

idea

THE MAGAZINE OF THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE
WINTER 2023

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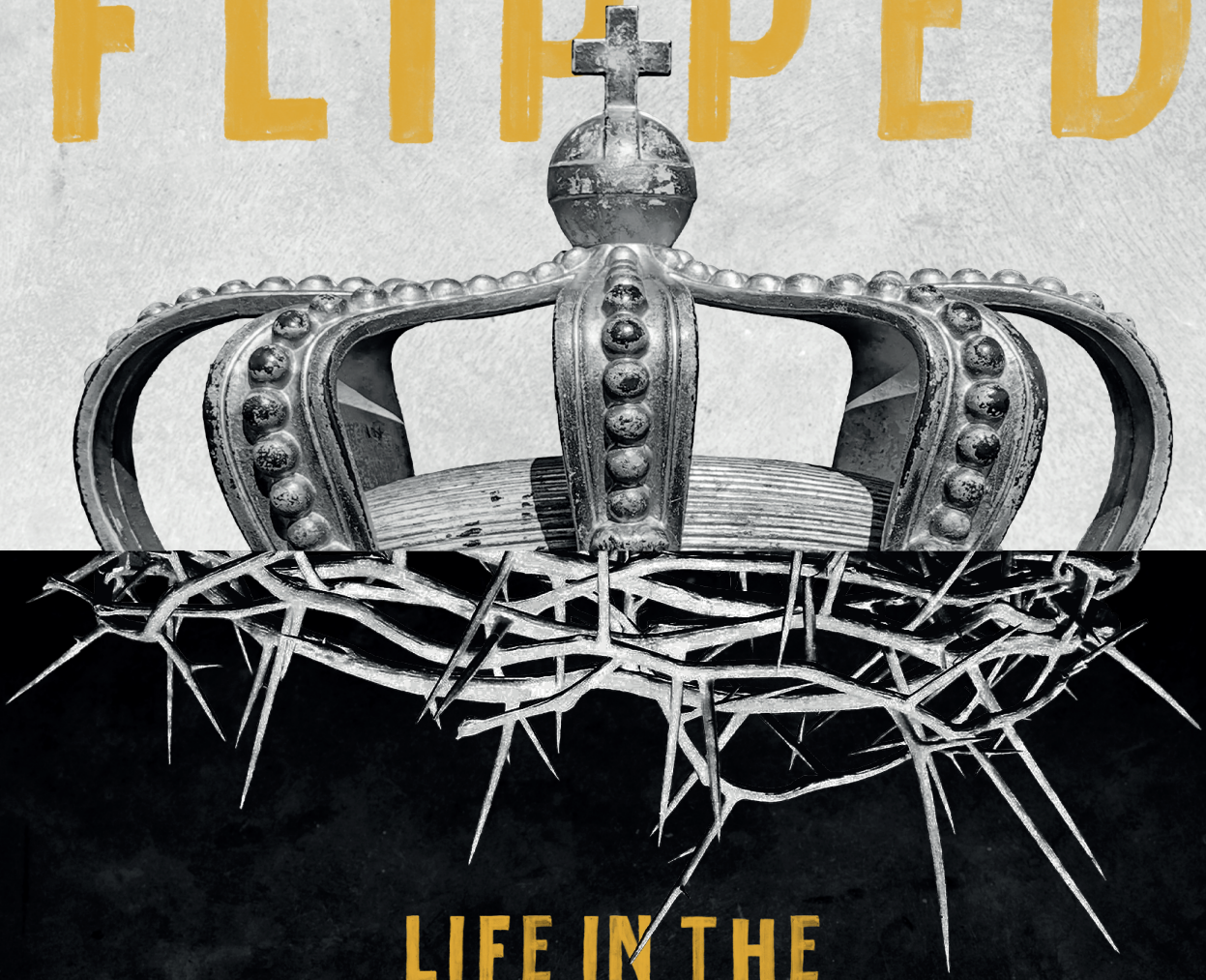


Called to hope



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

Advertising
020 7520 3830
sales@eauk.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
Jo Frost, director of communications and engagement
Rev Dr Israel Olofinjana, director of One People Commission
John Gibson, director of finance and operations
Danny Webster, director of advocacy
Hil Sewell, director of people & culture

Evangelical Alliance offices
Head office
176 Copenhagen Street
London N1 0ST
tel 020 7520 3830
info@eauk.org

Northern England
1a The Mailbox
1 Exchange Street, Stockport
Gt Manchester SK3 0GA

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

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Welcome

We look to our Saviour

The last few months of 2022 have been a whirlwind. With the death of Queen Elizabeth II, the rise in the cost of living and unprecedented changes in the UK government, we are certainly in a season of change and that can be disconcerting for our nation and the church. It is in times like these, when the future is unknown or when we experience unexpected change, that I am reminded that God is still in control, and that He is a God who wants good for us and our futures. Amid all the change that we are currently experiencing, I pray that this edition of *idea* magazine is a timely one for you, based on the theme of hope. In this latest edition, we hear from Natalie Williams of Jubilee+ as she reminds us to turn to God during good times and bad. We are encouraged by stories of hope from Hope UK, an organisation empowering young people through education against drug abuse, and we are



inspired by the powerful testimony of Hil Sewell on life after tragedy.

Lord, may You continue to encourage Your children, reminding us that You are our refuge, our helper, our Saviour and our Hope. May we seek Your face in good times and bad, trust in Your hands to uphold us and in all things assuredly rest in Your arms.



Nicola Morrison
Editor

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HOPE

is the
ANTIDOTE

Natalie Williams, CEO of Jubilee+, imparts how the Bible gives us principles that we can apply to our lives in the good times, the bad times, and everything in between.

There are many passages in the Bible that I find confusing or even bewildering, but one of the strangest, at least to me, is Romans 5:3-4, where we read that we can rejoice in our sufferings because we know that “suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope...”

What struck me was that this trajectory starts in suffering but instead of ending in sorrow or sadness or despair, it ends in hope. In the mysterious ways of God, suffering doesn't strip away hope, but ultimately produces it.

Surely that cannot be right? It is when I suffer that I often feel most hopeless. One of my 'go to' verses when I'm deeply disappointed with my circumstances is “hope deferred makes the heart sick”. The writer of the Proverbs gets it. He gets me. Suffering, in my case, usually means hope has fled. But this is the way the gospel works - it is the surprising, unexpected way of God that the darkest nights are entry ways to the brightest dawns. All things work together for good, even things meant for evil. Ashes become beauty.

Darkest nights are entry ways to the brightest dawns.

Mourning turns to dancing. Sorrow becomes singing. The cross leads to the resurrection. Death leads to life and suffering produces endurance, which produces character, which produces hope.

Hope is at work in our lives in countless ways, small and big, important and unimportant, all of the time. We probably hope for dozens of things every day - I hope I'll get all my work done today, I hope my dinner will taste nice, I hope my car won't break down, I hope my energy bill won't be as bad as predicted, I hope I'll get a good night's sleep, I hope more people will book in for the Jubilee+ conference, I hope people will be well served by my church's new 'warm bank', I hope I'll meet my future husband.

Some of these are quite likely. Some of them perhaps not so much. But biblical hope is something far deeper than an optimistic outlook towards the

things facing us today. Hebrews speaks of “the full assurance of hope” (6:11) that we're called to “hold fast to” (6:18) because it is “a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul” (6:19).

Our hope is solid, trustworthy, dependable. It anchors our souls because it is a hope based not on the temporary, but on the eternal. It is founded not on circumstances - neither on what we wish for (optimism), nor what we see around us (realism), but on the One it comes from: “we have our hope set on the living God” (1 Timothy 4:10), who is “the God of hope” (Romans 5:13).

As those who know what it is to worship the God of hope and to find our hope in Him, we are called to be hope-bringers. Right now, we're experiencing the cost of living crisis and uncertainties surround us, ranging from how high the price of food will soar to whether we're on the brink of a nuclear war. Yet in the face of this, we have the kind of hope that our communities are crying out for - one that anchors the soul even in the midst of the blackest nights and bleakest days.

Our hope fixes its eyes on the One who is in control, trusting in His goodness and knowing that two things rest securely on His shoulders, not ours: the government of the whole world (Isaiah 9:6-7) and us, His beloved children (Deuteronomy 33:12). Therefore, we can place our hope securely in Him for every little aspect of our lives, and for the biggest issues facing the world today.

It's this sure and steadfast hope that enables us to hold on during hard times and mature through our suffering. Not only that, it also frees us from worrying about the cares of our lives that crowd in on us, which in turn empowers us to be active in doing others good. Jesus told us that we don't need to be anxious about the everyday essentials because God is our good Father, who knows what we need and delights to provide us with not just the basics but with all the blessings of His kingdom!

Natalie Williams leads Jubilee+, a Christian charity that equips churches to help people who are trapped by poverty or injustice. She's the author of Invisible Divides.



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How the church is
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“ We have this hope as an anchor
for the soul, firm and secure.
– Hebrews 6:19 ”



Lindsay Shaw explains how SAT-7 is using its broadcasting platform to bring hope to Christians across the MENA region, even in places of conflict and isolation.



BEAMING HOPE ACROSS THE MIDDLE EAST

Turkish Pastors Cem and Vahan relate the Bible to everyday life in 'Let's Talk'

Hope is in short supply for many populations served by SAT-7 in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The Persian world is still reeling from the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. Syria remains broken and divided. Algerian Christians have endured five years of church closures. Lebanon is in crisis. Post-war Iraq is mired in political infighting. Rising food prices across the region have forced more families into poverty and growing conservatism threatens Christian activities. All of this adds to the urgency to show people that God loves them, that hope is possible, that in Christ they can find meaning, comfort and the resources to flourish in the face of life's hard challenges.

