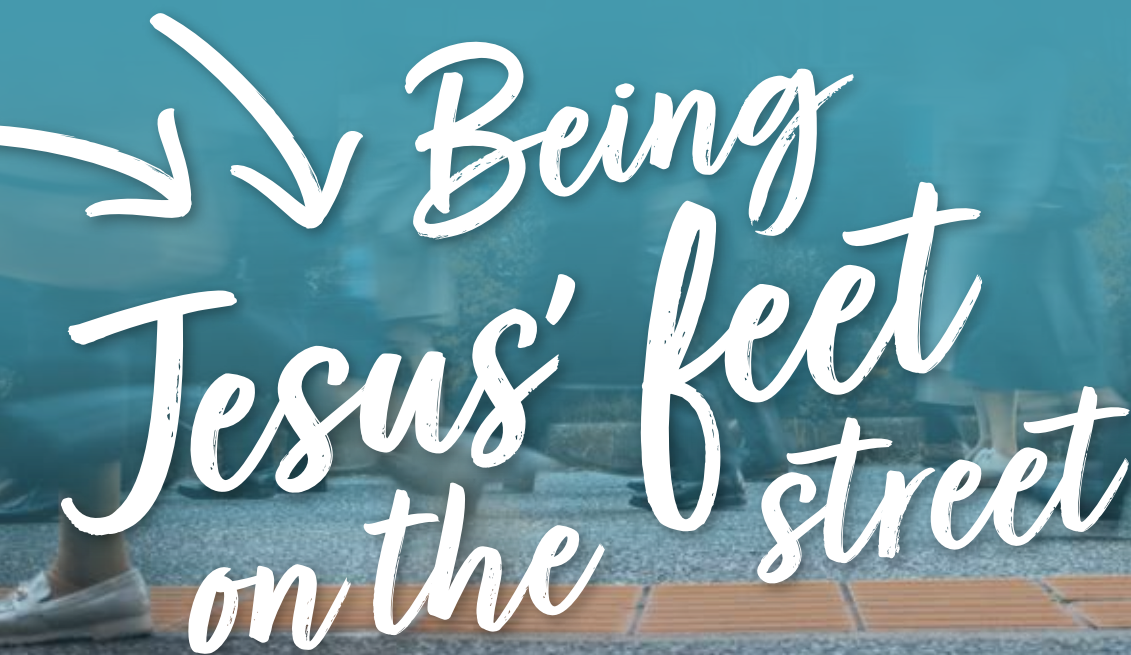
I've been living with atheists and an agnostic for five years as part of a programme of exchange (I provide palliative care in return for somewhere to stay). My space is small, so the less physical and mental clutter I have, the better. I limit my possessions, which frees up my mind, as I don't think about what I don't have. Living with less also makes me rely on God more and minister to others through gifts, as I'll always have more than I need – not to mention the environmental aspect.

6. I try to live without Christian clichés.

My first point was that I share Jesus. Often, in everyday contexts, this seldom involves me telling people that I'm a Christian. If my faith in Christ doesn't show by now, there's something lacking in my walk. My goal to live and breathe Jesus recently resulted in an atheist asking me to mentor her. What an incredible opportunity to share Jesus, and a test to be able to live Jesus without the clichés.

7. I live in the blurry space.

How I apply my faith is in a blurry space – a space that is not binary or black and white. By that I mean, the way I display Christ to those who aren't His follower depends on circumstance and context. I have no set way of witnessing to Jesus; I can't, because my goal has to be to ensure whoever comes across my path can make a link to the creator of the universe.



Being Jesus' feet on the street

Making disciples is about so much more than Sunday mornings. It involves meeting our community where they really are, both in acts of service and by overcoming our fear to share our faith, **Pastor Geoff Folkes** tells Helen Locke, communications assistant at the Evangelical Alliance.

Pastor Geoff Folkes is a busy man, leading Calvary Church of God in Christ (COGIC) in Tottenham, a community that's long faced great challenges, as well as working as a business advisor. But he was able to spend some time with me to share how his church is making disciples.

Tell me about your church and community?

We're one of the oldest Pentecostal churches around. Being right on Northumberland Park, near Tottenham Hotspur football stadium, we get heavy footfall, so we try to engage with the community in practical ways and let people know we're here.

The local community is diverse, made up of a range of nationalities and cultures. Sadly, many in the community face great challenges. There are high levels of homelessness, single-parent households, low-income families, gangs (one of which is active in our neighbourhood), drug abuse, hate crime, and domestic violence.

How does COGIC respond to these difficult circumstances?

No church can tackle all those issues in isolation. One of the main ways we engage with the community is through a fortnightly community lunch, which includes a hot meal and provisions for people to take away. We also work with the local authority to provide a safe space for female victims of domestic violence. They can come in and alert

us to their situation and we can help them move forward. Going forward, we're praying we can get a community house or refuge to expand this work.

COGIC's efforts are admirable and a real example of love in action.

We want to be a lighthouse in the community so that people see that this church is seriously concerned with responding to people's spiritual and practical needs. During the pandemic, many families were facing such difficult times, and those who had lost loved ones really wanted to remember them by having a funeral. So we stayed open as much as we could, and I said, "If I can, I will do it." People could see the church was active.

I'm also involved in the community's multi-faith forum, the Safer Neighbourhood Board and Haringey Giving organisation. I'm getting to know people and I'm finding out what's affecting my parishioners and what to pray and seek God for. This is a challenge because not everyone sees the need for this. Some people may think, you're in your corner and I'm in mine, but Jesus was a person who came out of the synagogues into the streets and healed people who had some of the most challenges.

It's not about me but about what I can do to demonstrate the love of God through personal as well as spiritual support; and God will make a way for me when I give everything to Him.

Have you any examples of community outreach resulting in conversions?

We've seen some non-Christians think more seriously about God after they've lost loved ones in the pandemic. They have come to church to worship and have even taken an active part in what we're doing. One lady who wanted to volunteer actually gave her heart to the Lord the day she offered her help.

Then there was the lady who was disillusioned by church who came to our community lunch and found herself back in the house of God, and back with the Lord. Lives are changed when they impact Christ through His church.

It seems there's much you can teach your congregation about following and sharing Jesus, even when it's uncomfortable or challenging.

I was in prison ministry for 20 years in a young offenders' institution, and I've been involved in youth ministry and street evangelism. When Christians say, "I don't know what to say," "I'm not trained to do that," and "I want to be trained," it's often fear speaking, because it's a challenge to discuss Christianity with unbelievers confidently. But sometimes it's as simple as saying, "Jesus loves you and He died for you", letting them know He's the way, the truth and the life, and leaving it there. Or you can share your own personal experience of what God has done for you and how your life has changed.

Yes, perhaps many of us do overcomplicate sharing our faith and then scare ourselves.

Fear is often what I encounter when I disciple people. Many don't realise that their testimony can be of great encouragement to people. Share it with people and encourage other Christians to be willing to testify too.

Just what you say and how you live could be a witness to people. You might thank God for the day aloud, and that will open up a conversation. Someone might say they don't believe in God, and you could ask them why. Opportunities will come up; it's just knowing how to encourage your faith when they do. Jesus opens the door.

How do you take your congregation from a place of reservation to raring to go?

We encourage our members with a programme of good Bible study and try and get people to see how they can help the church, from youth to mission, from music to hospitality. I also help people find out what their gifts are, to enable them to do the Lord's work. It's about more than Sunday morning. As Christians, we must step up and ask, what could I be doing better? and then move forward.

You mentioned Bible study – which key scriptures underpin this work?

Matthew 28:18–19 says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." All power is given unto Jesus, and therefore we have power too, so we need to go out and do what God has commissioned us to do.

