

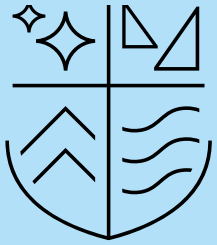
idea

THE MAGAZINE OF THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE
SPRING 2023

EAUK.ORG

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a small, round, terracotta-colored pot. The pot contains a small plant with several green, upright leaves and several white, bell-shaped flowers (snowdrops) on thin stems. The person's hands are visible, with red nail polish on the fingers. The background is a soft, out-of-focus orange-brown color, suggesting the person is wearing a sweater. The overall mood is warm and nurturing.

A time to grow



Thames
Christian
School

navigation for life




An independent
school for
boys and girls
aged 11 to 18

The journey ahead

thameschristianschool.org.uk

For more information contact
020 7220 3933 or admissions@thameschristianschool.org.uk

Thames Christian School, 12 Grant Road, London, SW11 2FR

-  evangelicalalliance
-  EAUKnews
-  evangelicalalliance

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

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

Spring signals a time of new beginnings. As the season changes, flowers begin to bloom and trees regenerate their leaves with rich tones of green. I am inspired by all that is growing around me and can't help but consider the many ways in which God may want to inject growth into your life and mine at this time. Maybe God desires for you to grow your faith and in the knowledge of who He really is, perhaps He wants you to grow deeper connections with your church families and surrounding communities, or maybe there is another area in your life where you can see God's appointment for growth. Inspired by Ecclesiastes 3, I am excited about this edition of *idea* magazine, 'A Time to Grow', where we see the many ways that God is moving and growing His kingdom through our members. We hear from Storm Cecile and The Christian Busking Project and how she grew her vision of street evangelism into a reality. Pastor Paul Brown shares a powerful testimony of growing his faith in the face of a terminal diagnosis, and we get to see how



our mission team are expanding their reach and impacting the nation in our new feature, *Spotlight!* As you read about the great work that God is doing in and through us and the lives of our members, I pray God will reveal to you how you too can welcome growth into your lives in this season. Be encouraged.



Nicola Morrison
Editor

Highlights

05 Caring for God's creation
Dr Hazel shares how Tearfund are spreading God's love across the globe amidst a climate crisis.

08 Growing in unity
Bishop Mike Royal reflects on the significance of the Windrush visionaries ahead of the 75th anniversary and shares how we can help to continue inspiring the intercultural church.

20 Gaining momentum and creating a ripple effect of hope
Christian organisation Operation Mobilisation is reaching those in need from foreign lands through their ground-breaking ship ministry.



20

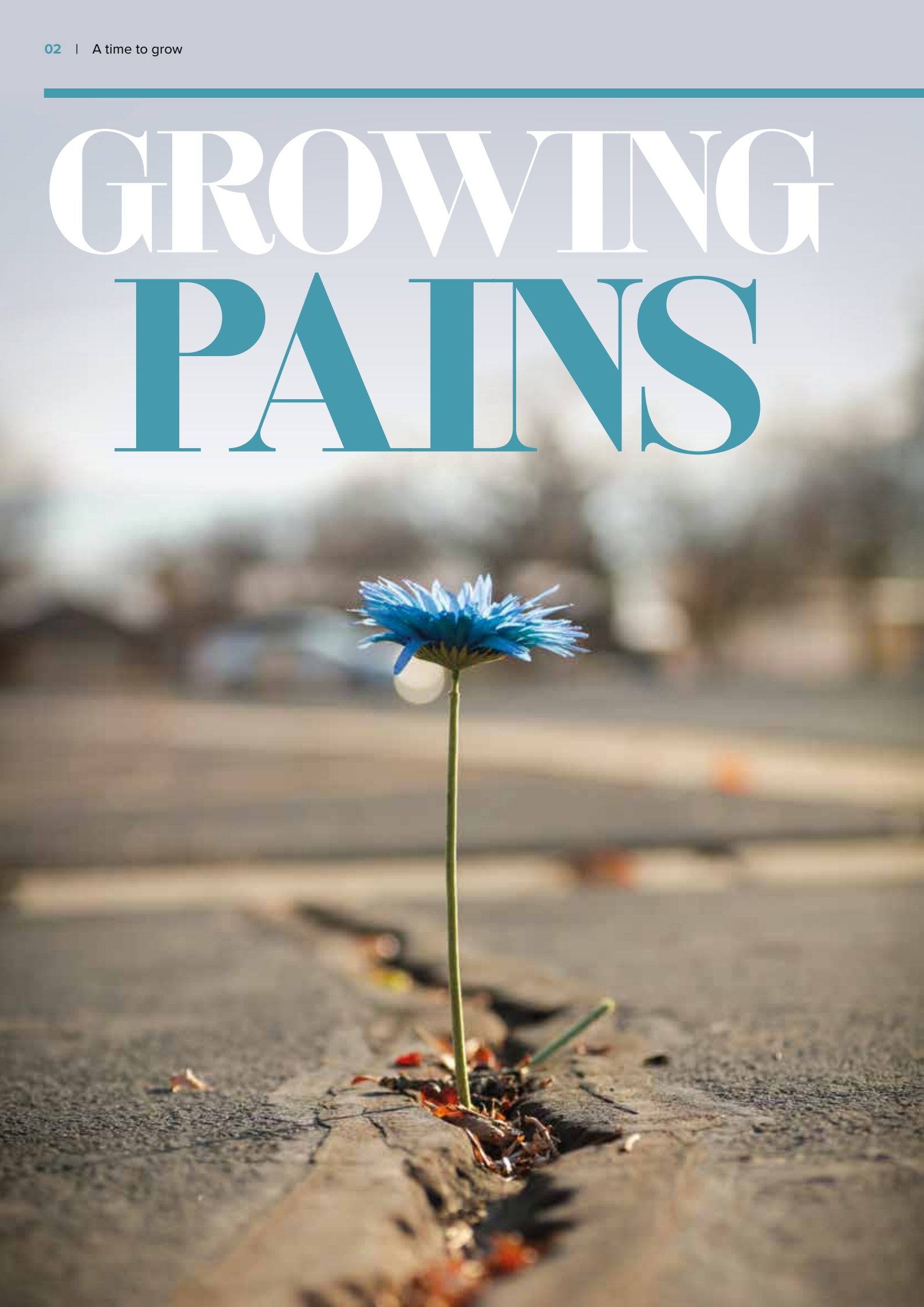


25 10 minutes with... Phil Knox
We hear from Phil Knox about the launch of his new book *The Best of Friends* and how friendship can be a powerful key to unlocking the gospel with others.