SAT-7 has been doing just that, through satellite TV programming, since 1996. It has since expanded to offer its holistic Christian programming 24/7 in Arabic, Persian and Turkish. As technology and media have developed, it has added streaming on social media and, in 2021, an on-demand online platform.

Presenters for our platform live in or come from the region and share the good news of Jesus in culturally sensitive ways and relate it to issues of daily life. From church services to talk shows, documentaries and even drama, SAT-7 comes alongside viewers as a friend, fellow Christian, and pastor.

Some of the most enthusiastic viewers live in locations where no churches are available. Mazdak, a viewer from Iran, shared, "While we still breathe, we need to be fed daily with God's word...over the last 12 years, I have had no access to a church, and it is through teaching clips from SAT-7 and really good programmes that teach the Bible, that I have grown."

Christian converts in Afghanistan – who risk death for following Christ, watch eagerly, and many contact SAT-7's viewer support staff who pray with them and send them encouraging biblical materials. Arman, a 30-year-old recent convert, said, "The only hope we have is in the true God... who grants us comfort and grace. This faith has caused me to live with peace in my heart and mind, without anxiety and fear."

In recent years, social media has become a contact point for many new viewers who are drawn to SAT-7 Facebook pages dedicated to themes such as family, youth, and biblical devotions.

Salem, a non-Christian from Morocco, found SAT-7 through a Facebook page linked to the North African testimony show, *Free Souls*. He explained, "I pray, fast, and obey all the religious requirements, but I don't feel any peace." Salem welcomed the opportunity to hear how peace with God was possible through Christ and, like many who contact the network, he prayed to commit his life to Jesus.

Many find encouragement in simply having the opportunity to watch fellow Christians from their own

culture on television. The latest addition to SAT-7's output is a small team based in Tunisia. Since 2020, its productions have given a platform for the small Christian community there who use the opportunity to share their beliefs and vision for society.

Worship from leading churches and teaching by gifted pastors allows viewers to learn and join in praise even if no opportunity for fellowship exists where they live. Multiple discussion programmes tackle life issues for women and young people, family relationships, and social issues, from a Christian perspective. These give viewers tools for living and to bring positive change.

In a region where 30% of the population is under 15 years of age, SAT-7 never forgets its younger audiences. Interactive children's shows mix fun, faith and learning.

"We long to see children enter into fullness of life in Christ," says SAT-7 International CEO Rita El-Mounayer, "...and we know that the future of our precious but troubled region lies in their hands."

Please pray that SAT-7 will continue to meet and adapt to its viewers' needs, increase its audiences in closed off countries, and be able to recruit more presenters from MENA countries where the Christian community is small and fragile.



Filming child trauma healing show in Egypt

Lindsay Shaw is SAT-7's UK press and communications officer, editor of its monthly Middle East briefing, and co-editor of its Insight supporter magazine. Learn more about how SAT-7 shares hope in the Middle East at sat7uk.org

HE IS THE GOD OF A BRIGHTER TOMORROW

Hil Sewell, director of people and culture at the Evangelical Alliance, speaks to Nicola Morrison about how she is able to hold on to hope following unexpected tragedy.

Hil is a mother of four, and has worked at the Evangelical Alliance for three years. To know Hil is to know a woman of great humility and poise, with an undeniable quiet resilience. After learning her story of suddenly and unexpectedly losing her husband two years ago, I couldn't help but be further endeared towards her and the beautiful qualities she emulates as she enthusiastically runs staff awaydays and leads the team's weekly prayer meetings. Her steadfast faith on display for all to see. I was struck by her honesty and openness as she shared snippets from her very real and raw journey with grief. As she shared her reality, sometimes behind watery eyes, I couldn't help but recognise the faint twinkle that lay behind them. That translated to me, that she was still holding on, still believing and still trusting God, despite her world being turned upside down. I was inspired and intrigued by her strength, her courage and her unrelenting hope.

Growing up in a faith-based home as a child, Hil learnt about the Bible and Jesus from an early age. But it wasn't until she went away to university in

her late teens that she gained a full understanding of who Jesus was and what it meant to really love and serve Him and share her faith.

Hil met Jem soon after graduating university. They worked for the same city organisation and quickly realised they had a lot in common, not least their faith. The relationship developed over time, and it wasn't long before it became apparent that they were right for each other.

"I knew that straight away," says Hil. "Maybe took him a little longer to realise!" she quips.

I catch Hil's face light up whenever she is talking about her beloved Jem.

"We recognised that God had a call on our lives individually and as a couple," she continues.

They were soon married and signed up for theological college. After a few challenges along the way, they were led to church ministry.

"We loved ministering together," says Hil.

For more than 28 years, Hil and Jem served churches in Slough and more recently in Westbourne Park, west London. Hil recalls, "There were ups

and downs, we saw God at work in the good and not so good times. We knew ministry was never about us but about serving God in His strength."

Then suddenly in November 2020, the unthinkable happened.

Jem had worked a normal day in his church office. Hil recalls, "Actually, I realise now he met with many and various people that day. He had significant conversations, he made decisions and he got things done. He began to prepare for Sunday's sermon from Matthew 6, 'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on Earth... but store up treasures in heaven where moths and vermin do not destroy... for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.'"

He had left his Bible open on his desk.

He returned home and Hil reminisces that they chatted briefly before he went upstairs to exercise on his bike, something he did regularly. But on this day, after 15 minutes of exercise, he collapsed, suffering a fatal cardiac arrest.

"He had gone to where his treasure was," she laments, "I woke that Monday morning very much as a *we* and I ended the day just *me*."



Fighting back tears, she confesses that the interview has caused her to confront her thoughts and emotions all over again. Feeling a surge of guilt at her emotional response, I apologise profusely, to which Hil, in her selfless way, assures me that whilst it has been hard, it has also been good for her to reflect. She goes on to say that it has been almost therapeutic for her, forcing her to process and organise her thoughts and feelings about that tragic day.

I asked Hil, what keeps her going, and how does she reconcile what happened to her family with her faith and trust in God:

“The depth of my loss still takes my breath away and it impacts me every day... I have learned to lament and through that lament to listen for hope. I very quickly decided that there was no purpose in asking why this had happened but realised I wanted to hear from God how He would have me be in this situation. We are not defined by the challenging situations we encounter but by our responses to them. And I held on to the fact that even though so much seemed to have been taken – I still had hope.”

“I knew I needed to focus on believing

rather than simply knowing the truth. When the only thing I sensed was God’s absence, lament was the rope that kept me tethered to His presence (inspired by the book ‘The louder song’ by Aubrey Sampson). What happened to me and my family was not OK, but my hope is about trust in Jesus – who is God with me... Jem’s loving care will be forever missed. I grieve his absence, but my treasure is in heaven and so I have hope.”

Hil’s prayer for others suffering grief

“Whatever your situation, I pray you will know the reality of the hope we have in Jesus. He was there for me on the cross, He was victorious in resurrection. He is more powerful than the grave, through Him death is defeated, and God says to you ‘I am the Lord your God who takes hold of your right hand and says to you – do not fear I will help you (Isaiah 41:13). He does not leave you to walk alone.’”

If you are experiencing grief, we pray that God will be the source of your strength today and always. May you be encouraged by these scriptures:

“He will wipe every tear from their eyes...”

– Revelation 21:4

The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

– Psalm 34:18

He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds.

– Psalm 147:3

Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

– Matthew 5:4

UNSHULA

Louanne Enns, international operations manager at Christianity Explored Ministries, details how lives of the imprisoned in Kenya and worldwide are being transformed and led to Jesus.

The room was filled with prison ministry representatives from 11 countries. They had gathered in Nairobi, Kenya to learn how to implement 'The Prisoner's Journey' programme.

"I was in prison, and you came to visit me."

Stephen James, director of prison ministry for Christianity Explored Ministries and the lead trainer for The Prisoner's Journey, begins the training session with a deeply personal

reminder of the impact of reaching out to prisoners - like himself. In 1997, a group came to the prison where Stephen was serving time on a drug charge and shared the good news of Jesus. Filled with hope for a better future with Christ (not drugs) at the centre, the prison ministry team disciplined and supported him after he was released. At the time, he said to one of the trainers, "My life has changed because of people like you."

Ten years later, Stephen was back in prison - this time sharing the good news and adapting the Christianity Explored course for prisoners in the UK. In 2014, Christianity Explored Ministries was invited by Prison Fellowship International (PFI) to partner together to reach a million prisoners around the world with the gospel by 2020. Since then, 1,253,800 prisoners in 655 prisons in 40 countries have been invited to explore who Jesus is, why He came and what it means to follow Him through an interactive study of Mark's gospel tailored specifically for those in prison.

547,434 prisoners have completed the programme and over 80% of these

have carried on exploring Jesus in a discipleship course.

The Prisoner's Journey is a three-strand evangelism programme, a transformational, evangelism and discipleship journey that puts the living word of God in the hands of prisoners. It brings the hope of Jesus to people like Matías and Asher.

Matías, a prisoner from Uruguay, describes his experience: "At first while in prison, I was disconnected and didn't care about anything. One day while working, I was invited to take 'The Prisoner's Journey' course; at first I just laughed, but the following week I reluctantly signed up for it. By the second class, I was enjoying the subject and something began to change my life. The videos were very moving, and I knew that God was calling me to Himself. Today, I am a new man. My family can testify that I have changed. I no longer feel anguish or resentment. I met Jesus and I do not plan to leave Him. The TPJ course changed my life and that of my family."