The most important thing is love. In conducting all those funerals, God encouraged me: "What you're doing is in love and it is a form of evangelism." I've been able to meet all these people, share the gospel and maintain contact with them. When they share that they're having a hard time, I can say to them, if you need to talk just give me a buzz.

God has called us to love everybody, no matter their colour, race or sexual orientation. Not excluding people is a way of loving people, and maybe one day they'll come to know Jesus as saviour.

How can we pray for your ministry in the community?

Please pray for our work in Tottenham. Pray for the local gang I mentioned; pray against drug problems; for children who have been affected by county lines; for families experiencing domestic abuse; and for our services not to be blocked on match days. The Bible tells us that "the harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few"; pray for workers, to work towards God's vision.





The Cross is Raised

By **Ruthie Thomas**, hymn
writer, author and poet

Selected verses from *The Cross is Raised*

The Cross is raised
give God the glory.
The Cross is raised
above a concrete hill.
Beyond belief,
the love, the pain,
still once again
the Cross is raised.

The Cross is raised
shout Alleluia.
The Cross is raised
above a concrete hill.
For you and me
look up and see
that once again
the Cross is raised.

The Cross is raised
the power is given.
The Cross is raised
above a concrete hill.
Come feeble flesh
draw from
God's breath
for once again
the Cross is raised.

© Ruthie Thomas/Heaven
Direct Music. Administered by
Stainer & Bell Ltd

When I struggled on a hard road of life – a road where hardly a day went by without tears – a place where the silence was an unwelcome stranger. This is what I did; this was the basis for the strength to make it through: I went back in memory to where redemption became a reality and a new beginning for me. That place was the cross where I first believed—the stone-built chapel in Cardiff where I had said, “I believe this” and handed over the keys to my feeble life to the Great I Am, Jesus.

I knew back then, as I listened to the gospel message for the umpteenth time, that in these moments there was a supernatural clearing and connection of God's Spirit to mine. I knew then that when I departed this human body I would without a doubt be held to answer for life's most important question. So there sitting in a church pew and believing, I considered how I had always attempted to be true to myself and now here was that challenge again. Without emotion, I made my decision. Jesus had given Himself as a sacrifice so that all my wrongdoing could be forgiven – washed away. I could be renewed and live forever in paradise, the place of purity and beauty and holiness, where nothing undefiled could enter.

It was from this revisit that I reignited and reaffirmed the truth and my identity. I recalled many precious and special blessings that God had done in my life and in the lives of those met on the journey. I know the love of God, of His Holy Spirit with me, of the love and joy of Jesus in my heart. Yes, there were still tears but I had refuelled. I had inner strength. The Holy Spirit was with me. I was assured and signposts of heaven lined the hard road.

Then, on a rain-drenched evening in the place of the hard road, I saw a vision of the risen cross. This vision puzzled me at first because it was a second vision of the cross I had seen since arriving in West Wales, only there was something

not quite the same in this second picture. Then I smiled as I realised the change: in the first vision the cross had been lying flat upon the concrete road between the houses where I was living; here it now appeared raised high above the concrete hill and the Tenby sea and town. Then heaven direct words and melody began to flood my mind, some of the verses of which I've shared, in what became a new revival hymn for Wales.

Seven-day challenge

If you need assurance or feel uncertain of your faith, could it be that your trust has been more in a denomination or group rather than the living Jesus? It is only true redemption at the cross that will give grounding and be a 'taking-hold-of' point in uncertainty.

I took the seven-day challenge with my household and found it helpful to keep a diary. It was a joyful challenge and there was insight. On the first and second morning my husband played guitar to the hymn on CD and the atmosphere was noticeably changed to a peace-filled space.

1. Sing the hymn every morning for 7 days.
2. Meditate and revisit your redemption day.
3. Tell others your salvation story.

Find *The Cross is Raised* lyric video at heavendirectmusic.org
The sheet music is available in Ruthie Thomas's songbook *You Can't Keep a Good Song Down*, published by Stainer & Bell (stainer.co.uk/shop/y330).

A RELATIONSHIP MADE IN HEAVEN



Making disciples starts with ordinary people, like you and me, and the potential for our relationships to be used by God, says **Phil Boydell**, country leader for Navigators UK.

“I want to go deeper in my relationship with God. A few harder things have happened in my life in the last two years and it’s causing me to ask big questions about the place of faith in my life.”

The person who said this to me last week is a faithful churchgoer who tries to read their Bible and pray. On the outside things are absolutely fine, but on the inside there is a gap: if Jesus is who He says He is then there has to be more.

How would you respond if someone said this to you? We often answer this kind of cry with resources: the latest book, a sermon, maybe a good podcast – all good stuff. But in that well-intentioned response we sometimes miss the most important answer to this question. A relational longing requires a relational answer. Let me explain: this person was asking about the reality and depth of their relationship with God, and the primary way God is calling us to answer that is with a relationship, a relationship that draws them to God in the nitty-gritty of their everyday life – ‘life on life’ discipleship as we at Navigators UK like to call it.

Life on life

The Apostle Paul’s favourite way to help Christians grow wasn’t letters, although he wrote a lot of them. He longed to be with the people he cared about – or failing that, to send someone else who could walk alongside them: a Timothy, a Priscilla or an Aquila. This mattered to Paul because the Christian faith is not just truth; it has to be lived truth or it will remain detached from reality.

It’s not easy being a Christian, applying the truth and life of Jesus into the complexities of our relationships and culture. We need people with us, who really know us and love us, and with whom we can be honest. Disciple-making relationships are not about advanced skills or superior knowledge but a quality of relationship that is marked by openness with one another and a relentless focus on Jesus.

Hidden resources

When Paul sent a Timothy or Titus, it wasn’t just into their Sunday gatherings, it was also into the depths of their lives and communities. It is hard to grasp just how relationally connected people were in ancient times compared to today. We tend to live

in enclaves, detached from others and protected by the walls of our homes and cliques; but in the ancient world this kind of hiddenness was largely unknown – lives were interwoven between family, work, neighbourhood and worship.

Listen to the way Paul describes Timothy, whom he is sending to the Philippians: “I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon ... I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare. For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 2:19–21).

Notice what Paul commends in Timothy: not that he was an advanced theologian or expert counsellor but that he showed Jesus’ concern for people’s needs. Here is a man who loved really well and who trusted Jesus to bring real change to people’s lives. This is the heart of a disciple-maker.

But I’m not...

We so often disqualify ourselves from being used by God because we struggle or we don’t know enough. I was first discipled as a 20 year old by a retiree in her 60s, who carried the pain of her divorce and who felt God couldn’t use her. That woman changed my life – because she loved me deeply, she encouraged me in my faith, and it was all about Jesus. She believed in me and gave me hope that somehow God was in the business of using people like this mess of a young man she found in front of her.

How would you answer my friend’s question? God uses ordinary people’s relationships for the deepest transformation. It doesn’t have to be clever or sophisticated. There are already people He’s placed around you who you could get alongside – people who long to go deeper with Him and people who haven’t yet encountered Him. Also, the reality is that such Jesus-focused relationships are always mutual, so you will benefit as much as the person to whom you make yourself available.

The most significant resources for the spiritual growth and the missional impact of the church in the UK are ordinary people and the potential for their relationships to be used by God. We have loads of resources to help you get going (navigators.co.uk/online-shop), but the biggest challenge is the willingness to make yourself available to God in your relationships in the first place. Are you up for the adventure of your life?

THE G

In some ways, rebuilding our church after the pandemic is like repairing a precious ornament without all the original pieces, says **David Taylor**, pastor, Thatcham Baptist Church.