30 Heart behind the art
Emily Feltham reveals how her faith and love for Jesus spurs her on as an actress and how her personal experience of feeling unseen inspires her to be a voice for the marginalised.

32 Growing together and going together
Our CEO Gavin Calver imparts why it is so important that evangelism is a community-minded mission.

GROWING PAINS



Reverend Cassius Francis gives a theological take on the meaning of growth and some of the unexpected and challenging places it can flourish.

Thinking about verses in the Bible that talk about growth, I am first reminded of 1 Corinthians 13:11 (NRSV), “When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.”

One reading of this verse sounds harsh with the use of the word ‘childish’ and the picture it evokes for me as a youngster being told off for doing something wrong. However, I am wondering on reflection whether there is a bit more behind these words. The Greek for ‘put an end’ to or ‘put away’ is ‘katargeo’ and means: the things that cease or are to be superseded by a more complete life. I think there are lessons here that we can learn and apply to our own lives.

Can suffering inspire growth?

When we think of growth, oftentimes we look to the positive elements of growth: change, new beginnings, acceleration and increase. The added ingredient of suffering may be a little harder to swallow but is often present in scripture, where we see growth.

Romans 5:2–3 says, “...through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance...”

I am also inspired by Susan L. Taylor, who said, “seeds of faith are always within us; sometimes it takes a crisis to nourish and encourage their growth.”

Life’s hardships enable us to grow as people by enlarging our understanding through experience and learning from that experience.

A significant crisis often enables us to learn new things and allows us to overcome challenges we might not want to face. If we face them head on, with the support of others, we usually find ourselves doing things we never thought we would do, or thought we were capable of.

Growth changes our perspective: our road to Damascus

A crisis can also cause us to reassess our purpose, leading to changes in direction or career, often with more meaning, or taking on a challenge

we might never have done. Sometimes negative experiences can cause us to see the world through different eyes, wanting to make it a better place for people who may be suffering as we have.

My own experience of bereavement has taught me that not only does everyone experience it differently, but your own perspective also changes. The apostle Paul’s description of growing into a more complete life in 1 Corinthians is helpful, but I have learned that we do have to give ourselves time and understand that there are things that we can do to support ourselves and others to process knock backs healthily. Of course, Paul was talking about spiritual gifts in relation to maturity and growth, but I am reminded that when we were children, we viewed the world from a child’s perspective. As we grow, we understand life differently and our perspective changes.

Growth inspires change

As Christians we understand that we are intended to grow and change with time in all areas of our lives.

Perhaps the biggest challenge for all of us as followers of Jesus when reflecting on growth is owning up to the fact that the way we spoke, understood and thought yesterday may be different to how we speak, understand or think today. God never changes, and nothing about Him changes, but that doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t embrace change. He is perfect. But for us, we are works in progress and there is always room for improvement, for you and for me.

Paul was one of the greatest examples of change; entering the road of Damascus as Saul, a persecutor of the Jews, he was transformed by an encounter with the Holy Spirit. So, we too should embrace change and lean into growth with great courage.

Reverend Cassius Francis is a minister with the Wesleyan Holiness Church and church trainer and resourcer for Loss and HOPE – a coalition project with AtaLoss, equipping churches in bereavement support. Learn more at lossandhope.org

Local churches – where transformation can continue with a gift in your will



Every day, we see it. Transformation happening through local churches.

Lives are being changed powerfully and the cycle of poverty is being broken.
In a way that lasts.

Because it's more than material or physical needs being met.

Through training, people of all faiths and backgrounds are seeing what they can achieve.

And they're realising nothing is impossible with God.

People are fulfilling their God-given potential – and it's a legacy you can leave today.

Leave a legacy of changed lives with a gift in your will.

To order a free legacy pack visit www.tearfund.org/legacy
search 'Tearfund gifts in wills', scan the QR code
or call **020 3906 3906** to find out more.



Tearfund, 100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE, United Kingdom
☎ +44 (0)20 3906 3906 ✉ info@tearfund.org tearfund.org

Registered office: Tearfund, 100 Church Road, Teddington, TW11 8QE. Registered in England: 994339.
A company limited by guarantee. Registered Charity No. 265464 (England & Wales) Registered
Charity No. SC037624 (Scotland) 00682-(03/23)
Photo: Tom Price/Tearfund



tearfund

CARING FOR GOD'S CREATIONS

Advocacy and campaign manager at Tearfund Scotland **Dr Hazel** illustrates the importance of taking care of all God's creations, including our neighbours and our temporary home on earth.



Abigael returning home after visiting her market garden. © Jonas Yameogo/Tearfund

Talking about the climate crisis in evangelical circles is not always straightforward. There are those who see it as the church conforming to the world and putting its faith in humankind to change how it lives, or in politicians to change legislation to put an end to the climate crisis if the world is to survive. Where is God in this? Where is the desire to bring people to Christ? And what about where it says in the Bible that the earth has been groaning since humanity first brought sin into the world and will only be restored and renewed when Christ comes again (Romans 8)?

There is also the challenge to Christian climate campaigners of whether they put the same passion and energy into pointing people to Jesus as they do into their climate activism. Although I know many Christian climate campaigners who would say that their activism brings them into contact with people who have no faith and it creates an opportunity to share that their faith is the reason behind their activism.



© Kiran Rai/Tearfund

So where do we stand in all of this?

Tearfund is a Christian charity that has worked and campaigned on climate change for over 30 years because of the heavy toll we see it taking on countries around the world. Hard-won development gains have been eroded and unprecedented numbers of people are now in need of humanitarian assistance due to climate change, conflict and Covid.