Another prisoner, Asher, in South Africa, recalls: "One day in prison, I heard people talking and asking if people wanted to register for a programme called Prisoner Journey, that takes place in the prison. I never went to the church inside the prison. I decided to register myself. It was the most positive decision that I have ever made. One Sunday, I went to church and the same day I felt something change



Stephen James, director of prison ministry for Christianity Explored Ministries and the lead trainer for The Prisoner's Journey

CRIMINAL

inside of me. I started to see life in a different way as we continued with the programme, and I am a better person today. I know the power of confession and repentance and forgiveness and how I can forgive. I also learned how to communicate with God and how God communicates with me. I am at peace with everyone and more especially myself, thank you God for allowing me to be in prison so that I could learn the wonderful news about You and how You restored hope in my life.”

The Prisoner’s Journey also impacts the lives of prison officials, chaplains and volunteers. Robert, a volunteer leader from Liberia, shares, “I am so grateful for The Prisoner’s Journey! After going through the course leader training, my mindset toward prisoners is completely different. It is almost like I have rediscovered Jesus and cannot wait to introduce Him to others. I have been ministering and evangelising to others for some time but have not experienced the style of introducing Jesus according to the gospel of Mark the way that The Prisoner’s Journey does. This is surely a life transforming course cause I am transformed again.”



Prison ministry representatives at The Prisoner’s Journey training conference in Nairobi, September 2022

Throughout the conference, we heard many more stories of lives transformed by Christ through this gospel partnership. It was so encouraging to see church leaders and volunteers excited to use these materials beyond the prison walls – to help their churches and share the hope of the gospel. We are inspired by the scripture Matthew 25:35–36, as we continue to transform the lives of prisoners and restore to them freedom and liberty through Jesus.

Louanne Enns joined Christianity Explored Ministries in 2011. In her current role as international operations manager, she works with churches and organisations around the world supporting local evangelism through various resources. Louanne is passionate about helping people love, live and tell the good news of Jesus through the Bible.

“I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

– Matthew 25:35–36

Hope with HINDSIGHT

Andy Palmer, senior pastor at Christ Church Balham, reflects on how God made a way to bring hope into the hearts of the local community and keep spirits up and open to hearing the gospel at a time when the rest of the world was shutting down.

Being asked to recall and reflect on the events of the Covid pandemic and the various resulting lockdowns might feel like a painful exercise in mental archeology. *Aren't these memories best left buried underground?* you may wonder. I know my wife would much rather forget the trauma of being confined to our house while nominally homeschooling our various small children! However, there

is great value in remembering the painful past because often it is only with hindsight that we can see God's various providential kindnesses.

For example, in Psalm 77, Asaph sings with brutal honesty about his experience of suffering and sleepless nights. But by the end of the song, he finds comfort in recollecting how God rescued Israel out of slavery: "Your path led through the sea, your way

through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen" (77:19). Asaph observes how God decided to take His people, not around the swirling chaos, but through it. With hindsight he also sees what was completely unseeable at the time - that their God was right there with them in the midst of it. By way of parallel, this was our experience at Christ Church Balham during the pandemic.

Bekah leading kids session outside



Provision in captivity

Looking back now, I see the Lord's hand in providing for us in that first lockdown. A few months before it was announced, a young man called Sean joined our church who happened to have all the tech skills needed to get us going quickly on live-streaming. What a God-send he was! Instead of changing the format of our online services to something simpler and shorter, we decided to keep things just as they would be if they were happening in person, with 30-minute sermons. At the time, we questioned whether this was wise, but in retrospect, many in the church were grateful that instead of having 'milk' there was 'solid food' to help sustain them.

Furthermore, the fact that nearly everyone in our fellowship was already in a midweek Connect Group before the pandemic meant that we had pastoral systems in place for spiritual encouragement, practical help (such as food deliveries), and social time outside together. We tried to help those who were living alone to move in with families so they wouldn't have to completely forgo human interaction, which was a cause of depression and anxiety for so many.

Incarnate love

Along with every other church in the land, our elders team had to make some tough decisions about exactly how and



Pastor Andy Palmer conducting a baptism outside



Praise and worship service outdoors

when to return out of lockdown. Given all the unknowns at the time about the virulence of Covid-19, we questioned whether we should be loving our church by prioritising their physical health, or their spiritual and mental wellbeing. Looking back, I'm sure we made some bad calls, but the benefit of having an elders team made up of diverse characters struck a balance among our most cautious and the most 'gung-ho' when it came to our decision-making.

We implemented a plan which would act within the law, but do as much as possible to continue fellowship in person. Pre-lockdown, we met at a theatre, but our landlords allowed us to move into their sports hall, which enabled the entire fellowship to gather together with social distancing in place. Again, what a God-send!

Singing in the rain

It was not all easy. Along with everyone else, extended time inside wearing face masks is no fun, especially for glasses wearers like me! The sports hall was absolutely freezing in the winter months. I recall one memorable Sunday when I was preaching with a howling blizzard going on outside, and all the doors of the sports hall had to be wedged open to allow air flow! Once singing became allowed again (and how strange it was to be the first generation in 2,000 years not to be able to sing

together), we did so together outside at the start and end of our service. It often rained on us, but our spirits were not dampened – it was a privilege to be able to lift praises to the Lord. Indeed, some of our neighbours heard our singing and joined us as a result!

Unexpected growth

Perhaps the greatest blessing of all looking back at that time was how the Lord clearly grew us in so many ways. He certainly grew us in love for one another and many realised how vitally important their church family was for the first time. But most unexpectedly, the Lord added to our number.

A Portuguese couple called Mario and Vanessa had stumbled across our sermons on YouTube and were soundly converted despite never actually having been to church in person. We knew nothing about them until they rocked up for the first time on Good Friday. It has been a joy to watch them discover the church family they had been adopted into through faith in Christ.

With hindsight, we can thank God for not airlifting us out of the pandemic, but graciously walking with us through it, all so that His kingdom purposes might prevail. "Your path led through the sea, your way through the mighty waters, though your footprints were not seen." (Psalm 77:19)

Andy Palmer, senior pastor of Christ Church Balham, is also part of the Co-Mission church planting network. He has four children with wife Hannah. For more info visit: christchurchbalham.org.uk

Rehabilitation, Recovery and Restoration

Sue Hedger shines a spotlight on the work of Yeldall Manor and how the Christian organisation is helping men caught up in addiction recover their lives.

“**T**here is a love and a care beyond it just being a rehab,” was the testimony of Matt, one young man who came to Yeldall Manor. Not only did he find the support and resources he needed to embark on his road to recovery, but he also came to know Jesus. “I also found faith in Christ... this was a massive turning point and has been a strong foundation to build my life upon.”

Matt is just one of the many men who we have been able to help and support here at Yeldall, a Christian drug and alcohol recovery centre. We are committed to providing hope and healing for men from all faith backgrounds as well as those with no faith.

Recovery is a hard road and that is why the work we do is so important. As well as providing residential support and therapy, we help our residents establish independence and a sense of belonging through community work. Unlike many secular rehabs, here we endeavour to work with and support

those who come to Yeldall for as long as they need, extending care long after they have left our programmes.

It is impossible for our residents to come to Yeldall Manor and not know that we are a faith-based organisation, which makes it a unique and special place. We combine discipleship with addiction recovery through weekly fellowship meetings, an ‘exploring faith’ conversation workshop, optional Bible studies and a dedicated discipleship team on hand. They are also available for one-to-one sessions if the residents desire it. With the help of local churches, Yeldall also provides access for our residents to the Alpha course.

Dom, a former resident at Yeldall, was baptised last year and has gone on to work for a drug and alcohol service as a result of the support and life skills he gained at Yeldall. “It’s a privilege to be able to give back, and I owe it all to Yeldall Manor for giving me the tools I needed,” he says.

From these testimonies and so many others, it is clear that it is so important to continue the work that we do and support men like Matt and Dom to transform their lives, but we can’t do it without the support from the church. More than half of our income comes from donations and unfortunately our income from donations is significantly lower

than it was this time last year.

We are also committed to partnering with the church to provide support and resources for those battling addiction in their congregation. We can provide a source of expertise through our experience with addiction and recovery and help churches to navigate these difficult challenges. While it may not always be possible or wise to open your home to someone dealing with recovery, with our Good Samaritan Fund, a church can fund the ‘inn keeper’ and sponsor someone on our programme.

We would also value prayers for our residents as they embark on their journey to recovery and beyond, that they may receive healing and stay the course as we help them to restore their lives, and build family and community with faith, wisdom and grace.

To find out more about our programmes and to join alongside our mission, please visit yeldall.org.uk



Sue Hedger works in administration and supporter relations at Yeldall Manor. She oversees the relationship between the organisation and its supporters and is committed to providing long-term support and care for men facing addiction and seeing lives renewed.

LEAVING A LEGACY OF HOPE



Wendy Pawsey, head of giving at the Evangelical Alliance, shares why it is so important for us all to leave behind a kingdom legacy here on Earth.

As a relatively new staff member to the UK's oldest and largest evangelical unity organisation, I have come to value and respect the legacies that have been left behind by those who have gone before me. I am grateful for my predecessor's neat filing system. I love our team-building traditions. I'm inspired by the culture of prayer that is promoted throughout the organisation, both internally and externally (an integral part of the Evangelical Alliance's foundations). These are great legacies to step into and inherit.

In fact, ever since 1846, the people of this alliance have been sowing gospel seeds, promoting religious freedom, and speaking up for the marginalised. They may not have seen all the fruits of their labour, but there is no doubt that their work has benefited generations.