REEP

JOB



WARRIORS

PARIAHS

Sunday, 1 August 2021 was a red-letter day for our church. It was the first time we held our worship service outside in the church garden. Some of those who had been reluctant to attend indoor services were happy to sit in the open air, including the young families we'd missed so much. Passers-by stopped and chatted. And above all, we could sing.

There was something else noticeable, too. About a quarter of those present were newcomers. We are used to welcoming around one or two new people into our church per month, so it was as if we were catching up on the backlog caused by coronavirus. Most of these newcomers have stayed with us, including several with disabilities and three families that recently arrived from Hong Kong on the government's special visa programme. We've moved back inside the building now, and our new congregation includes about 30 recent arrivals.

At the same time, of course, we have lost people. During the pandemic some have died and others have moved away. Others have still not found the confidence to return to church

in person or have simply got out of the habit of coming. I have to admit this had me worried for a while: all these new people arriving, some core members avoiding church almost completely and the strain this put on those of us trying to keep in contact with everyone.

Much work to do

Back in June I broke an ornament at home that we had inherited from my late mother-in-law. Fortunately, I was able to repair it to something like its original condition. Inspired by this and *The Repair Shop* TV programme, I encouraged our church to think of our task following coronavirus as 'the great repair job'. However, what I hadn't factored in then was that we'd be rebuilding our church without all of the original pieces as well as some different parts.

So, in our church there's now a lot of adjustment going on. Because of the sheer amount of change we've experienced, we have a great deal of community building to do. Each of us has a large number of other people we need to get to know if the church is to function well. This may be exciting for

an extrovert like me, but for those who find meeting new people daunting it presents a big challenge.

In addressing this situation, one of the keys seems to be simple hospitality. The Bible contains so many good examples of this, doesn't it? From Abraham entertaining angels unawares to Paul's friend Gaius hosting a whole church, God's people are hospitable people. Both Peter and Paul make a point of encouraging this in the church. And Jesus Himself shows us how to be the perfect guest, bringing the presence and blessing of God into every home He entered.

I'll never forget someone explaining to me the difference between entertaining and hospitality. Entertaining often means smart clothes, the best china and a three-course meal. Hospitality can be as simple as a cup of tea and a chat. This was fairly easy to do in the warm weather when we could meet up with people outside. Certainly, we saw some beautiful examples of it in our own church. But now that winter is here, it may be different.

Coronavirus has turned homes into castles for all of us, not just Englishmen, with the drawbridge well and truly up. This mindset so easily persists as we move on and, hopefully, out of the pandemic. My wife recently commented that when meeting other people it's easy to forget you've been vaccinated. But if we want to welcome the stranger who turns up on a Sunday, we need to overcome our fears and invite people into our homes once again.

So may the Lord give us all patience, imagination and large dose of His grace as we seek to build Jesus-shaped community out of the pieces broken by coronavirus; and may the vessels that emerge shine all the more brightly with His glory.

**Build relationships
and make a difference
to public life.**

Connect with your MP
or civic representatives.



**For easy and accessible
ideas: eauk.it/connect**



evangelical alliance
together making Jesus known





10 minutes with...

DANIELLE MCELHINNEY

Public policy officer, Evangelical Alliance Northern Ireland

Tell us about yourself.

I grew up in a Christian family. A family friend led my brother and I to the Lord when I was four, in a car, looking at the stars in the night sky. It was a very simple moment, but it made an impact. I have been a follower of Jesus since then. Today, I work in the space between church and government, highlighting why government policies should matter to us and why we should be speaking into these issues.

What do you do in your daily life to grow as a follower of Jesus?

I'm a motivated person, who likes to talk, learn and work quickly. But I've learnt that there is no shortcut in this area and I can only become like Jesus by setting apart time to spend with Him, so I do, in the morning. I read through a book of the Bible, journal and pray through a list, creating a space when He can speak to me. It's important to listen to Jesus, not just my own voice, because that's what feeds my soul.

How do these discipleship practices influence your work?

I travel an hour into work in the morning and that's often when I have the most vibrant connection with Jesus, through singing and listening to Him. In my work, when I meet important people, I can become insecure, with an inner voice telling me I'm not worthy to be in that room. So I find that journey time invaluable: reciting verses about who God says I am, and what He says about my worth – I need that in my life to combat the imposter syndrome. Again, I need to listen to His voice rather than my own.

How do you exercise your faith in other areas of your life?

I grew up with parents who were pastors, so I learned early on to live out my faith in church:

running the overhead projector, joining the worship team, helping out at youth group. The importance of volunteering and serving stayed with me. But now I do that more widely. I joined the parent and teacher association at my children's school and I want to see my faith influence that role. During lockdown, I befriended my elderly neighbour and she has me on alert call. I want to take Jesus into my world, not just at church, but to everyone, everywhere and every day.

What would you encourage others to do to grow as a disciple and make a difference where they are?

Ephesians 2:10 says we are "created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do". I encourage others to seek good works to do. From supporting Afghan refugees to responding to mental health, there are many issues and it can be overwhelming. We can't do everything, even if we think we can. What's in your hands? What are your skills, abilities and passions? You don't have to go looking for opportunities; there will be things in your everyday life for you to do.

Finally, how might readers pray into and find out more about your public policy work?

Check out eauk.org/public-policy. We do a broad range of work across the UK nations, and we need and appreciate all the prayers we get – but we also want you to get involved and contact your own representatives, to make life better for all in society. Please use *Connect* (eauk.org/connect), our short resource, to help you build relationships, pray and support your public representatives. It explains who to contact and how, and the best way to share. We want to instil confidence in you; your voice matters too.



LOVE AND ADVOCACY: AN IMPOSSIBLE COMBINATION OR A CHRISTIAN'S INVITATION?

How do we engage in public life as part of our love for God and our neighbour? asks **Damilola Makinde**, advocacy engagement lead, Evangelical Alliance.

Keen amateur singer that I am, I curtail my loudest singing until daylight hours when my neighbours aren't around. I greet them and ask after their welfare on the odd occasion that we bump into each other as we move to and from our central London apartments. I happily hold their post for them if they aren't home to collect it themselves. Once, I even got them chocolate. How do you love your neighbours?

In the gospel of Luke, a religious lawyer approaches Jesus with a question on how to receive eternal life; and during this exchange, the lawyer offers a two-part summary of the Law of Moses, which Jesus readily affirms: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind; and, love your neighbour as yourself" (Luke 10:27).

The lawyer doesn't stop there: "Who is my

neighbour?", he asks. Jesus' answer confounds not only the lawyer's expectations but mine too – and my hunch is that we're not alone.

In characteristic fashion, Jesus' answer strikes at the heart of the matter, challenging dominant paradigms, principles and preferences. The love that God desires we show Him is meant to flow into how we love our neighbours. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan which follows (Luke 10:30–37), we see that love for our neighbour extends to those we find it most difficult to love.

Our neighbour is whoever our hearts are merciful enough to include. But, because of the extravagant love of God in including us within His love, our hearts should be merciful enough to include all within ours. So, my neighbour is as local and specific as the person next door, but also as distant and faceless as those currently crossing the Channel to seek refuge in the UK.

With whom our neighbour is encompassing those near and far, how do we heed Jesus' teaching and love our neighbours today? And how might we demonstrate this love through advocacy?

The challenge of the time we live in

The notion of neighbour-love as a key principle that shapes evangelical engagement in public life is both deeply encouraging and immensely challenging. At the heart of the Christian life, we receive the sacrificial love of God in Christ and are empowered to love God and our neighbour. Our advocacy is meant to be consistent with this and an integral part of responding to God's love well. This is not an extra item on an already too-long to-do list as much as it is a clarification of the calling and commissioning we have already received. This is the joy of evangelical public engagement. This is encouraging.