Abigael is a woman in Burkina Faso whose life has been transformed as a result of the work Tearfund partners are doing amidst the climate crisis. Abigael is a 35-year-old mother of five. She and her husband are farmers – an occupation that used to provide them with everything they needed.

Now, however, farming only brings them heartbreak. In recent years, the rains have become scarce, meaning Abigael can't grow the food she needs to make an income and feed her young family.

"When it does not rain and you have nothing to eat, what are you going to do?" Abigael says. "How are you going to eat? How are you going to take care of children?"

Around 80% of people in Burkina Faso rely on farming for food and income. Yet because of the changing climate, one in ten are now going hungry and need emergency help.

Thankfully a project run by Tearfund's local partner, working alongside local churches, is offering real

solutions to the very real problem of the changing climate.

The project brings community members together into farming cooperatives. These groups are given training in sustainable farming, along with the seeds and tools to grow crops that are more resistant to drought.

Since they joined the project Abigael and her husband have been able to feed their family. Now, she has less fear about the future. "Peace is now present," Abigael says. "The sadness has left."

We can all make a difference

At Tearfund we see every day the effects of climate change, which come at a devastating cost to people. I give thanks that we have an eternal hope in Christ and that "the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). I also know that God has called me to care for His creation, to love my neighbour, to act justly and show mercy.

For me, part of that is saying I will try to do my bit, however small, such as giving money, signing a petition, trying not to buy stuff I don't need, and not flying. Not because I think I, or world leaders or even the church, will solve the problems of poverty or climate change (spoiler alert: none of us will), but until Christ comes again I want to grow in my discipleship and to honour Him.

For more Tearfund information, see: tearfund.org/campaigns/climate-campaign



SPOTLIGHT!

In this feature of Spotlight! **Alyssa Carey** shines a light on the amazing work of our mission team and how their work and insightful resources and events are building and growing relationships across the UK.



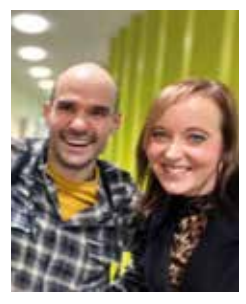
Mission is at the heart of everything we do at the Evangelical Alliance.

Underpinning all our work is a desire and a passion to make Jesus known.

As we reach out to our communities, speak up for the issues that matter and unite the UK church, we do so while proclaiming the good news of Jesus and His Kingdom.

Meet the team

Our core mission staff team is small but mighty. Rachael Heffer is head of mission, she is the queen of celebration and loves partnering with our membership organisations and churches to help share the good news of Jesus. You may have known Phil Knox under a different role, but he now serves our team as evangelism and missiology senior specialist. Phil always brings his trademark energy and enthusiasm for relationship and the gospel. I'm the most recent addition to the team as the mission coordinator. While I've only been at the Evangelical Alliance for eight months, I've loved hearing stories from across the country of how our members are boldly making Jesus known and getting stuck in with the work of the mission team.

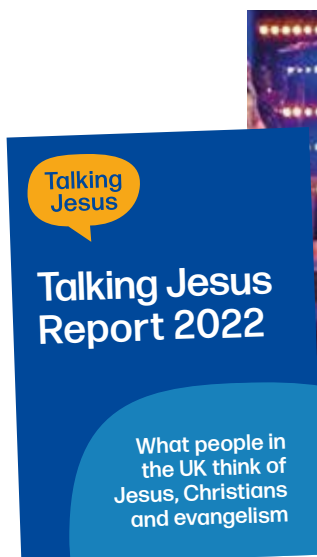


Talking Jesus: Making a difference

Talking Jesus, our UK-wide research into the spiritual temperature of the population, remains an invaluable resource for church leaders and members. Seven years on from the first report in 2015, the 2022 Talking Jesus research continues to inspire, challenge and equip us all to talk about Jesus. The latest report explored what people in the UK think of Jesus, Christians and evangelism. It is full of encouraging findings; some of which were so positive we had to double check, just to make sure they were true! However, that is not to say that the report did not also reveal some challenges, particularly around non-Christians and whether or not we are close enough with them to talk to them about Jesus.

As part of a six-way partnership, with Alpha UK, CV Global, HOPE Together, Kingsgate and The Luis Palau Association, our team has been travelling around sharing the findings of the report at all sorts of different events, churches and organisations. In fact, Rachael alone has connected with over 50 organisations over the past year to share the findings of the report with them.

The findings of the research have real implications for the way we do mission



Rachael Heffer sharing the Talking Jesus research findings with leaders from across the UK

and evangelism in our churches, and you may be wondering how it affects your own contexts. We're developing the *Talking Jesus toolkit* which contains a variety of tools to help you take the findings and think about what they mean for you. My favourite element of the toolkit is the *health check*: a live, online survey which you can run in your own church or group to discover their attitudes towards evangelism. It's ideal to run in a church service, small group meeting, team gathering or any other context.

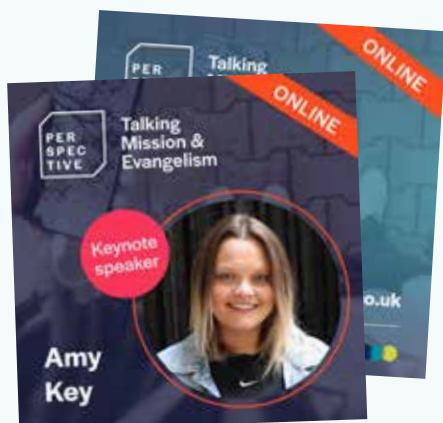
Another key area of our work is running the online Perspective

Conversations. We live in a missional landscape like no other, and in a time of cultural crisis it's vital that we share the good news of Jesus bravely and boldly. Through Perspective Conversations we want to encourage you to reset and reframe your perspective for mission and evangelism.

Talking Jesus

Perspective Conversations Online

So far, we've held two big-picture conversations. For our first one in November we were joined by Bishop Mike Royal from Churches Together England and author and theologian Amy Orr-Ewing, who challenged us to think through a collective response to trauma and a biblical perspective of evangelism in this season.