Without the boldness of the Victorian church leader John Angell James (one of the first people in Britain to suggest an evangelical alliance) and our other founding members, we may not even exist as a unity movement today.

In the Bible, the concept of a legacy focuses on what will endure, passing

on things of lasting value to those who will live on after us. If we look at scriptures such as Proverbs 13:22 and 2 Timothy 2:2, we can see clear examples and commands to live intentionally and feed into the next generation, and the generation after that, for their success. Legacies handed down over the years by faithful men and women have enabled Christians who came before us to be strengthened, equipped and resourced, and we continue to reap the benefits from this.

That's why we are so grateful to the hundreds of faithful Christians who have fed into this generation, and many more to come, by leaving the Evangelical Alliance a gift in their will. Christians like our member Heather Rayner.

We asked Heather to share her motivations for leaving a legacy to us.

"I see leaving a legacy as a way of giving at another stage of life, leaving a portion of the many gifts that I have received and want to share with others.

"When it came to making our wills, my husband Tim and I made provision for our families first, but we also wanted to know that a part of our estate was separated out for God's work. We recognise that legacies are an important

part of ensuring that the vital ongoing work of some charities is well-funded long into the future.

"We are happy to share with others that we've left a legacy to help carry on the Evangelical Alliance's work long after our lifetimes, promoting values that are important to us. I'm also pleased that the Evangelical Alliance know this and can continue to keep me updated with their plans for the future as a result.

"I believe most Christians would be happy to consider including a legacy in their will for causes they love, and it's probably something we should talk about more and share with one another."

If you, like Heather, would like to leave a legacy, we are offering you the opportunity to write your will for free through us.

There is no obligation to leave the Evangelical Alliance a gift in your will, but we hope that after looking after your loved ones, you'll consider leaving a percentage of your estate to us as well so that we can continue shaping our nation, speaking powerfully into the corridors of power, seeking unity and making Jesus known to this and future generations.

To find out more, please contact Rev Wendy Pawsey, our head of giving, on 0207 520 3856 or w.pawsey@eauk.org or you can visit eauk.org/legacies to find out more.



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Vision on a mission

Reverend Dr Betty King, founder and host of The Cry, shares the vision behind a special day of prayer, worship and intercession.



The Cry has a storied history, as it's the culmination (in certain respects) of nearly 30 years of labouring for the knowledge of the glory of God to be felt and seen in the nations. In Wembley, north-west London, in particular, I have prayed and contended for that atmosphere shift, and over the years the Lord has allowed me to be involved in significant events and gatherings to share and impart the good news. Yet, I also knew there needed to be a 'cry' at some point, leading to numerous cries from the Bride for the nation and the nations of the world. We hope this upcoming gathering on 7 January 2023 will be just the start of subsequent impactful and pivotal gatherings for our nation. The upcoming Cry event has Song of Solomon 4:1-4 as

its foundation, because this passage of scripture speaks of 'a thousand famous soldiers'. I believe that the Father's desire is for this event to leave a powerful legacy of thousands arising for His glory.

History tells us that the greatest awakenings often happen at the bleakest moments and so we believe, amid the darkness of today's world, a light has shone and will shine through (Isaiah 60). All is not lost, God is waiting for us - His people - to cry out to Him in repentance so that He can heal our lands (2 Chronicles 7:14).

The Cry has two main focuses - empowering young people and edifying the body of Christ to preserve its posture of being the city on a hill.

For the younger generation, we will be addressing issues such as mental

health, addiction and identity with the hope of bringing wholeness and healing to this generation. We want to see the Daniels, Esthers, Joshuas, Deborahs and King Davids - the future reformers and rebuilders - arise, fully confident of their identity in Christ - in order to build His Kingdom.

For the wider body of Christ, we want to bring refreshment and strength so the church can ascend to the next level (Psalm 24) - taking its position in the world, moving beyond its limitations. The church is the supreme emergency service, and we are especially critical in this hour.

As we pursue this vision, we believe times of refreshing and healing will take place so the Bride is restored from hurts, division and misunderstanding that have emanated from ethnic, cultural, denominational or intergenerational lines and move forward into true unity.

In faith, we see the impact of The Cry not just lasting for a decade but for generations and centuries. We see commerce and business being impacted by many discovering their true identity. We see spheres of society being impacted and shaken by those who discover their cry before God. We see young and old rising to alter the destiny of their nations.

The Cry will take place in Wembley OVO Arena on 7 January 2023. A series of The Cry gatherings will happen across the nation and internationally throughout 2023. For more information, visit: thecrybkim.com



Lou Fellingham, Christian songwriter, worship leader and author, made the life-changing decision to be a follower of Jesus at the tender age of five. She remembers being drawn to the simplicity of understanding that she was loved by God and that He cared for her. Now at 48, she shares her passion to serve the church both locally and worldwide through her gifts.



HEART BEHIND THE

ART

“My passion is to share the love of God”

Lou is a wife and mother of three, lives in Brighton and attends Emmanuel Church where she serves on the worship team.

A self-confessed hugger and lover of people, Lou desires to share Jesus with others.

Her husband Nathan is the other half of the formidable pair; former drummer of PHATFISH, he is an accomplished musician in his own right and also produces. Lou and Nathan recorded several albums during the various lockdowns as well as hosting a wide array of events online, once concerts and speaking engagements were cancelled due to Covid.

Inspired during the pandemic to join with other worship leaders and keep the church singing, they joined an online worship series with around 500 participants joining the livestream. Moved to keep going long after the pandemic ended, and once other church leaders resumed business as usual, ‘Worship Wednesdays’ with the couple continued – the weekly online meet-up draws in an audience of over 300, with many more watching the online service at later times in the week, leading to over 14,000 views on their online platforms.

Lou says, “A community has developed where people are praying for

one another, caring for one another, some have actually met in person! It has been a special place where we worship together and pray for one another and God has been so kind to us. This is not a replacement for our local churches. This is a well-received addition. A mid-week moment to stop, pause and be encouraged in God.”

Grounded by her Christian upbringing, Lou talks of how she watched her parents serve the Lord and acknowledge Him in all they did.

Growing up as one of five girls, Lou describes her family as close knit. “Watching my parents walk their journey of faith impacted me in a deep way. Watching them navigate through a lot of highs of togetherness, loving God and having an extremely hospitable home but also many lows of loss of loved ones, unbelieving family, unemployment. These things had a deep impact on me.”

She recalls how important prayer was in her home.

“I remember dad getting us up for morning prayers before school and we would always read *Daily Bread* as a family. We were raised with principles of generosity... He always told us to give the best away, and that has always stayed with me!”

“He always told us to give the best away, and that has always stayed with me!”

Lou reflects on how her relationship with God and the depth of His love was once again revealed to her during a time of great hardship.

At 34, Lou lost her mum to cancer. “That’s when the rubber really hits



Lou performing on stage

the road. My family and I sat around her bedside, we worshipped, we sang scripture, we prayed, we wept and we gave thanks. I can honestly say that I have never felt the Lord as close as I did in this moment. Despite all the sorrow, all the pain, all the loss, I felt His nearness, love and comfort in a tremendous way. The sting of death is real but the hope of that sting one day being finally swallowed up in Christ’s victory is also very real. The peace that He gave us during such a difficult time was supernatural. It could only be God.”

“Despite all the sorrow, all the pain, all the loss, I felt His nearness.”

For as long as she can remember, she has desired to sing and share the good news of Jesus. “My parents said I used to sing around the house before I could string sentences together! I started writing songs more officially when I was a teenager – I would even perform some of these songs in my school assembly! From there, the songwriting has evolved depending on where the songs are being sung. I like to write story songs as well as ‘congregational’ songs. For instance, I wrote a song called ‘My God cares for you’ for a friend who wasn’t a believer but had just lost her brother. It expressed that although we don’t understand it all, I know that God cares for her. I also love writing with others and have written many congregational songs with my husband Nathan.”

“My belief is that as we declare His praises and who He is, He is not only glorified in our own lives, but others will stop and say, ‘Surely God is in this place.’ My heart and longing for the church is that as we worship, the kingdom of God is revealed and there will be manifestations of healing, deliverance and salvation.”