The challenge, as ever, comes as we move from principle to practice. What exactly does neighbour-love look like amid the issues of our time? There certainly are many of them. We are still being churned up in the continuing rollercoaster of COVID-19, during which we have seen figures of deaths, mental illness and domestic violence soar. Christians across the country are working out what it looks like to serve the needs of their communities through foodbanks, job clinics and counselling. We are trying to get many back into physical church while also catering to those who are new to church or who would not otherwise engage if it weren't online.

As disadvantaged communities and nations bear the brunt of changing climate conditions, we are more aware of our responsibility to them and to God in how we steward our resources and the earth; and yet there is a lot of work to be done in educating our communities and lobbying decision makers to see our end of key international agreements upheld.

This is also a time of deepening ideological divides. Distrust of politicians and societal systems has been on display as British ethnic minority communities have generally been more hesitant to receive COVID-19 vaccines. And yet, as some have sought to encourage constructive engagement in this area, they have been met with tides of backlash and criticism for falling foul of new cultural orthodoxies. Traditional Christian beliefs around marriage, sex and gender are hotly contested in the courts of public opinion as well as in the actual courts of the land, and by all indications this will only intensify in future.

In such an environment, maintaining conviction while engaging with compassion is fraught with regular misunderstanding, ridicule and pain. It can often seem easier not to engage at all or to restrict engagement to certain issues and not others.

Neighbour-love drives our advocacy

So, again, what does love look like amid our most pressing policy issues and our entrenched social divisions, especially when those we are seeking to

love are hostile to the love we share? How does the gospel compel us to use whatever influence we have in these matters for good?

This final question is a major driver behind the work of the Evangelical Alliance's advocacy team. We believe that we are all called to show neighbour-love through thoughtful, gospel-infused engagement in public life, and that through this we can serve the flourishing of all in society and enable as many people as possible to come to know Jesus. As a team, we aim to do this in three ways:

1. We relate

We want to learn from Evangelical Alliance members' experiences navigating the cultural and societal tides in your context. We want to work out with you how best you might serve your community and how we might best enable you to embrace the challenge and joy of advocacy.

2. We resource

We want to share our learnings with you in order to enable you and your community to show love through your engagement in public life. Be this through our online suite of resources, one-to-one Zoom calls or preaching at your church gathering, we want the work that we do to empower you and your community.

3. We represent

We want to enable your voice to be heard, understood and valued across the corridors of power in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England. We want to champion the unique influence of the people of God for His glory and for the benefit of all.

Neighbour-love isn't easy, but as we look at Jesus we realise that we shouldn't expect it to be. The love that He showed crossed divides, embraced being misunderstood, risked His interests, and ultimately cost His life; and yet, through His perseverance He restored the very life of the world. Let us remember the example of Jesus as we work together to share His love across every sphere of society.

Connect with us

Reach out to me at d.makinde@eauk.org to begin a conversation on how the Evangelical Alliance can support advocacy in your context. For more information on our advocacy work, head to eauk.it/public-policy-idea





FOLLOWING
CHRIST
ACROSS
DIVIDES

Divisions wreck the creation that God charged His people to care for – that’s why we should do something to repair our fractured society, says **Jon Yates**, director of the Youth Endowment Fund.

I want to tell you a story when nothing much happens. A man is thirsty and asks a woman for a drink. She passes him one. He drinks it. That’s it – the whole story. But I think it is the most important story for our society today.

It is the most important story for a society that has been rocked by division. Following the Brexit referendum, two US elections and the Black Lives Matter protests, division is suddenly everyone’s concern. How should Christians respond?

We should start by seeing the scale of the problem. As I show in my recent book, *Fractured: Why our societies are coming apart and how to put them back together*, our divisions are profound. They are also easy to spot; you can see them in our friendships. Half of graduates have almost no friends without a degree. The majority of western pensioners have no contact with anyone under the age of 35 unless they are their grandchildren. A fifth of ‘leave voters’ and a quarter of ‘remain voters’ don’t have a single friend who voted the other way. Half of us don’t have any friends from a different ethnic background. The greatest divide though remains wealth. A British barrister would have to invite 100 people round before they would invite a single person who is unemployed.

But why should this matter to us Christians? In fact, why does this matter at all? The truth is that it matters a lot. The divisions around us damage the creation that God called us to care for. It damages our heads, our hearts and our hands.

Let’s start with our head. Our head contains our brain—a brain given by God for us to make wise decisions. Surely there is no more important decision for our country than the one we make every few years when we elect our leaders. It is often said of our present leader (and of previous ones) that the problem he has is that he is too well off to “know the price of a pint of milk”. I don’t think this actually matters. What matters is whether our leaders know some of the people who must obsessively know the price of a pint of milk so that their weekly budget adds up.

But here’s the thing: my mum always taught me that when you point a finger at someone else, you have three fingers pointing back at you. In our divided society, do I know someone who obsessively needs to know the price of a pint of milk? Do you? Do we know people who have struggled to set up a small business? Do we know people who have lived through racist abuse and prejudice? How well do we know our fellow citizens?

When we go to vote – entering that little booth, picking up that stubby pencil – we turn to our heads. But in a divided society, our heads are a poor guide. It’s hard for us to know what is good for our country when we don’t know our country.

What about our heart? A number of years ago I ran a programme for 60 young people from different backgrounds and income groups. After two weeks away with them I returned to my flat in central London. I woke up the next morning and walked down the street and felt something new. I felt more at home in my very diverse neighbourhood than I ever had before. Why was this? And then I realised: every person I passed on the street reminded me of someone I had spent the last two weeks with. Division had made me anxious, but mixing had made my heart feel at home.

Doctors have come to the same conclusion: when we spend time with people who seem different to us and those we normally spend our time with, our body releases cortisol. This raises our heart rate and stresses us out. It even makes a heart attack more likely. This goes away if we are used to spending time with people who are different. Division is literally bad for our heart.

What about our hands? We work with our hands – whether typing out an email, lifting something heavy or greeting a colleague. Work is good: God calls us to work as for the Lord. How did you get your last job? About 40 per cent of us get our jobs through word of mouth. That means that the job you get –

and whether it is a good job – doesn’t just depend on how hard you work, or how skilled you are, but on your networks. We know this. We even have a phrase to describe it: “It’s not just what you know but who you know.” And yet, in this country, we educate half of our poorest children together in one fifth of the schools. If we want a fairer society, where people can use their hands to do interesting, well-paid work, we need to reduce our divisions.

We are called to be stewards of this world. It should trouble us that our democracy is becoming less effective, our society more anxious and our economy less fair. Some will say, this isn’t our business. Yes, reducing division could make the world a better place but the church is not called to solve all of the world’s social problems. Our calling is simple. It is the great commission. Matthew 29: 18 is very clear, we are called to “make disciples of all nations”.

Hang on though. “All nations”, not only the people who look like you, or just those who also went to university, or just those who voted like you. We are called to go to all nations. How exactly can we do that if we surround ourselves with people just like us, especially if all of those people are already followers of Jesus?

Let’s return to the story where nothing much happens. A man is thirsty and asks a woman for a drink. She passes him one. He drinks it. There’s something I need to tell you about that story. For a start, that water didn’t come from a tap; it came from a well. It didn’t happen here, it happened in Israel. It didn’t happen recently; it took place 2,000 years ago. And that man, he wasn’t British, he was a Jew. And the woman, she was a Samaritan.

Here’s the thing: 2,000 years ago, Jewish men weren’t meant to talk to Samaritans, let alone ask a Samaritan woman for a drink. I think you’ve probably worked out who the man was. The man we are called to follow didn’t care for the world’s divisions; He stepped out across them; and He’s the man we’re called to follow.