Our second event took place in March and we were delighted to see the growth in numbers from just over 100 attendees for the first event to over 250 sign ups for the second. Patrick Dixon shared insights about signs of the times we're living in, what they mean for the future of the church after Covid, and how this affects our mission. We then heard the first-hand experience of Amy Key from River Church in Ipswich, who planted a church with a particular focus on reaching young adults and gained amazing insight into what mission can look like in a post-Covid world.

Our team are always thinking about how we can better serve the church and our member organisations and work together to provide useful support and resources. You may have heard about Phil Knox's new book, *The Best of Friends*, where he encourages us to develop meaningful friendships that can have a kingdom impact. Some of

the wider mission team members are particularly thinking about how we build relationship and respond to the 2022 census data, with a particular focus on how we reach those who identify as having no religion, and how we as the church do missions on the margins of society. We're excited to see what God will do in and through us over the coming months and are praying for you as we share in the mission to make Jesus known wherever we are.

To learn more about the mission team and to access our wonderful resources, visit: eauk.org/greatcommission



Bishop Mike Royal outlines the value of integration and intercommunity and why unity must always be at the heart of growing the kingdom of God.

THE INTERCULTURAL CHURCH: GROWING IN UNITY

Pioneers

On a misty morning on 22 June 1948, the *Empire Windrush* docked at Tilbury Docks carrying approximately 500 passengers from Jamaica. This year marks the 75th anniversary of that ship's remarkable journey as we celebrate the pioneers who were part of the Windrush generation, who didn't just bring their skills, but also brought their desire for community and vibrant faith.

The main vision of the early pioneers was to plant churches that would both be a place of belonging for people from the Caribbean but would also welcome the indigenous population through their doors.

Unfortunately, as a result of receiving a less than warm welcome in churches in the UK, they pioneered their own. Churches like the New Testament Church of God and Church of God of Prophecy were planted in the 1950s and 1960s, not only in the large cities like London and Birmingham but also provincial towns in the UK.

In terms of local mission, while they did not achieve the cultural integration of the indigenous community at the time, their gospel outreach saw many people coming to faith through their own communities. They also delivered Saturday Schools that benefited many Black children and young people who were being failed by the education system and soul kitchens that provided free meals to many in need in the local



Men, women and children from the Caribbean arrive at Southampton in 1962 at the invitation of the British government to help with rebuilding Britain after World War II.

area beyond their own community.

Later on, we saw a commitment to the vision of the early pioneers through the setting up of the African and Caribbean Evangelical Alliance (ACEA) and also through the work of ministers like Bishop Esme Beswick MBE who built interchurch relationships with other denominations through Churches Together in England.

People like the late Rev Philip Mohabir and the late Rev Dr Joel Edwards CBE were instrumental in

establishing the ACEA, connecting and uniting Black majority churches, and fostering relationships beyond their local communities. This was the foretaste of the Evangelical Alliance One People Commission, led today by Rev Dr Israel Olofinjana.

Making the vision plain

The hope of the early Black Pentecostal pioneers was to reach out to the indigenous populations they found themselves living in. However, for



The One People Commission team at the Evangelical Alliance

many, the integration they hoped to see went unrealised. Multicultural church dynamics are complex. But, we have to be willing to do the work. To embrace our brothers and sisters and reject division caused by our differences. Evangelical Alliance member church, Grace Chapel in Chesterfield, Derbyshire, led by the brilliant Pastor Toyin Taiwo, from Nigeria, is a great example of this. It has been just wonderful to see people from all different backgrounds worshipping together, and a leadership that is representative of the congregation. But what, you might ask, is the secret to their success? They're an outward looking church that have a busy local outreach programme. Their social action outreach is coupled with a radical commitment to evangelism and has drawn people into the congregation from all factions of the community. They are a church that has been committed to their local church unity movement in Chesterfield. They have played an active role in working closely with a wide range of churches in the town and have often hosted inter-church events. In addition, they have an open posture that engages with civic society and has developed a strong relationship with local statutory agencies.

Seeing God's glory

The result is a porous church that attracts a variety of people, relates

to a variety of churches and has developed a reputation that says, you're welcome, whatever your background. For me, it's about the disposition of the leaders and the positioning of their church as being a hub for all. But it's also a strong commitment to be in relationship with a broad group of churches locally. So, what are the learning points? Intercultural churches tend to demonstrate radical practical social action outreach that draws people in. They are deliberate about integrating people from a wide variety of backgrounds into the leadership and activity of the church. They develop trusted relationships with statutory agencies and are seen as a community asset for the whole local population. A place of sanctuary for all who need it. They are part of the local unity movement and have journeyed with churches from a wide spectrum of traditions. But they stick around!

For me, it's about the disposition of the leaders and the positioning of their church as being a hub for all. But it's also a strong commitment to be in relationship with a broad group of churches locally.

Pastor T, as she is affectionately known, and her husband Pastor Debo Taiwo have sown in the same soil over many years. They are part of the fabric of the local community. Many churches would not be missed if they closed their doors tomorrow. Grace Chapel would leave a huge geographical and spiritual hole in the community if they weren't there.

And so, as we commemorate our early Black pioneers, we also celebrate those church leaders of all backgrounds, who are finding ways to realise the vision of an integrated church from every tribe, tongue and nation. I'm here for that journey!



Bishop Mike Royal is the general secretary of Churches Together in England. He is also a member of the Evangelical Alliance council and part of the One People Commission.



REVEALING JESUS

FREE:

- COACHING
- AMAZING RESOURCES
- ADVICE & SUPPORT

**A flexible and FREE mission
framework from Scripture Union**

Helping you journey into faith with children and
young people who aren't in church.

.....

[SU.ORG.UK/REVEALINGJESUS](https://su.org.uk/revealingjesus)

GUIDING AND GROWING THE FAITH OF THE NEXT GENERATION

Myles MacBean, national director of Scripture Union England and Wales, details how the organisation is helping churches to overcome the challenges of reaching children and young people with the gospel.

Scripture Union's mission is simple at heart – to create opportunities for children and young people to explore the Bible, respond to Jesus and grow in faith.