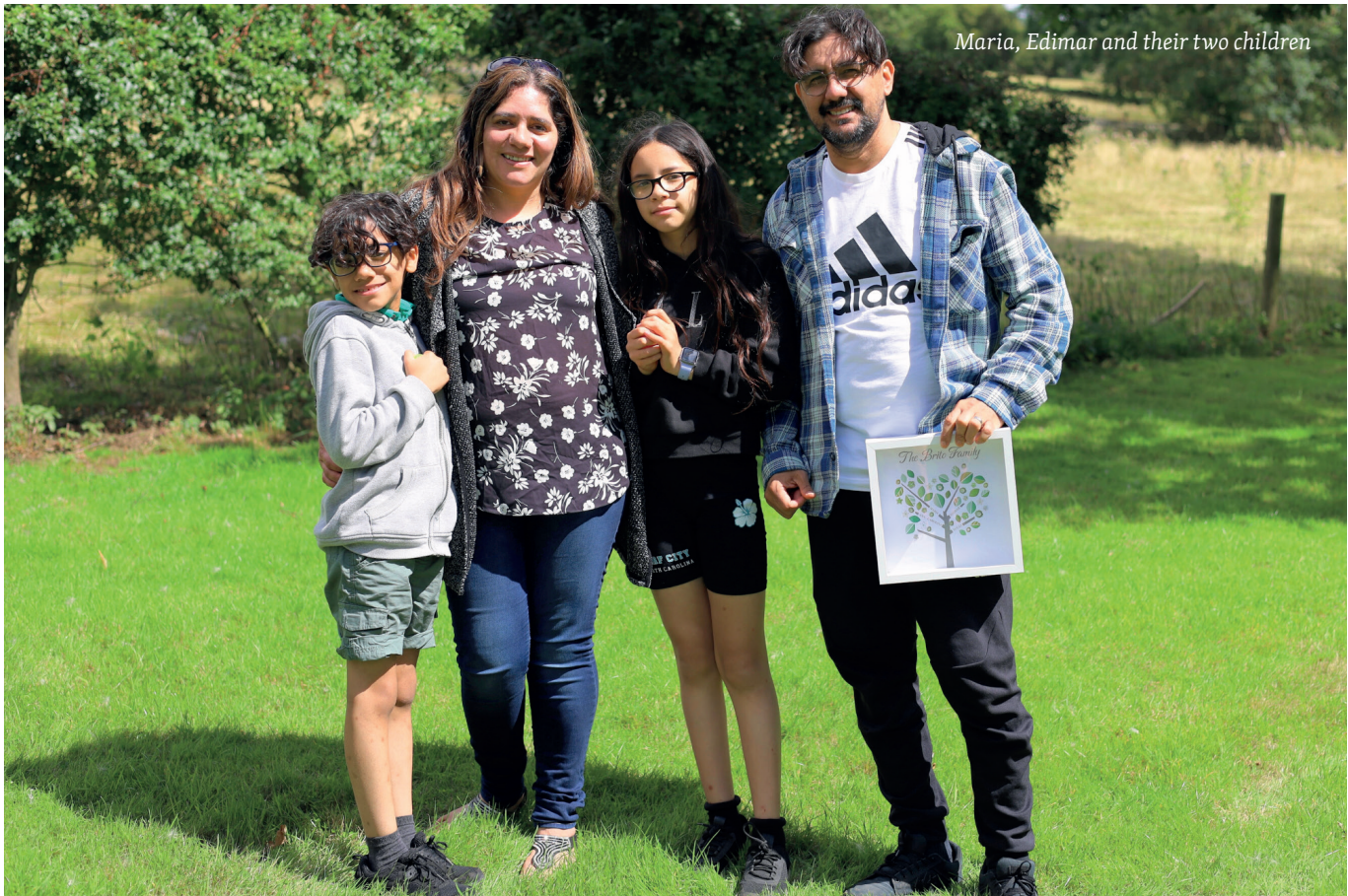
To find out more about Lou, her weekly events, conferences or to purchase her music, visit Loufellingham.com

For the extended version of this article, visit [ideaonline at: eauk.it/heart-behind-the-art](http://ideaonline.at:eauk.it/heart-behind-the-art)



Lou with husband Nathan in studio

Exchanging ASHES for BEAUTY



Maria, Edimar and their two children

Dorothy Muraya of Cornerstone, a Christian fostering and post-adoption organisation, highlights how they are bringing together children and families to create new beginnings.

When I think of hope, I think of Abraham – the father of our faith. He continued to believe God would give him a son even though he and his wife were advanced in their years. The Bible tells us that, “Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father

of many nations...” (Romans 4:18). This strong sense of hope is not just a hope depicted in biblical times, but a hope that echoed in the lives of a couple called Edimar and Maria, who fostered with Cornerstone.

They were struggling with infertility when God called them to become foster



Families gather together at Cornerstone family retreat

carers. They stepped into fostering while continuing to hope that God would give them children of their own. They said, “we are going to do this in the meantime and we’re going to wait on the Lord to have our own children one day.”

How typical of God to hear the desires of our heart but seemingly take us on a detour. This same God invited a childless Abraham and Sarah to leave their homes and follow Him. Similarly, God invites us to lay our hopes at His feet and trust His will for our lives – and that’s exactly what Maria and Edimar did. They wanted children of their own, and in answering God’s call, they have loved and cared for many children since 2008.

This year, after a wonderful fostering career, spanning over 20 years, they are moving back to their native Brazil with their two children.

Fostering has allowed Maria and Edimar’s family to grow in compassion and understanding. They said, “We learned to have unconditional love, regardless of what the child is going to tell us, we still love them and want to look after them...and our children benefit from that as well. They grow open-minded, accepting different backgrounds and cultures and accepting different traumas of the children... they are very kind with children. They love to have children in our house. They learn

to adapt and live with other children as well. When a child comes to us, they feel excited and happy as well.”

When Edimar and Maria were praying for children, God had a plan for a family who had lots of quality time together. A family full of compassion, kindness and understanding. A family who ministered together through fostering. This was perhaps a greater vision of family than they initially had. At a time when they could have been overwhelmed by infertility, they chose to heed the calling of God and along the way they became the family they wanted. They are just one of the many amazing families within Cornerstone who foster.

God is our Hope and it is our hope in Him that has fuelled our current expansion into Scotland where we are seeing God open doors for us. We continue to step out in faith within an environment which often challenges our Christian evangelical values and we are confident that God will move powerfully and allow us to continue equipping and supporting Christians in loving and caring for vulnerable children.

Dorothy Muraya has an MSc in childhood studies. She has more than 15 years’ experience working with children and has worked with International Justice Mission in Kenya where she worked with victims of child abuse. To learn more, visit cornerstoneuk.org

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INSPIRING THE 'FORGOTTEN' GENERATION

Joy Winfield and **Joan Wilkinson**, volunteers at Belmont Chapel, Exeter, share how their church is bringing happiness, hope and joy through their third age ministry.

For many churches, the elderly members of their congregation can feel disengaged, misunderstood or even ignored, with many church leaders not knowing how to connect with their elderly church members. As the unavoidable frailties of life become a reality, the older generation can begin to feel more disconnected and isolated. A sad but true reality.

We at Belmont Chapel are so passionate about our members having full and enriched lives, including those who are more advanced in their years. It is important that all our church members enjoy coming to church, hearing the gospel and get to interact and connect with each other. After all, "iron sharpens iron" and it was never God's intention for man to be alone.

Which is why we, along with several others, volunteer our time to run weekly morning meetings followed by lunch for older folk. This provides an opportunity for them to get out of the house and have a day in the calendar at least once a week to look forward to.

"Folk who attend have said how much they appreciate the opportunity to meet together and the care that is shown to them," says church administrator Karen Fulls.

We also run a monthly Memory Café meeting for those with early dementia and their carers. The beauty of these groups is that they are not exclusively for church members, they exist for all and are both run by teams of dedicated church volunteers, so there is always someone on hand for prayer and a listening ear.

Our biblical principle for providing these sessions is being able to show God's love and compassion for all. We



provide a safe place for them to come and meet with others.

There is a real opportunity for discipleship as we encourage participants of our 15-minute walk and talk, where we get to speak freely with one another and inspire discussion around Christian-based themes.

From this weekly activity flows a variety of pastoral care situations and a support network for those who come. This often involves liaison with family members, some of whom are not in regular contact with their older relatives.

Perhaps as you read about the work we are doing at Belmont Chapel, you are wondering how your church could support and encourage connection amongst older members. So, to get you started, we have devised some top tips:

- Occasionally, try to include an older hymn in services. Some older people find more modern songs difficult to engage with. They have a wonderful recall of older tunes and words. At

the harvest themed Memory Café there was spontaneous singing of the old harvest hymns, enthusiastically led by some of the frailest members of the group.

- Bear older people in mind when deciding on the timing and length of services.
- Create a comfortable space where they can sit and socialise with a cuppa after the service.
- Ensure there is a loop system in place for those with hearing difficulties.

Joy Winfield is the Third Age Ministry team leader. Joy has a passion for sharing Jesus with people of all ages and has been overseeing the organising and running of Third Age activities at Belmont for 10 years.

Joan Wilkinson is a retired primary school teacher and oversees the organising and running of the Memory Café.



10 minutes with...

SARAH SMALL

The head of the Eden Network talks urban mission, and the importance of bringing hope to 'tough communities'.

Sarah and husband Steve head up the Eden Network and live with their three sons in Manchester. Sarah is passionate about building communities through trust and engagement.

What is the Eden Network?

The Eden Network is part of The Message Trust which is a worldwide movement passionately sharing the love of Jesus Christ in words and actions with the hardest-to-reach people and communities. We position urban missionaries in tough communities, in areas of deprivation. Over the past 25 years, we have sent and supported more than 700 people to serve in almost 70 different towns and cities across the UK, Germany, South Africa and Canada.

What scriptures inspire the work you do?

We take our inspiration from the incarnation of Jesus and personally I love the way the Message Bible paraphrases John 1:14 - "The word became flesh and moved into the neighbourhood." Jesus located Himself and His ministry among some of the most marginalised in society and we feel similarly called to do the same.

We call ourselves Eden because we have a vision of kingdom transformation for our estates, communities and neighbourhoods and Ezekiel 36:35 is one of our key scriptures, "They will say, this land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited."

Eden was God's perfect design, and we believe He is working to restore that and renew that in all places.

What spurs you on and motivates you?

Jesus' love for those who are on the margins and are side-lined by wider society. I am motivated to counter the stereotypes of those who are materially poor and/or socially different. I want to show that crossing boundaries and cultures isn't always easy, but it also doesn't always involve getting on a plane and going somewhere far away. There are so many people living

close by who don't have hope right now but who also don't feel welcome and comfortable in our churches.

I'm inspired by our team - people who love and serve neighbourhoods despite the personal cost, prayer walking, planting churches, discipling their neighbours, running food and clothing banks, setting up youth groups, campaigning for better services, the list goes on and on.