Blessed are the LISTENERS

The call on Christians to listen well is one that should be taken seriously, particularly in this cultural moment, so how might we cultivate a listening ear? asks **Emma Sowden**, Being Human coordinator, Evangelical Alliance.

It was one of those pinch-yourself-I-must-be-dreaming moments. I was sat in a small, abandoned building in the middle of the West Bank, half a mile from an Israeli settlement and half a mile from a Palestinian village. The tension between the towns was hostile, and interactions usually consisted of threats or violence.

Adding to the suspense, in this drafty room sat two men. One introduced himself as proud and devoted Zionist – a Jew wholeheartedly committed to the idea that the Holy Land is the spiritual and political home of his people. The second introduced himself as a dedicated Palestinian who believed in the liberation of his people, and had previously fought for, and was subsequently jailed for, his leadership within the ranks of the militant organisation known as Hamas.

However, the two men were not enemies—they were friends—friends with opposing stories, contested worldviews and different identities, but each committed to making small steps towards peace simply by being in relationship with one another.

“It has been a journey,” one man said. “But over time we have talked, shared interests and hobbies, invited each other to our homes, and introduced our families and children. Now we are trying to encourage others in our communities to do the same. Simply, we have listened.”

The power of listening in the process of peace

and reconciliation should never be underestimated. The humanisation effect of hearing another’s story and inviting them into your own breaks the walls of disunity and prejudice.

Jesus cultivated a listening ear. Despite being a teacher, He chose to be attentive to all those He encountered – their lives, their joys, their suffering. When He was with fishermen, He talked about fishing. When He was with farmers, He talked about seeds and soil and weeds. In Luke 24, we read one of the most interesting encounters with the risen Christ: Jesus joins the two men on the road to Emmaus, and waiting to reveal Himself, He listens to their distress. Then at the table, in a home, while sharing a meal, He reveals the truth of His resurrection.

Now, of course we are not living in biblical times, and most of us don’t find ourselves in environments of widespread conflict, but I believe the call on us Christians to listen is a distinct one. It is three-fold: we’re called to listen to the stories of our culture (1), through the lens of the God story found in scripture (2), for one another to flourish in a life-long journey of discipleship (3). These three sources are in a constant dance, ebbing and flowing as we walk along our own Emmaus road.

Walking the Emmaus road today

In the UK it can be challenging to listen well in a plural society where there are many competing



stories trying to frame and form our identity. The Being Human project is constantly examining the intersection between the compelling gospel story and the culture of our age. But culture is a difficult word – it can mean very different things to different people. The Palestinian peace-builder was immersed in an incredibly different context to my own in north London, for example. So how then can we even begin to listen to it?

For the sake of simplicity, we can define culture as the stories we tell each other. It is not necessarily something we see, but its markers can be the habits, heroes, villains and interactions a community possesses. There are underlining depths and currents that run through the foundations of western society – secularism, individualism, post-modernism, to name a few; and these underlying currents and dominating ideologies of the day bubble up to our surfaces in these everyday forms. So be attentive to these everyday markers.

But how should I walk along the Emmaus road? What content do I need to prayerfully engage in which will help me listen to the stories swirling around me? As I listen to the culture around me, who is to join me on the Emmaus road? After all, there were two men in the story of Luke, and not one. Similarly, to the unlikely friendship I witnessed in the West Bank, who should I seek to understand and love whatever their worldview, background or identity. It's not about striving to be

the most culturally relevant in the room, nor the saviour in everyone else's life, but recognising the image of God in one another.

While I walk, am I also listening to God's story unfolding around me? Am I hearing His voice in scripture and His whispers in creation? Am I learning to be okay with His mystery, but slowly digesting His presence within my heart until the day I finally sit at the table with Him and all truth is revealed? Theologian John Stott CBE once said: "One of the most important – and much neglected – ingredients of Christian discipleship is the cultivation of a listening ear. Bad listeners do not make good disciples."

Go deeper

For a deeper dive into some themes explored in this article, our friends at LICC released a series this year on wise peacemakers: licc.org.uk/resources/wise-peacemakers. Also check out our Being Human project, which will help you engage with the stories from the world whilst you live out and share the good news of Jesus: eauk.it/being-human-idea



A PLACE TO CALL HOME

From a living room with around 12 churchgoers, to a chapel of 100 – this is the story of Emmanuel Church Cardiff, which I hope will inspire you today, says **Pastor Simon Walker**.



For the first time in our history 100 people gathered in our little backstreet chapel. It was only four years earlier that around a dozen churchgoers had tried to make a living room feel full as we launched Emmanuel Church Cardiff.

A handful of us had moved over the border from Bristol to start a new church. We had made a few friends en route, and now we were launching a new church, sensing that God had a plan and that He had brought us together to do this.

We started small back in 2017, having church in a home, which did have lots of advantages. We could be relaxed and informal; people were more willing to be themselves; and learning and growing was a shared experience.

I could see in those early days that close friendships were quickly being formed across the generations, trust was growing, and we were learning about Jesus, the Holy Spirit's presence and what is so precious about church.

It was obvious that trying to do a few things simply and well was our best plan; and it seemed to be working. One Sunday the doorbell rang and a young couple we had never met asked rather nervously, "We heard a new church has started meeting here; can we try it out?" A few weeks later, the husband was leading worship. Our church was growing—slowly.

But, if we wanted to grow more, we had to move—so we did, into a local school. The school hall was a practical venue, but it being tucked away in a suburban part of the city meant we weren't as accessible as we'd like to be. So, we moved again – this time to a community centre, which was a tad rundown but perfectly located for us to reach into the community.

Then COVID hits

Fun, chaotic, weird, difficult, amazing, unusual, growing, challenging, breathtaking, are all adjectives that could be used to sum up church life at Emmanuel Church Cardiff following March 2020. The coronavirus pandemic did indeed present both a threat and an opportunity. How could we enable our growing church family to thrive and stay connected now? We decided to stay true to what we had been doing before lockdown, like many learning how to fellowship online as we brought the community together on Zoom.

It was on Zoom one Sunday that we were able to announce that we had been given a building. Kate, my wife, had often dreamed about a church

building which was a space for community – where the world outside could come and feel safe and at home; where refugees and the marginalised would be able to connect and rebuild their lives; where the hungry could be fed. But we were not praying for our own building; it was as if God knew what we needed next. Even during lockdown God's hand was firmly on our church plant.

Now, able to gather together in person, we do so as a much larger family, with newer members learning the culture and values which were established when we were smaller. You see, all growth requires a 'values renewal' so that we are all in the mission together, everyone getting to benefit, contribute and invite the next person along.

We are all walking through three opportunities concurrently: a new venue, a growing community, and gathering as a church physically after the limitations of coronavirus. In effect, we are replanting the church – together – and the adventure continues.

Lessons learned

Over the years I've had the privilege of visiting various pioneering contexts across Asia, learning lots along the way, including that family and community can provide a safe space for learning and growing. I think our over-individualised cultures in the west tend to miss these opportunities, which is why at Emmanuel Church Cardiff we set out to create a culture where we could collectively learn, celebrate Jesus, and find forgiveness and healing.

What I didn't anticipate was how much I needed this as much as anyone in our pioneering community. My wife and I starting a new church in our early fifties was not something we had planned, nor was it something we had thought God had in mind for us. The move to Cardiff was unexpected and parts of the story had not been easy; we were really a bit beaten up and bruised.

Paul opens his second letter to the Corinthians explaining that the comfort we receive from Christ resources us to help others. Not only does the goodness of God seep through our cracks for the benefit of others, but we learn through loss and healing what cannot be learned any other way.

Our church-planting community has been a place where it's okay to not be okay, a place that offers healing love through our fellowship, learning and gathered worship.