However, with 95% of under-18s not in church, that mission is a real challenge, both for us and the churches we support. It's a scary statistic. But it is no small feat trying to share the gospel in today's context, to a largely unchurched generation, while remaining faithful to biblical principles.

“Let the children come to me”
(Mark 10:14)

Time and time again, I come back to this passage in Mark's gospel. Jesus is saying that children can, and should, be encouraged to come to Him. And that is our desire – to see these children and young people truly come to Him and develop a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Revealing Jesus

In October 2020, we were delighted to launch the *Revealing Jesus* mission framework as our way of encouraging and equipping the church in long-term mission. We knew another programme or scheme of work wasn't the answer, but rather a flexible framework that worked across multiple contexts.

So far, over 200 churches have partnered with us and are now intentionally journeying in faith with children and young people in their local area.

The faith journey

Revealing Jesus outlines four stages of the faith journey that most people go

through as they come to know Jesus: Connect, Explore, Respond and Grow. And it's walking with children and young people through these stages that forms the very heart of *Revealing Jesus*.

Take Lucy for example. Church wasn't even on her radar, but a friend invited her to a group at their church and Lucy started to **connect** and build relationships with the Christians there. She got interested in Jesus after seeing Him working in the lives of the Christians she'd been around, and she started to **explore** the Bible with them and to ask questions. Later, at a youth group weekend away, surrounded by Christians and with time to reflect, Lucy chose to **respond** to Jesus and started to follow Him. It didn't end there though. Lucy and her peers needed support as they grew in their faith, and so a '**grow** community' was formed, providing relevant worship and Bible exploration opportunities for them.

Faith guides

Our research shows that it's so important for children and young people, like Lucy, to have consistent, positive role models as they find and grow their faith. That's why we're now focusing on supporting volunteers affectionately called 'faith guides' from local churches. We currently have more than 250 faith guides on board.



One faith guide shared, “Being a faith guide gives me licence to try a more individual approach – to discern what's right for the child in front of me, depending on where they're at. It also gives me a toolkit of resources and support to respond accordingly!”

Children and young people need a place to flourish in their faith.

Grow communities

At the grow stage of the faith journey, children and young people need a place to flourish in their faith. And while many struggle with traditional church settings, grow communities, being peer-shaped (and adult guided), provide this opportunity.

Faith guide Charis has set up a grow community on a local council estate, which the children themselves named 'Believe Club'. Charis told us:

“I normally do an end of session prayer, and Tim (not his real name), one of the boys I would've least expected, asked whether he could do it. At this point, none of the group had ever prayed out loud. He asked everyone to close their eyes, he put his hands together and then he prayed an amazing prayer... It was so sincere.”

Over 70 grow communities have been established since the launch of *Revealing Jesus* but our dream is to support churches in establishing 3,500 of them across England and Wales (about one in each high school catchment area).

If you're interested in becoming a faith guide or you just want to find out more, visit su.org.uk/revealingjesus

“MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOU”

Nicola Morrison shares the powerful testimony of **Pastor Paul Brown** and how his faith has been rocked, tested and has ultimately grown stronger, despite a terminal diagnosis.

When I first heard of Pastor Paul Brown, minister of Beacon Community Church in West Yorkshire, I was instantly captured by his story; a pastor living with Motor Neurone Disease, who had just recently been told his condition was terminal, but was continuing to preach, evangelise, conduct funeral services and minister to his community, was truly astonishing to me. And after reading a recent interview of his where he was quoted as saying, “I’m not dying, I am living for Jesus”, I was left in no doubt that I had to meet him for myself.

After an hour-long conversation, where we laughed, shared and brought each other close to tears, he left me with an experience that genuinely humbled me and a story that truly took my breath away.

But let’s start at the beginning.

Pastor Paul was brought up in a Christian family, in a little village in North Wales. His mum and dad were both Christian and at 13 he attended an open-air mission.

“It would be an experience that would forever change my life,” he recalls.

During the event, a gentleman stood up and gave an impartation: that so

often people think that Christianity is automatic when raised in a Christian home. He went on to use the example of, if one was born in a greenhouse, it wouldn’t make them a tomato! Pastor Paul pinpoints that, “suddenly the penny dropped, and I realised in that moment that I needed to carve out a personal relationship with the Lord for myself, God doesn’t have grandchildren, and that day, I made the decision to give my life to Him.”

The next pivotal moment was when Paul was 18, and a spiritual mentor told him that he was called to be a leader and serve others. “In that moment, I had complete clarity. My life’s mission was to reach out and help others and connect them with the Lord.”

At the time, Paul had just started an apprenticeship in carpentry and joinery, but soon after completing his course he wasted no time in taking up the mantle. Around his 20th birthday, he joined Emmanuel Bible College and was consequently ordained.

“But it wasn’t all straightforward,” Paul reflects, “In 1998, my faith was undeniably rocked when my marriage ended, and I was separated from my children. I was devastated.”

Paul recalls contemplating stepping down until a friend and fellow clergy member urged him to stay on and see what God had in store.

Several years later he met and married his wife Claire. In 2003 they were called to plant a church in Wrexham in Wales, which they had the pleasure of watching grow, before being called to serve in Essex. They eventually ended up in Bradford in 2016 at Beacon Community Church where they still

reside. In 2020 they began fostering two little girls. “It was a challenging but wonderful time,” he reflects.

Then suddenly, last year in June, after 12 months of bouncing back and forth between medical professionals and referrals and many appointments with doctors with blank faces, Paul was diagnosed with terminal Motor Neurone Disease (MND) and was given just a few years to live. He was 66.

“It hit me hard,” Paul says. “I was shocked. We both were.”

“The following morning, during my daily reading I came across 2 Corinthians. I had always loved 2 Corinthians; a praise to the God of all comfort, it couldn’t have been more timely!”

Paul shares, “As I read on to verse 12:9, ‘My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness’, I felt as though God was speaking directly to me and restoring my faith.”

“I instantly felt peace. His grace is sufficient I thought, whether He cures me or not, He is enough!”