I'm also inspired by those who have come to faith and who now are a key part of helping lead and inform our work going forward. I think of people like my neighbour Susie* (not her real name) who despite the struggles, has clung fast to her faith in Jesus and has taught me a lot about personal devotion, resilience, faith for the toughest situations, hospitality and openness. Through diligent prayer and witness, she's starting to see members of her family open up to the hope that she has in Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit in her life.

What is one significant challenge you are facing as an organisation?

Our communities can be hard places to be - there is lots of pain and trauma, so making sure our teams have adequate support, time to process, pray and pace themselves well, helps to ensure longevity of the mission.

The cost of living crisis is also affecting our communities disproportionately so we have much to do in the current season to provide hope and support to our neighbours.

How can we encourage others who want to positively impact difficult to access communities and share the gospel of Jesus?

Proximity is key. It's much harder to build relationships, gain trust and really see God in the big and little things if you're trying to do it all from arms' length. Be all in! If you want to see change, there needs to be sacrifice - trust in God, put Him first, surrender to Him and ask Him to lead and guide you.

To find out more about The Eden Network and how to get involved, head to joineden.org

Hope for the INTERCULTURAL CHURCH

Carla Jacobs, our One People Commission assistant, sheds light on the importance of intercultural unity in the church.

More and more church leaders today are exploring what it means to be part of the intercultural church. As it turns out, there are many ways for us to strive towards a true representation of the diverse kingdom of God.

So how do we define what it means to be an intercultural church? Well, quite simply put, it is the uniting of different cultures, backgrounds and languages through the uniting of diverse Christian communities. Although the UK is often referred to as 'multi-cultural Britain' there seems to be a significant number of churches that do not reflect this reality.

Segregated or just separated?

The UK has a history of racial injustice that runs deep. The

conversations that I have had with my late Jamaican grandparents about the treatment they received upon arrival into the UK church is enough to make you feel angry, confused and disappointed. They, like many of their counterparts who arrived in the 1960s, longed for a community that they could join, connect with and later become a part of. Their desire to become a part of a community that aligned with their beliefs was met with anything but the warmth of a place they could call home. As the stories of racial discrimination faced by my grandparents and so many came to light over the years, the message was clear: those who were different did not belong in the family of God here in the UK.

“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of His household...”

– Ephesians 2:19 (NIV)

As the church, our role is to be a home away from home. Whether we are welcoming a new student who is living 10 miles or 10,000 miles away from home or the refugee who has travelled across seas with their family. We have a God-given duty of care to welcome and adopt those who are in search of a new or additional family and when we accept Christ into our lives, we accept His people into His household and all other names and titles are stripped away.





Reconciliation of a divided church

I can recall having a conversation with my friend about her experiences with being Black whilst on a predominately White church leadership course and the countless times she was subject to racial discrimination through seemingly light-hearted jokes. She best described these experiences as feeling hurt and betrayed. For us to really unite as an intercultural body of Christ, we must be willing to set aside our own racial and cultural biases, listen, and learn from one another.

Although there is an increased number of cultures and ethnicities coming together in worship, many churches still do not represent the diversity of the community they serve in. I believe the remnants of a once segregated UK church over 60 years ago has left generational scars and wounds that are still in need of reparation and reconciliation.

The international God

The first time I came to understand the beauty of an intercultural scene of worship as depicted in Revelations, was the moment my perspective changed.

“...from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb.”

– Revelation 7:9 (NLT)

A few years ago, I attended an international youth conference in Prague. It was one thing to hear the voices of over a thousand from more than 20 nations worshipping together; it was another to watch people leave their seats, their family and friends and

their in-ear translation devices to pray and join hands in worship with their Christian brothers and sisters, despite the obvious language barrier. Although I didn't understand every word prayed over me, the translation of the love, embrace and encouragement I received through the power of the Holy Spirit was enough.

After this experience, I realised that everything I had learnt about God up until that point had been based on my own Caribbean-British perspective of God. Although there is absolutely nothing wrong with serving God through your own cultural lens, learning to see the beauty in our differences and beyond our own cultural perspective is key to intercultural unity. To know our God is an international God and Father to all nations who need Him shows the vastness of His great love for us all.

Celebrating one another's cultures

Intercultural unity is more than just meeting together under one roof, it is about building intentional relationships within the family of God and loving and honouring one another above ourselves – but what does that mean?

We can truly honour others through learning to respect and take an interest in what makes each culture unique. When we choose to weave the practices of one culture into our own church practices, that's when we begin to truly see one another.

“Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.”

– Philippians 2:4 (NLT)

It's in the beautiful moments when we explore another culture's musical

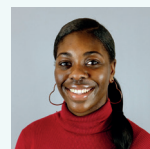
expressions through Latin style worship in Spanish, Nigerian worship in Yoruba or Indian melodies in Hindi; or the moment we decide to host our weekly small group meetings at a Sri Lankan, Thai or Polish restaurant. We make a difference when we make the conscious decision to do so, so that we can dive deeper into the stories and backgrounds of our diverse family of God. It is then, in those moments, that we can truly honour one another above ourselves.

“Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves.”

– Romans 12:9 (NIV)

Prayer for unity

Father, as the future of the intercultural church continues to advance, let our prayer be one of healing, forgiveness, reconciliation and unity. Lord, would you bless those who are at the forefront, pioneering, teaching, encouraging, resourcing and planting intercultural churches for your glory. Let us not be like the world in our pursuit for diversity but more like you in how we celebrate one another through honour and love. Let your will be done. Amen.



Carla Jacobs rejoined the Evangelical Alliance in October 2022 as a member of staff after

completing our graduate scheme. She has always played an active role in her church community, and enjoys engaging in events and projects that encourage her love for all things creative.



EMPOWERING YOUNG MINDS

Hope UK are helping to reduce drug abuse amongst young people through education.



When 15-year-old Rita was approached by a man with a simple request – to take his bag across the road and drop it off to his friend – she had no hesitation in saying no.

Growing up in a neighbourhood that was badly affected by drugs, gangs and knife crime, Rita was already aware of the dangers around her. She also knew how easy it was to get caught up in risky, criminal activities – just by doing something as simple as helping a friend out.

She was even more aware of the risks of agreeing to help him out because she had taken part in drug awareness training delivered by Hope UK. She had learned about the dangers of drugs and county lines – where young people are exploited and manipulated into drug dealing – a reality for young people in her local area.

“Being part of Hope UK has made me understand more about drugs and gangs and it made me more vigilant,” she said.

Rita also felt more empowered to stand up for herself and refuse to get involved because of the life skills training she had received from Hope UK. This included how to develop self-confidence – a vital skill for young people to gain in order to navigate the increasingly complex world which they are growing up in.

“I was so confident when I said No!” she recounts.

Rita’s story is not an isolated one – thankfully, hers is one with a happy ending because she was able to protect herself with the practical skills she had learned by attending a Hope UK training session for young people.

Today there is a pressing need to reach more young people with these potentially life-saving skills.

Most people will have come across headlines in national and local media about the dangers of county lines. It's estimated that up to 27,000 children, some as young as 11, are caught up in such activities in England alone. The reality is that any child is vulnerable – gangs are targeting children from good schools in middle class areas as well as youngsters in more deprived communities. Children from church families are not immune either.

Around 1,000 county lines are operating in the UK – from cities and urban areas into rural and coastal parts of the country. It's also acknowledged that the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated the problem over the past two years, as gangs have recruited children who were not in school nor engaged in home learning, but instead hanging around the streets with nothing to do – making them easy targets.

In the recently published *Smoking, Drinking and Drug Use Among Young People in England* NHS survey, a clear picture emerged that smoking and alcohol use are key 'gateways' into the use of other harmful substances.

According to Hope UK's CEO, Sarah Brighton: "There's good and bad news. On the one hand, 11-15-year-olds appear to be drinking less and taking fewer drugs. On the other hand, the trends for older young people, aged 16-24, are going in the wrong direction. There has been a 50% increase in the numbers reporting drug use in the past year. That's why Hope UK is committed to delivering high-quality drug education to support schools, churches, parents and the wider community in reaching this generation."

It's a challenge that demands a co-ordinated response across all sectors – from government and local authorities at a strategic level to voluntary organisations like Hope UK working with local communities. In its 10-year drug strategy published at the end of 2021, the government has committed to a £145 million investment to strengthen



its county lines programme, in recognition of the continued severity of the problem nationwide. As well as focusing on the perpetrators, the multi-agency approach aims to ensure that the young people caught up in criminal activity are identified and safeguarded, recognising that they are in fact victims of modern day slavery and child abuse.

Alongside bolstering the efforts of the crime-fighting agencies, we have to raise awareness of the risks for young people – particularly in areas where it is known that county lines are operating. Parents, schools, youth services and church leaders all have a role to play in understanding how a young person might be at risk of being groomed and recruited.

Hope UK offers free online training on drug awareness, including e-learning modules. Drug education is now a mandatory part of the Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) curriculum for all key stages. Hope UK is also able to deliver in-person workshops and sessions for schools and informal settings like church youth groups.

For more information on what Hope UK can offer, visit hopeuk.org or call 0207 928 0848.

Mary Deller is the press and media officer for Hope UK. She is also a trained voluntary drug educator and has been delivering drug education in her local community for more than 12 years.

The Evangelical Alliance Scotland *Stories of Hope:* Addiction recovery report



A report published on 7 June 2022 by the Evangelical Alliance and Serve Scotland highlights

the extraordinary efforts that have been made by Christians in Scotland to assist and care for those in addiction, bringing to light the scope of Christian services across Scotland. We note the high percentage of residential beds for addiction patients offered by Christian groups, 121 out of 418 (Scottish Govt, February 2021). Within the past decade, over 2,300 individuals have been directly treated and successfully recovered from their addiction through services offered by Christian groups and churches across Scotland.