A lasting LEGACY



Together we can ensure faithful discipleship continues for generations to come. Will you join with us and consider leaving a legacy gift to the Evangelical Alliance? asks **Gillian Lee**, giving and membership administrator.

Over the years, we at the Evangelical Alliance have heard so many wonderful stories of people coming to know the love of God, Christians making headway in their discipleship journey, and lives being completely transformed. People just like me and my family.

I have been blessed by the countless number of Christians who have taught, corrected and encouraged me along the way. From leaders dressed up as lions in Melbourne, family Bible studies in Belfast, being mentored as a student in London – praise God, I have had so many spiritual parents and siblings, all of whom I’m extremely grateful for. And I bet you have had too. If you are willing, please join me for just a moment to give thanks and pray for disciple makers across the UK, those who are investing in the lives of other Christians, believing they’ll grow to know and love the Lord more and more.

It’s important to give thanks and pray, you know, because those who help us grow in Christ help us stay in Christ. My mum’s sister became a Christian in a classroom in Malaysia when she was 18. Without discipleship, there’s a good chance she would have drifted away from the faith due to pressures from her Buddhist family. Thankfully, while at university she met other believers who supported and discipled her, and even joined her in prayer for her family to come to faith. Twenty years later, my mum and her family came to Christ – the first in the family to do so since my aunt’s conversion.

I get to tell my family’s story all these years later from the head office of the Evangelical Alliance, which exists to make Jesus known. I’m delighted to be on the staff team, working with colleagues to support the church in

Without discipleship, there’s a good chance she would have drifted away from the faith due to pressures from her Buddhist family.

making disciples. Our enduring hope is that the UK would reflect the kingdom of God, leaving a legacy of discipleship, with Christians taking seriously the words of Jesus: “All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18–20).

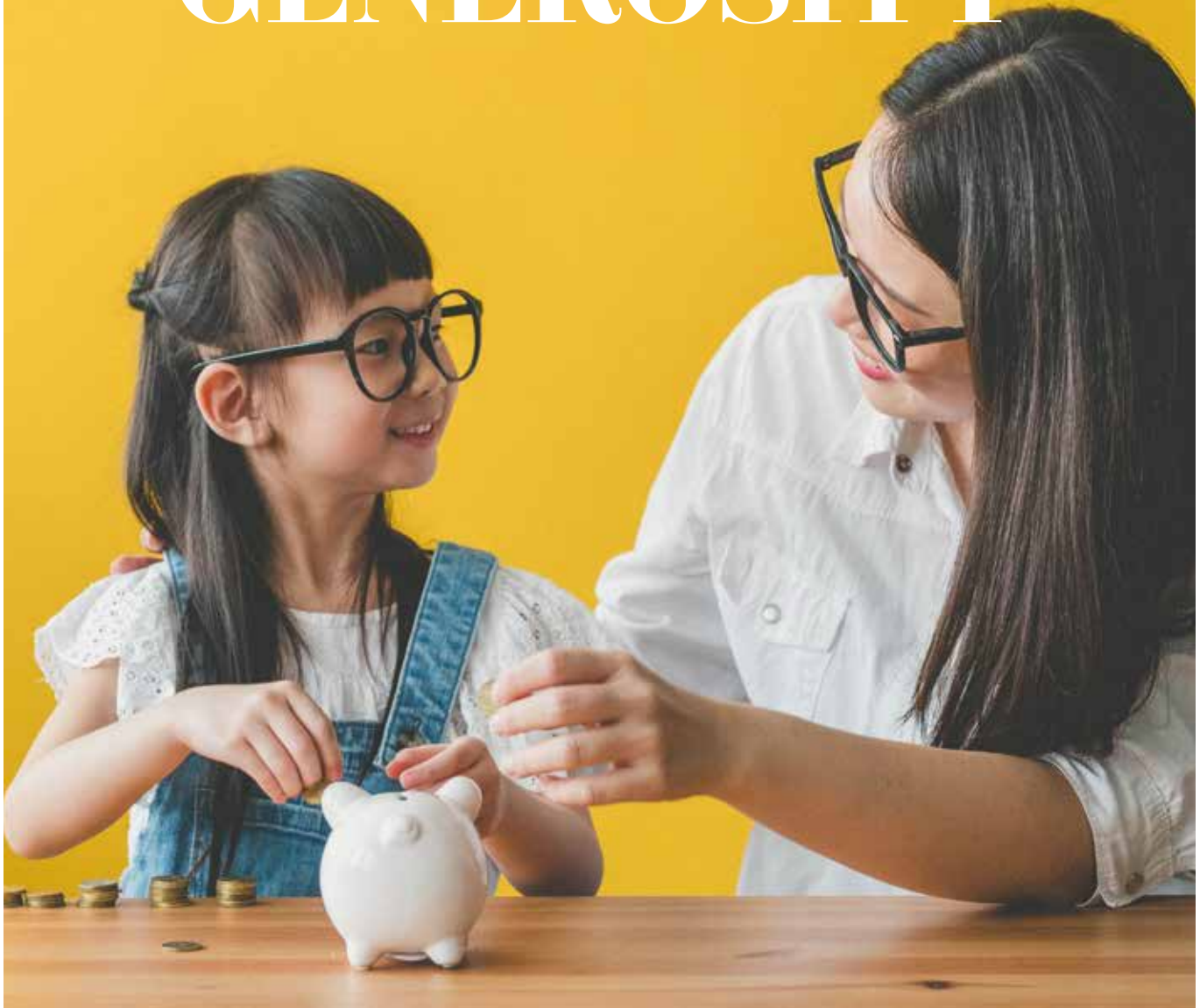
But we can’t do this without you – your prayers, your faith and your gifts. Therefore, we ask that you continue to stand with us before the Lord in prayer, and that those who can, consider leaving a legacy gift to the Evangelical Alliance. We want to strengthen the church of God in the UK so that families like mine have the chance to come to know Christ and grow in Him.

Contact us

This Free Wills Month in March, find out more about remembering the Evangelical Alliance in your will by contacting me at g.lee@eauk.org or 020 7520 3844, or by visiting our website: eauk.org/legacy



THE MACEDONIAN CHURCH – A MODEL OF GENEROSITY



What can we learn from the early Macedonian church, which was wholeheartedly sacrificial amidst their own day-to-day struggles? asks **Catherine Durant**, senior editor, Stewardship.

Is now a good time to talk about giving? With increases in energy prices, food and taxes looming, we might be thinking more about tightening our belts than loosening our purse strings.

The last 18 months has taken its toll, and our security has been shaken. I'm thankful to have kept my job throughout this time, but as a typical millennial, struggling to save enough to maybe one day own a home, the financial future can still look bleak.

From the very earliest days of the church, the Bible calls us to radical generosity, even amidst periods of particular strain. The most famous givers in the New Testament are probably the Macedonian church, praised by Paul in 2 Corinthians 8. These new Christians showed joyful generosity, despite facing “a very severe trial” and “extreme poverty” (8:2). We don't know exactly how they suffered, but it was likely persecution, including harassment from the Jews (Acts 17:5; 1 Thessalonians 2:14). There may also have been a higher proportion of women in the church (Acts 16:13) with less ability to support themselves.

Instead of wallowing in their circumstances, this church was so eager to give that they “urgently pleaded” (8:4) with Paul to be a part of blessing their unknown Christian brothers and sisters in Judea, who were probably experiencing severe famine (Acts 11:28). Imagine a church where the members plead with the leadership to be able to give rather than the other way round.

Last year at Stewardship we had the privilege of seeing a reflection of this early Christian generosity in the way our givers responded to the pandemic. From the committed regular givers who stood firm or increased their support, to those raising almost £5m with us in the first 100 days of lockdown to ensure the vital work of churches and frontline ministries could continue. For many people, it was a moment to look at what they could do with their resources and step up their generosity.