Paul says that he and his wife from then on took the distinct belief and decision that God was going to see them through.

“As I read... ‘My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness’, I felt as though God was speaking directly to me and restoring my faith.”

“He was going to give us the grace that He had promised. We are believing in God for a mobility scooter, and a home.”

Paul truly believes that his diagnosis is not a limitation for his work here on earth, but in fact a clear reminder of his purpose which he defines as being a voice for the world to encounter the love of Jesus. “God has not weakened my voice, if anything He has strengthened my voice,” he says.

He still accepts requests from families to conduct their loved ones’ funerals despite his frailties, and I can see why. His gentle spirit, positivity and compassionate heart are so evident from just talking to Paul.

“It would be easy to lie in bed and give up. But God has called me to live for Him.”

Paul says, “I am not defined by MND, but defined by my faith in God.”

I asked Paul if he had any words of encouragement for those facing

“I am not defined by MND, but defined by my faith in God.”

similar hardships and he shared with me a beautiful story of a chaplain who understood his assignment from God was to be a light on earth and to bring everyone he encountered into a closer relationship with God. Paul said this story is to encourage everyone that we all have purpose and that we can all make a difference to others, even until our very last breath, or theirs.



Pastor Paul Brown with his wife Claire before his diagnosis.



The story of the chaplain...

There was a chaplain who visited a hospital ward every Tuesday. As he would enter one of the rooms on the ward and greet the patients, he would be subject to an onslaught of abuse from a man in a neighbouring bed on the left. Without reacting to the man’s colourful language or undesirable hand gestures, he would smile at the man and reply “God bless you.” Every Tuesday the chaplain returned and without fail would receive the same treatment from the man. Undeterred, the chaplain would smile towards the man and reply “God bless you.” When one day, out of the blue, the man questioned the chaplain and said, “Why are you so nice to me, when I am so rude to you?” The chaplain turned, and replied, “Because Jesus loves us all, despite what we do or what we say, and it is my desire for everyone to know Him.” The man paused. The chaplain approached the man’s bed and asked, “Would you like to know that type of love? Would you like a personal relationship with Jesus?” The man looked unsure and replied, “What would I say to Him?” The chaplain pointed to the chair next to the man’s bed and said, “Imagine He was sitting right there in that

chair. You can say whatever is on your heart.” The chaplain stepped closer and asked the man, “Would you like me to lead you in a prayer to encounter Jesus for yourself?” Surprisingly the man nodded and said yes and so the chaplain led him in prayer to give his heart to the Lord. The following Tuesday the chaplain entered the ward and was surprised to see the man’s bed on the left of the room empty. When he enquired of a nurse if the man had been moved, she replied, “Sadly he passed away last week.” Unaware of the chaplain and the man’s encounter the previous week, she went on to say, “But the last few days with him were very pleasant. He was usually so rude and aggressive but last week he was so polite and kind, giving pleases and thank yous to all the staff – he was like a changed man.” She then paused and pointed to the chair beside the man’s bed and said, “The strangest thing was, when he died, we found him sitting on his bed with his arms wrapped around that chair.” The chaplain paused and looked over at the empty chair and a smile beamed across his face, as he realised that the man, in his final moments, had his arms around Jesus.



From little acorns... **MIGHTY OAKS DO GROW**

Storm Cecile shares how a fleeting vision for street evangelism is steadily growing into a movement across London.

The Christian Busking Project was birthed in a vision back in 2018, while I was attending the Wilberforce Academy run by Christian Concern. In that vision, I saw street parades, worship, and praise proclaimed boldly by Christians on every street corner.

I had a second vision (in the same sitting) where I saw a map with lots of dots on it. I realised that these were multiple street worship groups across the globe that God was showing me. I heard the phrase 'Worship on every street corner.' I knew God was speaking to me and calling me to do this.

My initial reaction was to start planning immediately, but I quickly realised I needed to be in the right place emotionally and spiritually. I was in a dead-end relationship, and in my second year

of university, studying Business and Psychology BSc with French, and was spending every spare second studying in the library. So, I put it on the back burner. Then in 2019, after graduating I moved to China and abandoned the vision.

Then in 2020, the pandemic happened, and I was stuck in my Shenzhen apartment. I was isolated. The shelves in the supermarkets were bare and food was scarce. I was hungry and so I decided that since I didn't have any food, I might as well fast.

It was during this time of fasting that God reminded me of the vision He'd given me two years prior.

I began laughing hysterically, thinking *I don't even have food, how will I be able to get back to the UK and fulfil this vision?* But I knew God was there with



me because He provided me with a peace that was unexplainable and that didn't just wash over me in that moment but lingered and stayed with me for days after. God also gave me some faces of the people that would be part of the core team – astonishingly I had only met one of them before!

Where we are now

Two years on and God has been faithful and has fulfilled His promise. Today the project has around 30 volunteers who comprise of musicians, worshippers, evangelists, creatives, and poets from all walks of life.

The Christian Busking Project feels like an extended family. We meet once a week to pray for each other, for the people we meet and for boldness and clarity when proclaiming the gospel out on the streets. We also pray for favour among law enforcement and environmental officers, tube station managers and others, as we never know how people will respond to what we're doing. We have had our fair share of persecution. On one occasion a man in a balaclava approached us and threatened to kill us. I could see the imprint of the knife in his trouser leg; however, we remained calm, we knew God was with us. We still, however, pray for protection!

In 2022, we gathered 96 times remotely to pray, and between March and December 2022, we have had 48 outings in locations across London, including Wood Green, Kings Cross, Woolwich, Camden, Tottenham Hale,



and Brixton, to name a few.

Every experience evangelising on the road is memorable because each conversation is crucial to help those we encounter have a better perception of Christianity and, more importantly, a more robust understanding of who Christ is. We have seen God move so many times as we worship Him in the streets.