To download the *Stories of Hope: Addiction recovery* report, scan the QR code.

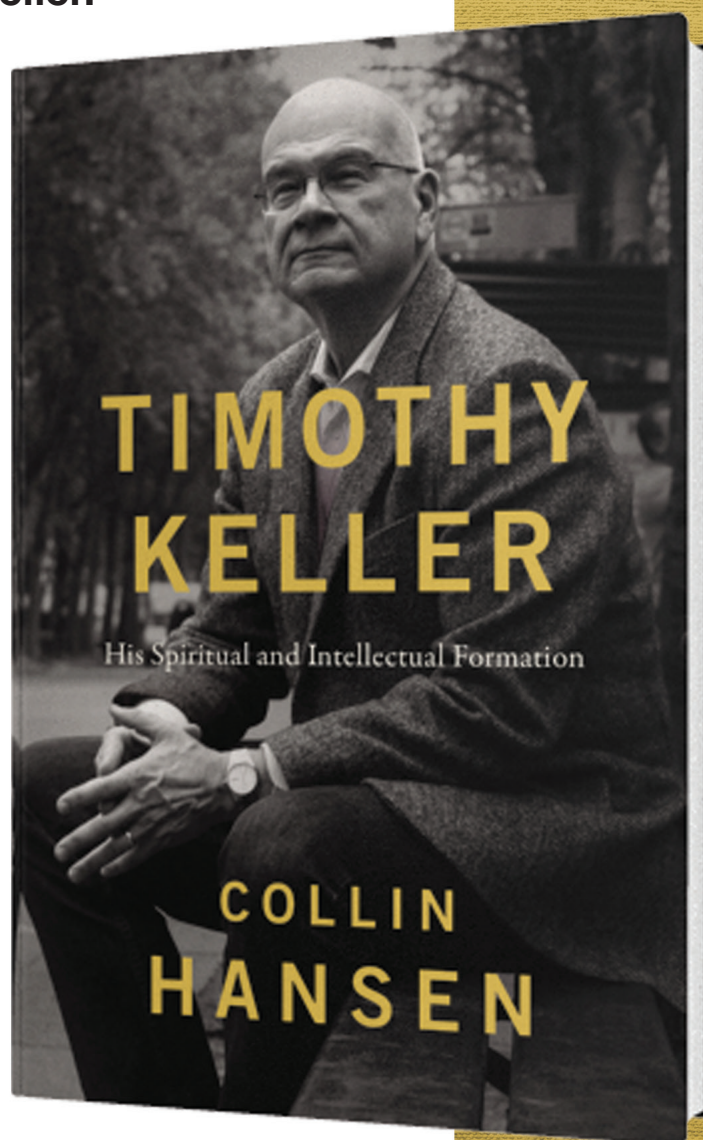


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 **ZONDERVAN REFLECTIVE**

Six beats, one story

Poet **Dai Woolridge** gives creative insight into how the Bible can be understood in just six ingenious tweets.

I remember the first time I realised a passage from Genesis was talking about Jesus; it was a game changer for me. The entire Bible is made up of many stories but there's one character who threads the entire story together. People far brainier than me have taken a bird's-eye view of the Bible and pointed out that you can track through the story in six scenes. This is my take of the Bible story in six social media updates.



Beat 1

God speaks – stuff happens. God forms people to bear His image. Serpent tucks people up, people stuff up, stuff goes belly up. But a holy God points to the one who'll one day raise up.

[#Seed](#) [#SerpentCrusher](#) [#RestorerOfBrokenness](#)



Beat 2

Abe gets the call-up, fathers a people to be a bless beacon to all nations. Israel ends up in shackles – via Moses, God flips the story for His glory, delivers rescue, rules to flourish, and points to a promised land.

[#400Years_aSlave](#) [#MannaMeals](#) [#DesertDiscs](#) [#40YearWait](#)



Beat 3

Enter promised land. Judges miss mark, Israel want a king. Saul wrecks the gig, David's crowned then convicted, Sol builds temple, Rehoboam botches it. Kingdom splits, Israel's evicted, then God gives.

[#WelcomeHomeParty](#) [#IsraelSplits](#) [#BabylonTakeover](#)
[#70YearExile](#) [#TempleRebuildM2](#)



Beat 4

Enter magnificent maker of everything. Lived then laid the world's burdens on His shoulders. Crucified but the grave could not hold Him. Jesus fully lives so we can fully live in Him.

[#400YearWait](#) [#WordBecameFlesh](#) [#SerpentCrusher](#) [#ItsFinished](#)
[#EmptyTomb](#) [#BlindedByYourGrace](#)



Beat 5

Spirit shows up and rubber-stamps believing hearts. Equips believers with gifts and gumption to rep Jesus. Paul flips from persecutor to proclaimer – 3 mission trips later, ends up prisoner.

[#Pentecost](#) [#RoadToDamascus](#) [#JewsAndGentiles](#)
[#GospelGoesViral](#) [#ThisIsWhereWeFitInTheStory](#)

Where we come in...

The Author invites us to have a role in the same story. Now it's our turn to follow in the footsteps of the heroes of the faith who have gone before us, to #Tedtalk the good news of Jesus.

Why we have a reason for hope...

Then the final beat of the story. Beat 6 is a snapshot of what broken people who bank on Jesus have got to look forward to. Imagine a world where pain is past tense. Imagine a world where tears only flow out of overwhelming awe and joy. Imagine being a part of a perfect community that gets to experience the fullness of God's love first-hand. There are no adjectives that come close to describing it.



Beat 6

John gets a snapshot on how the story ends. Sin's death-grip will cease, fears forgotten and baggage sent packing. A community of grace-gifted misfits welcome in the homecoming.

[#NoMoreTears](#) [#NewHeavenOnEarth](#) [#FullOnCreationRestoration](#)
[#PlaylistOfPraiseForEternity](#)

Ultimately, the Bible is a love story from God to us, which showcases God the Father's unrelenting heart to rescue broken people through His Son, Jesus. And one day, what was lost in Eden back in Beat 1 will be fully restored and then some. If ever we need a reason to hold on to hope – this is it!

This article is based on Dai's book 'Six Beats One Story', which begins with 'The Bible in four minutes' poem. You can watch the video or order Dai's book by visiting biblesociety.org.uk

Dai Woolridge is an award-winning spoken word poet who has written and performed for Sky Sports, Radio 2 and the Welsh Rugby Union. He is creative specialist at Bible Society, author of 'God's brilliantly big creation story' and leads Sound of Wales, with his wife Cath.

You are our hope in the midst of hopelessness

Fred Drummond, our Scotland director, shares a prayer of encouragement as we look to our heavenly Father, the source of all hope.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, Hope of the world, we come to you.
We thank you that through your amazing love, you
have granted us hope.
To know that you are for us and with us enables us to
hope even in the middle of the darkest trials.
Jesus, Lord of hope, fill us afresh with hope today.

We pray for those who feel hopeless,
the weak and vulnerable, the poor and broken,
the sick and outcast.
When dark clouds are all they can see and despair
weighs upon them,
Jesus, Lord of hope, fill them with hope today.

Lord, our nation faces huge challenges,
some still reeling from the effects of Covid,
others worried about the cost of living,
many having to choose between eating and heating.
Lord, in the middle of our nation's weariness,
Jesus, Lord of hope, fill us with hope today.

Lord, we pray for your church
in every part of our nation.
Prompted by love, help us
to be beacons of hope in every community,
pointing others to the glorious hope found
in you alone.
Jesus, Lord of hope, may your hope fill your
church today.
Amen



Fred Drummond is Scottish director and UK prayer director of the Evangelical Alliance. He is a writer, conference speaker and reflector on mission, church and spirituality.

UNFAILING, UNWAVERING HOPE



Gavin Calver inspires us with a moving story about how even in our frailty we can be spurred on by the beauty of the gospel.

When I was a young man, I vividly remember going to my grandparents' diamond wedding celebration – I remember it not because it was a good party, but because of how my grandfather behaved that day. He had not been well for a number of years and was always in his wheelchair being pushed along and cared for faithfully by my grandmother. My grandfather, Gilbert Kirby, was an incredible Christian leader in his day, had been the general director of the Evangelical Alliance, principal of London Bible College, the founder of Tearfund and the leader of many churches. He regularly preached on Sundays until his mid-eighties when he took what he called 'early retirement'. By the time of his diamond wedding anniversary, he was in his nineties, in poor health having suffered multiple strokes, and slept for around 20 hours a day.

All the great and the good of the Christian world from their generation gathered to celebrate 60 years of marriage. I'm not quite sure how aware he was of what was happening around him. My defining memory of that day is not about him sleeping his way through the entire celebration, but a 30-second moment that happened towards the end. There had been a number of tributes

spoken to my grandparents, from Bible college principals to national evangelical leaders of the moment, from church pastors to business people who had been greatly impacted – I even recall a telegram being read out that had been sent from Sir Cliff Richard. The gathered masses all listened in attentively and with great joy and celebration to the incredible affirmations of how my grandparents had dramatically impacted thousands of lives with the gospel. My grandmother enjoyed it, but my grandfather just slept through it all, missing every word.