But what if we're starting to feel burnt out by these ongoing demands? When we consider the Bible's encouragement for us to give to the limits of our abilities and beyond, is it joy and enthusiasm we experience or fear and guilt? How

was it that the Macedonian Christians could be so wholeheartedly sacrificial?

I think it was because they genuinely thought of themselves as rich. From a human perspective, they were underprivileged both materially and circumstantially. But Paul credits their “overflowing joy” (8:2) as the main reason they had been given “this grace of giving” (8:7).

First and foremost, they had a wealth of joy because they knew they belonged to Jesus (8:5). Realising their lives are not their own didn't diminish their sense of self – it emboldened them with all the blessings that come from being a child of God: uniquely created and given purpose by Him. They found freedom rather than fear in knowing that all that they were and had was ultimately His.

Their abundance-mentality was characterised by gratitude for what Jesus had gone through on their behalf: leaving the majesty of heaven to become human, living in poverty and sentenced to the worst kind of death. But in the glory of resurrection, He was their best example of a full life.

They were also enriched by their deep sense of family in belonging to the body of Christ. Their concern for the suffering of one part affected them all, and their giving flew in the face of divisions between nationalities, race, language or class.

Giving was valued as a privilege, not depleting what they had. They trusted God's will beyond their day-to-day struggles and instead of guarding their resources, their suffering softened their hearts to be more acutely aware of the plight of others.

A call to give in hard times is a good gauge of the state of our hearts. Can I truly say that it feels like a privilege to give away my money? This is even tougher when we're financially struggling. I'm grateful to have any savings at all, but sometimes I try to challenge my attitude by asking the question: if God asked me to give it all away, would I be willing?

If in honesty we recognise that we don't readily have that grace of giving, we can ask God for it. The riches that the Macedonians had are true right now for all of us who know and love Jesus too. We need to go back to our first love, because amazing things can happen when we reach the limits of ourselves and rely on Him.

These are the seven conversations I think every church should have about young adults, and each is connected to a room of a house – **Phil Knox**, head of mission to young adults, Evangelical Alliance.

REVITALISING YOUR CHURCH'S MISSION TO 20s and 30s

Young adults have been a keen area of interest for us as an Evangelical Alliance for more than a decade. We have been working to equip and serve the church in reaching and discipling this generation and creating cultures where they feel at home.

The past three years have been building to the launch of 7 Conversations, which supports leaders in local settings who want to understand young adults and bring them into a lasting relationship with Jesus.

Six months on from the debut of this integrated and interactive resource, we wanted to update you on how churches have been using it and invite you on the next step of the journey.



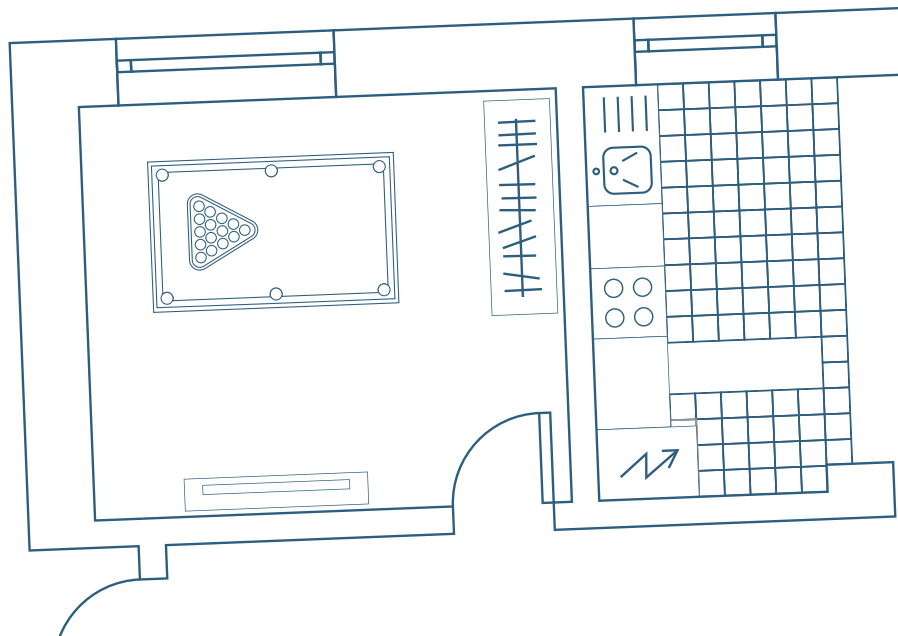
The rooms

Hallway

Churches that thrive amongst young adults have a world-class welcome. They help 20s and 30s feel at home and have a sense of belonging very soon after their first initial point of contact. Online and through social media they also tell the story of who they are and what God is doing.

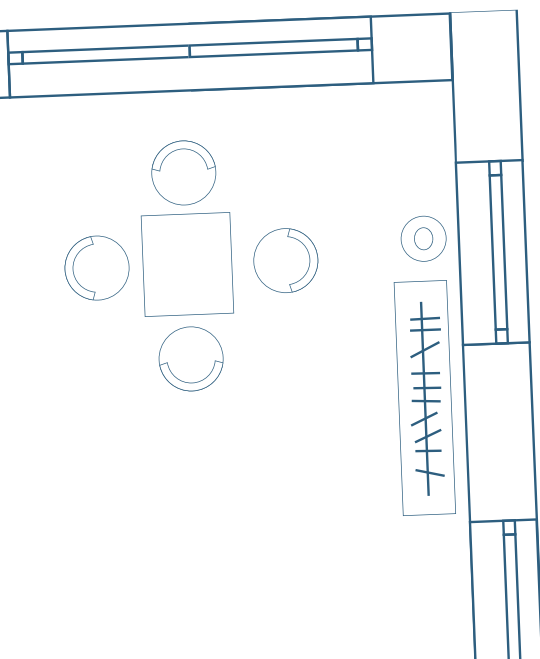
Living room

Relationship is everything to this generation. We have found that community, eating together and opportunities to form meaningful friendship across the generations is central to fruitful ministry in this area. A key component of this conversation is about the interaction between the Sunday gathering and small groups.



“The Young Adult Conversation looks so exciting and timely. Looking forward to digging into it with some of our key leaders.” Simon, church leader

“Love it – well done on such a brilliant resource. Loving the video resources and the concept of the different rooms.” Paul, organisation leader



Study

The cultural forces that affect this generation have impacted the styles and postures of leadership that are most effective for leading today’s young adults. This conversation is about how we lead 20s and 30s well, with values such as collaboration, authenticity, humility and vulnerability.