Ibukun, one of our musicians, recalls, "As we were evangelising in Wood Green, I came across a young woman and engaged her in a Christ-centred conversation. As I talked, she expressed how grateful she was for me talking to her about God. She said she had walked past us a few minutes earlier as our volunteer, Mezie, was preaching on the mic. She said everything Mezie said on the mic made sense and that she wanted to believe it. As we talked, she expressed how she grew up in a Muslim

household but has recently started attending church with her mother-in-law. We were able to share the gospel with her and pray with her. We also took her phone number to be able to continue to reach out to her and encourage her to continue reading the Bible and seeking God."

We are so excited about what God has in store for the streets of London through The Christian Busking Project and we believe He will continue to water His vision and make it grow.

Storm Cecile is an international spoken word poet and founder of The Christian Busking Project. She is passionate about street evangelism and team building. To learn more about The Christian Busking Project visit: thechristianbuskingproject.com



Visit Lee Abbey as an individual, group or church...

Lee Abbey
Christian Community

Encounter Jesus and be renewed, refreshed and resourced
Engage in our varied programme, or find your own rhythm and space
Enjoy our stunning estate on the north Devon coast with its own beach

Find out more and book today

01598 752621
Lynton, North Devon, EX35 6JJ
leeabbeydevon.org.uk



CONNECT WITH THE LIFE WORDS OF JESUS

Life words for you to explore and put into practice

THE NINEFOLD PATH

A JOURNEY IN THE BEATITUDES OF JESUS

A 9-week series for you,
your church or group

'Ninefold Path' is a Lifewords initiative offering a range of resources designed for individual and/or group use. Each beatitude ("beat") is presented with a short invitation and reflection, with practical ways to put the words of Jesus into action.

Part study guide, part journal, the 68-page 'Notebook' is available in packs of 5 for just £15 per pack. Additional content and videos are available on the website.

The 154-page leader's guide is available in print and downloadable formats – a free download copy is available with every 3-pack bundle order of the Notebooks.



ORDER AND FIND OUT MORE AT:

[NINEFOLDPATH.ORG](https://www.ninefoldpath.org)

Use discount code **IDEA20** to receive 20% off your first order of Notebooks or Learning Labs

“An inspirational, insightful, and deeply formational programme that changes the heart!”

Helen, UK

“It's not a Bible study, it's applied theology, it's practice, it's useful, it's a way of life!”

Jamie, USA

“Honestly one of the most refreshing things I have done in my spiritual walk.”

Adrian, Australia



NEW RESOURCES TO SHARE SCRIPTURE, FAITH, AND LIFE

Life words for you to share one-to-one

Follow Me

An invitation to experience
and walk the way of Jesus



Brand new, free
booklet resource

'Follow Me' presents the words Jesus spoke to people he interacted with day-by-day. With each word, Jesus invited them to follow, no matter what circumstances he encountered them in.

Through 28 colourful pages, 'Follow Me' equips you to share that invitation.

Lifeworlds resources are great to read, easy to share – and we continue to make our Bible booklet resources freely available (donations welcome) to everyone who needs them, just as we have for 135 years.

ORDER AND DISCOVER OUR FULL RANGE AT:

LIFEWORDS.GLOBAL

“

“Follow Me is a brilliant resource.”

Francine

“The design and colour are captivating.”

Margaret

“I just wanted to thank you for this publication – so beautifully produced, so approachable and contemporary with biblical, but also very accessible wording!”

Christina

Lifeworlds is a worldwide ministry here to help you experience and share the Bible in person, in print, and online. Through Bible resources and a range of Bible-rooted programmes and projects, Lifeworlds is all about creating ways into the Bible for everyone, everywhere. Find out how you can give, pray, and partner with us at www.lifeworlds.global

LIFEWORDS
www.lifeworlds.global



INTENTIONAL about growth in the church

Reverend Duncan Clark, senior minister of Coventry Elim Church, reflects on the growth of the church and offers some transformative insights.



Like most local churches, Coventry Elim has modest origins. A small group in the early 1930s sensed a call from God to plant a new church with the express desire that Coventry would be revived. As the decades passed, the church community slowly grew in size and as a result they met together in different locations across the city. In 1997, fresh out of Bible College, I was called to join the church staff as their youth pastor, and then in 2005, I accepted an invitation to become the church's senior pastor.

Twenty-five years after I first walked into this local church, I'm still here! During that time the church has roughly trebled in size and has become a thriving intercultural, multi-generational family

and a home to people who represent over 50 different nations.

Although we've tasted significant multiplication, our experience of growth has been less than dramatic. We're acutely aware that growth is not just measured in attendance, buildings and cash (the ABCs), but also in the 'D' of discipleship. And as we've called people to a life of intentionally following Jesus by pursuing His presence, being formed in Christlikeness and engaging with His mission to reach the world, we have, in turn, witnessed steady numerical growth.

As I reflect on the past 25 years and how we've seen the church change and grow, I would suggest that the following actions have helped promote and sustain a culture of growth:

Being Presence-led

We discovered early on that being programme-driven is exhausting and ultimately unproductive. Adding new ministries may have looked impressive on our website, but they were rarely strategic or fruitful. Rather than trying to figure out through logic what we should do and when we should do it, we've learned to listen. We've created a culture that values prayer and the prophetic, so that when the Lord speaks, we follow.

“Being presence-led has become a whole-family passion for us. We have learnt that we don't need to adapt worship and encounter for different ages, as the presence of God is accessible to everyone. Recently, during an evening of extended corporate worship and prayer, I heard a voice rising powerfully in worship above the others; turning to look, I saw a nine-year-old boy on his knees, eyes closed, arms lifted high, lost in adoration of the Father. We were made for this.”

– Beverley Samways, elder

Knowing which part of the Body we are

I believe that the apostle Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 12, about the diversity of roles in the local church, can also be applied to the diversity of roles that local churches play in a city. Not every church excels at everything and that's why we need each other. We discovered that if we try to be great at everything, we lose our distinctives and we become average at lots of things. We've learned to celebrate the

things we're good at and lean into them, and then celebrate other churches in our city who excel in areas that we don't.