When the many memories, thanks and tributes finally finished, my grandmother got up, and taking the microphone, thanked everyone for their words of encouragement and for coming along to celebrate with them and the family. I recall a quiet shuffle – my grandfather was waking up. He signalled for the microphone and was wheeled to the front. Within about 30 seconds, rather than thanking anyone or taking note of what a special day it was, he shared the gospel of Jesus Christ, clearly and succinctly, before falling back to sleep. Bear in mind that he was sharing Christ with a largely Christian crowd, but that didn't bother him. He just wanted everyone to know that hope has a name, and His name is Jesus. He

was expectant for His King to move, even if he himself only had 30 seconds of breath and energy available to him.

This was the last time the late Gilbert Kirby spoke into a microphone. He'd previously done so thousands of times, but I remain profoundly impacted to this day that the last time he did it, was to share the gospel, using what he still had to point all the glory to Jesus. My abiding memory is that though his body was so frail, he remained full of enduring hope. He had lost the ability to use most of his limbs, he was failing daily, and yet when you saw his eyes open, they twinkled with life. His soul was alive with Jesus and he wanted everyone to know that you can lose everything and have lost nothing because you still have Jesus. If a man in his nineties can have that much faith, and share the gospel till his dying day, we can too!

He showed me that day that you don't need to grow out of believing that the Lord can move powerfully among His people. I don't need to stop having hope for a major move of God in the UK. I believe it's coming, and if it doesn't come in my day, I will die believing it is coming tomorrow because we have hope in a God who can move mountains. I want to place my enduring hope in Him and what He could do in our land.

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit," Paul declares in Romans 15:13. This is my prayer for all of us. Let us be those who, with the help of the Holy Spirit, hold on to Jesus and keep believing He can change lives for eternity.

ANNUAL REPORT SNAPSHOT 2021-22

Another full
year of making
Jesus known,
together.

“At the end of another full year at the Evangelical Alliance, my overwhelming feeling is one of gratitude.”

What a year we have had, again! The pandemic rolled on but many of the challenges were new as the restrictions changed and things began to open up. We at the Evangelical Alliance continued to do everything we could to keep the church informed, safe and equipped in testing times. It was amazing to hear so many stories of how churches responded to the crisis they were faced with and how they continued to serve their communities despite the added obstacles.

We continued to stay in touch with our membership and make sure we were serving them in the best way possible. This year has had many challenges, for example speaking up on issues such as a proposed ban on conversion therapy and helping Christians to engage with government more widely. There have also been many opportunities to share the gospel, so we have worked hard to equip and inspire you to rise to them.

We have been busy speaking, preaching and meeting leaders, both online and back on the road as well as sharing timely and innovative resources such as *7 Conversations* and *Motivating Mission* to help churches reach even more people with the gospel.

At the end of another full year at the Evangelical Alliance, my overwhelming feeling is one of gratitude. Thank you so much to every member, every donor, and every person who prays for us. Without you, none of this would be possible. I'm always saying that the Evangelical Alliance is not a staff team (though we do have one). What makes up the Evangelical Alliance is the 3,000 churches, 800 organisations, and tens of thousands of individuals who come together to make Jesus known. Thank you for being part of this.

Most of all, I am grateful to the Lord, for showing us His favour, using the Evangelical Alliance, and for His enduring presence in a time of great

challenge and opportunity. It's been a great year, and still I'm praying that the best is yet to come! Please continue to stick with us on the journey.

Every blessing,



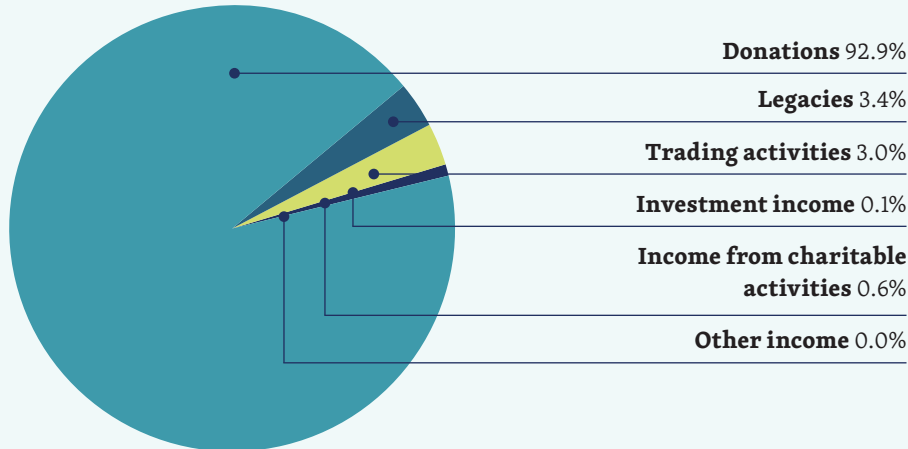
Gavin Calver
CEO



Stewarding our finances responsibly, preparing for what's ahead.

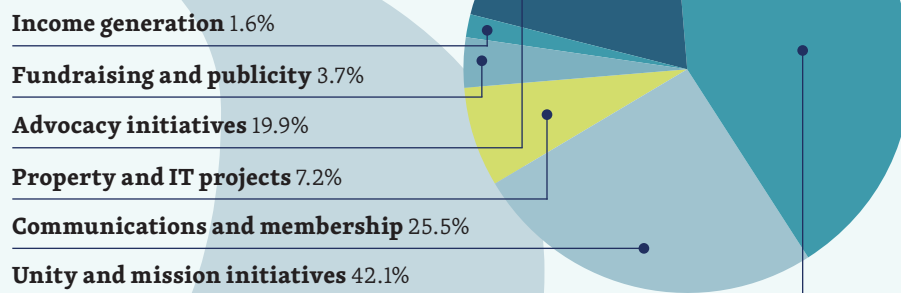
Income £2,518,612

down from £2,673,547 last year



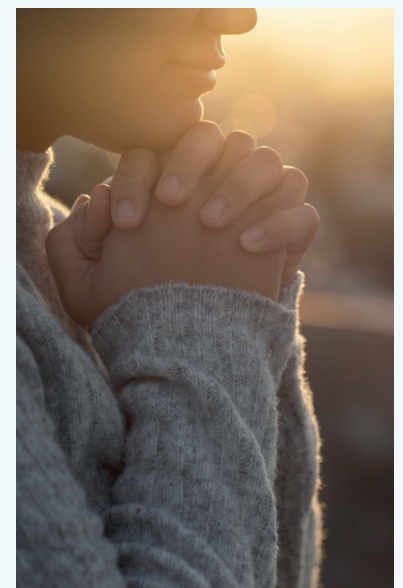
Expenditure £2,470,471

up from £2,132,308 last year



The world is changing fast.

But together, we're sharing the glorious gospel hope we've found. Raising up the voice of the church. Speaking into culture. Serving those struggling the most in our communities. And we won't give up until Jesus is known in every corner of the UK.



To every one of our supporters, including the

1,200

new members who joined us this year, thank you.

Nathan Sadler, our Wales public policy officer at the Welsh parliamentary prayer breakfast



appearances before government giving evidence on the importance of religious freedom in public life.

We work together with member organisations, elected representatives, government advisers and legal experts to advocate for policies that reflect the values of love, freedom, justice and truth across the UK.

This year, we've engaged in policy development on conversion therapy, cost of living, and asylum seekers. We were also privileged to attend the Welsh parliamentary prayer breakfast and share good news stories of what the church is doing in our booklet *Stories of Hope Wales*.

27

next-generation public leaders supported on our Public Leader programme.

We have now been running our Public Leader programme for five years. It's a 10-month journey with teaching, mentoring, residential weekends and opportunities to connect with senior and other emerging leaders. The programme is designed to equip and encourage Christians to intentionally and strategically take the lead so that they can make a difference wherever they are.



It has given me a new boldness for sharing my faith. – programme participant



80

TV and radio appearances carrying the voice of the UK church



[UK director Peter Lynas] spoke really well on the Today programme this morning. Thanks so much for serving the evangelical community with such courage, clarity and calmness.

– John, BBC Radio 4 listener



Events hosted or co-hosted – including our “life-giving” leadership conference

Christians in positions of leadership, both in the church and other spheres of society, were adapting to life post-pandemic and preparing for a new chapter in 2022. But it is often hard to see beyond the immediate, to pray into what God is saying to His church, and

gain insights about the UK's current spiritual and cultural landscape. We hosted a free online evening full of interviews, worship, prayer and talks, with contributions from evangelical Christian leaders from across the UK and beyond.

6,000+

views of the young adults resource suite online



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.

Behind the numbers is a passion for lasting gospel unity across the UK church. We're committed to strengthening relationships across the church, representing our members in every corner of the UK, and promoting evangelical unity. This year,

we're excited to welcome Ben Jeffrey, head of unity, to the team and celebrate the new office based in the north of England and we continue to celebrate diversity while promoting unity through the work of our One People Commission (OPC).



16

innovative resources produced

175

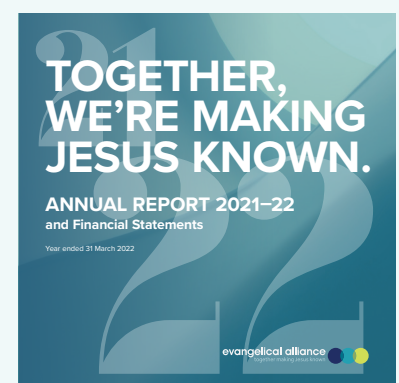
years of the Evangelical Alliance celebrated

500

individual meetings, Zooms and coffees with church and organisational leaders

160,000

views of *idea* online



...and much, much more.

From bringing people together in community-shaping conversations, to developing our Being Human project to help you speak into culture with the gospel, we have been working tirelessly to strengthen the UK church. Read more in our full report on eauk.org/about-us/annual-report



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to call home again”***



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