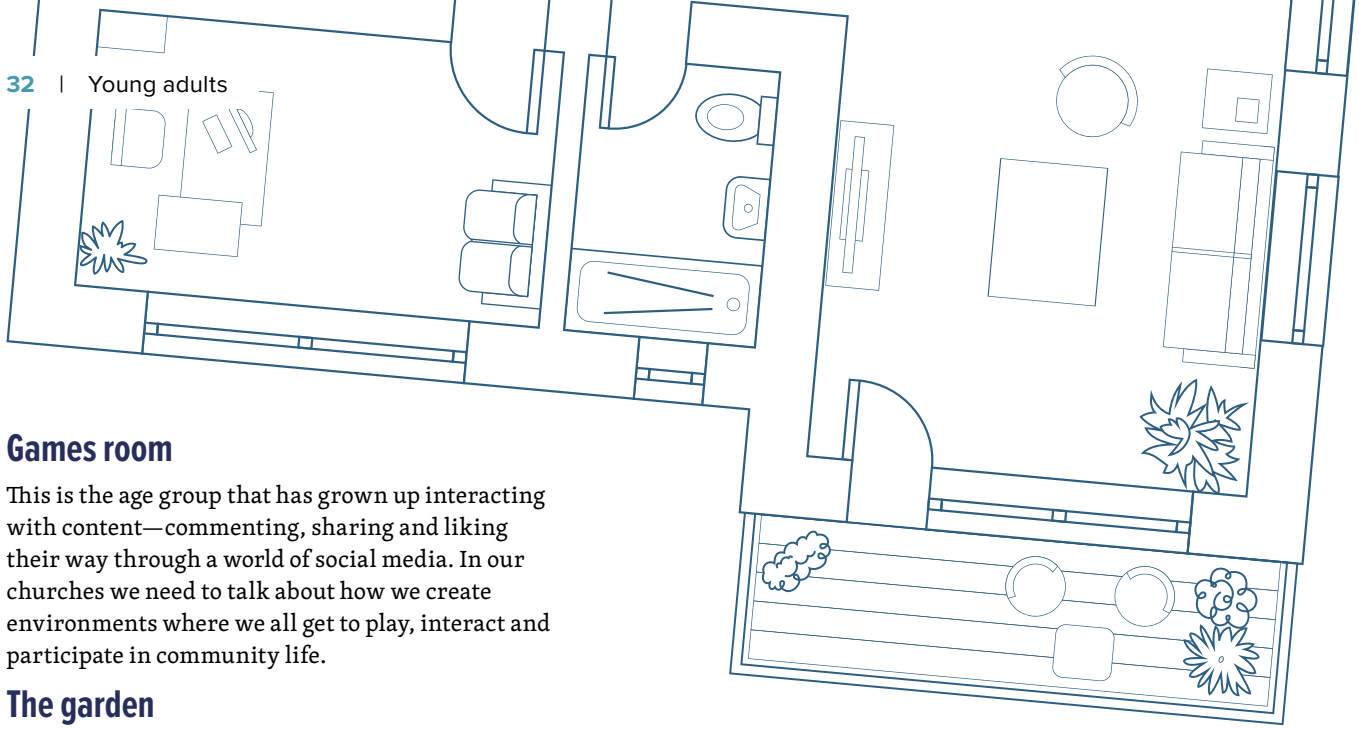
Kitchen

The digital revolution has transformed the ways in which we receive and process information. In the kitchen we consider what we are serving and how it is served.

We explore how we stay unapologetically faithful to the Bible and yet communicate in a creative and story-rich way that engages this generation.

Dining room

The dining room table is often the place where families have the difficult conversations. Many young adults walk away from faith because they are not able to grapple with issues of doubt and contention in their churches. This is a conversation about how we have the difficult conversations around the issues that matter to 20s and 30s.



Games room

This is the age group that has grown up interacting with content—commenting, sharing and liking their way through a world of social media. In our churches we need to talk about how we create environments where we all get to play, interact and participate in community life.

The garden

Whilst not wanting to identify as nominally religious, there is evidence to suggest that today's young adults are spiritually open and hungry. This conversation is about the common journeys of how 20s and 30s come to faith and how we inspire and equip Christians in this generation to share their faith with their friends.

Feedback

Since launching in June we have been delighted by the feedback from church and Christian leaders across the UK, who have been using 7 Conversations to ask the key questions and make small and big changes so that they're more fruitful in discipleship and evangelism amongst this age group. Some have tackled all the conversations in a day as a leadership team, others have been spreading them across monthly meetings.

Join the conversation

Over the next year we'll be meeting with churches, denominations and organisations to help strengthen their ministry to young adults as we continue to listen and explore these important issues for the present and future of the UK church.

Check out the resource eauk.org/7-conversations and have a look around our interactive house. Also, host a live conversation. If you are part of a church that'd value a member of the Evangelical Alliance team facilitating a conversation in this area of ministry, please contact me at p.knox@eauk.org





Go and make disciples

By **Gavin Calver**, CEO of the Evangelical Alliance

A short time ago my wife Anne had a vision of fields ripe for harvest. Beyond the fields she could see the sun rising in the morning sky. As she prayed her sense was that the Lord might be saying that He was shining His glory on the landscape and opening our eyes to see the many that are waiting and ready to hear and receive the gospel of Jesus Christ. The call to go and make disciples is the mandate for the church. From the great commission in Matthew 28 onwards, our calling is to make disciples of all nations. What a mandate!

When Jesus stands by the lake and calls His first disciples, they leave everything to follow Him (Mark 1:16–20): their nets, their families, the people they are working with. There is something about this man Jesus that calls for their total abandonment to Him. Being true disciples and making true disciples starts here, with an encounter and call to run after Jesus and know Him and prioritise His call over and above everything and everyone else.

Interestingly, as Philip encounters Jesus, he goes at once to Nathanael to bring him to the Messiah (John 1:45). Philip's passion is for others to meet the Messiah; his heart like the Samaritan woman at the well burns to introduce others to Christ (John 4). There is so much urgency and love in them that they have to respond by involving, inviting and including others. This is so challenging – do we realise how incredible it is to come to the one who has the words of eternal life? What a privilege it is to be part of a family of believers. There should be no such thing as solitary Christianity.

Part of our discipleship is learning to bring the little we have to Jesus. Consider Andrew bringing the boy's five small barley loaves and two small fish in John 6:8–9; it is nothing in human terms, but when it is put into the hands of God, it feeds thousands. I love the fact that Jesus uses the disciples to distribute the food – He partners with us to bring forth plenty from our hands. You may not feel that you have much, but offer it to the

Part of our discipleship is learning to bring the little we have to Jesus.

king and watch Him, by His Spirit, move powerfully.

The call is for true disciples to emerge, not those with lukewarm faith but those who hunger and thirst for Him above everything. The eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him (2 Chronicles 16:9). Do we long for people to know Him and have their lives transformed by His death and resurrection? We pray, "Lord, let your love and urgency burn in our hearts by the power of your Spirit." It's a hard call to surrender everything and to trust Him to use us with what we have in our hands. However, imagine if we began to step out and see the greatest harvest we have seen. Let's not be those who back down, lie down or get watered down but those who take a stand for Jesus and follow Him wherever He calls us to go.

RESTORE
RENEW
REBUILD



SPRING HARVEST IS BACK IN 2022!



SPEAKERS AND WORSHIP LEADERS INCLUDE: CRIS ROGERS, DR SELINA STONE, LOU FELLINGHAM, DR AMY ORR-EWING, KEES KRAAYENOORD, SHELDON BANGERA, MIKE PILAVACHI MBE, ABBY GUINNESS, LISA HOLMES, SETH PINNOCK, PATRICK REGAN OBE



SPRING
HARVEST
2022

JOIN THE REUNION

BOOK NOW to join us in 2022. Spring Harvest is where the whole church comes together to worship, learn and laugh as one big family. We can't wait to see you again. **Will you join us?**

HARROGATE:
springharvestevent.org/harrogate

MAIN BOOKING LINE: 0330 100 9330

Groups and adapted accommodation

SKEGNESS:
0330 100 9331

MINEHEAD:
0330 100 9332



Book early! Limited space available at all sites

Harrogate
9-13 April

Skegness
11-15 April

Minehead
18-22 April

SCAN THIS QR
CODE TO LEARN
MORE ABOUT
OUR 2022 SPRING
HARVEST EVENTS



IN PARTNERSHIP
WITH:



Open Doors



SPRING HARVEST
14 Horsted Square, Uckfield,
TN22 1QG

TEL: 01825 769000
EMAIL: info@springharvest.org
www: springharvestevent.org

Essential Christian, registered charity number 1126997, a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales, number 06667924.