Prioritising ministry for children and young people

The first staff appointment we made when I became senior pastor was for a children's worker. We knew that without significant investment and intentionality we may lose a generation, and once a generation is lost it's very difficult to avoid a slow trajectory of decline. We've learned to place high value in creating an environment where our kids and youth are being raised as passionate worshippers of God. One of our distinctives is our focus on children and young people with additional needs. This focus, along with providing support for their parents with a ministry we call 'Connect+' and hosting an annual conference called 'Belong', has created an environment of inclusion and acceptance for all.

“When we were almost losing hope, felt forgotten and forsaken, God worked through this wonderful group that brought hope and love into my unique special family.”

– Olu Ademakinwa, Connect+ parent

Being intentional about leadership

We are very deliberate about the way that the cultural and ethnic diversity of our city and our church community is reflected in our leadership teams and those who speak or lead from our platforms. To be clear, diversity



is not our goal, family is. And so, we are intentional about building strong relationships and friendships across cultural and ethnic lines, listening to each other and honouring others above ourselves.

Investing in leadership development

Every year we invite a group of 12 potential leaders to be part of a group we call 'Emerging Leaders'. The only qualifications required are that they must be younger than me and show early signs of a call into leadership, whether that be in the local church or the marketplace. We meet together once a month for a year; we discuss leadership issues and we pray for each other. It's ridiculously simple, but we've seen so many young leaders be released into positions of influence. Sope and Shirene Agbelusi were members of our cohort in 2012. Sope is now a successful leadership coach and Shirene has become the associate pastor of our church.

“Emerging leaders was really significant for me, there is something about a leader calling out the potential they see in you, that opens your eyes to start to see it for yourself. I realised leadership wasn't about job title or position but about what God had placed inside of me.”

– Shirene Agbelusi

Being a voice for hope

While we would never pretend that the challenges in our world aren't real, we are purposeful about creating a culture of hope, where the songs we sing and the messages we preach emphasise our belief that Jesus still saves, heals and delivers, and then we ensure that the ministries we release lead people into life!

Duncan Clark is the senior pastor of Coventry Elim Church and a member of Elim's national leadership team. Duncan is married to Helen, they have four children, and he loves to run and read.





GAINING MOMENTUM AND CREATING A *ripple effect of hope*

Operation Mobilisation (OM) is a dynamic, international Christian missions movement that works in over 100 countries. With the help of its 5,000 workers and through its Ship Ministry, OM is connecting with communities in places such as Serbia, Brazil, South Africa and Zambia – and is helping those in distant lands connect with the love of Jesus.

by **Jane Knoop**





Our ship makes a slow, steady approach. Her decks are adorned with colour; the vibrancy of flags representing countries from across the globe. Shoulder-to-shoulder, crewmembers wave their country flags, filled with expectancy and hope as the quayside and city backdrop comes into focus. The Spirit-filled anticipation is palpable. There is always so much possibility.

Lucas is one of the hundreds of crewmembers standing on deck. He arrived on board OM's ship in August last year intending to stay for just three months, but he's still here! "Initially, what made me want to stay longer was the community and the safe environment that this was to grow in faith," he shares, "It was the first place someone gave me responsibilities and trusted me." Whilst flourishing in his gifts, Lucas has simultaneously developed a passion to live out his faith and see kingdom growth on a global scale. This is why he stays on board: to reach those who have never heard of Jesus.

As OM's ships visit cities around the world, with hundreds of crewmembers who have been profoundly impacted by God's love, there emerge frequent, unique opportunities to share knowledge, help and hope, equipping and inspiring the church in a way that creates a lasting ripple effect.

"We have seen the coming of an OM ship to Sierra Leone two times," shared Pastor Emmanuel Conteh who serves with Sent Ministries. "Our encounter with them helped to give our ministry definition. We now have the resources we need to go to the least reached with the gospel."

God enables OM's Ship Ministry to be a catalyst that galvanises and awakens churches and Christian organisations such as Sent Ministries to develop a global vision and gain fresh inspiration to reach out to those who have never heard of God's love through Jesus.

When we consider the number of people who do not know they are loved by God, the statistics are staggering. More than one-third of the world's eight billion people have never heard the gospel or experienced Christ's love through the life of a Jesus follower.

"It's when we consider each person behind the number that we truly comprehend what that means. It's a serious wake up call," shares Seelan Govender, chief executive officer of OM's Ship Ministry. "It was this conviction that made us realise that if we were going to be part of the solution at OM's Ship Ministry, if we were ever going to reach these people with the hope and good news entrusted to us, we needed a radical new vision. A vision to go further, stay longer and engage more deeply in the communities we visit."

Recently, one of OM's ships has been engaging deeply with port communities throughout the Mediterranean. When in Albania, crewmembers visited inmates in a high security prison. Arbër, a 30-year-old Albanian man who came to faith while in prison seven years ago, started a prison chaplaincy, visiting inmates twice a week to spend time with them and study the Bible together. "It was really special when the team came...more inmates came - some I've never met before - and we had some good discussions. Some ask, "why are you wasting time to visit us?" They act suspicious until they realise, we just want to bring them hope."

Our prayer is that these moments of Jesus-fuelled, life-changing hope will multiply, especially in areas of our world today where people are less likely to hear the good news.

"This isn't a calling that is unique to us," Seelan Govender emphasises. "It is a call for every follower of Christ. I have seen ordinary people create a ripple effect that leads to communities boldly sharing the gospel and I pray that we will see this work continue to grow."

As OM's Ship Ministry expands, more volunteers are needed. Do you know a young follower of Jesus you could encourage to explore this opportunity to grow? If so, please share this link with them: uk.om.org/ships

Jane Knoop is a freelance writer and editor of OM UK's magazine. She works from her narrowboat home, roaming the English canals with her husband and two little boys.



WEEK ONE

15 July - 21 July
Sam Allberry

WEEK TWO

22 July - 28 July
Jonathan Griffiths

WEEK THREE

29 July - 4 August
Ivor Poobalan

Human

KESWICK CONVENTION 2023

Gather with thousands of believers this summer to hear from God's Word, enjoy fellowship with each other, and be refreshed in God's creation.
Find out more at [keswickministries.org](https://www.keswickministries.org)



Speaking Hope To The World

Biblical Teaching | Current Affairs | News

www.twr.org.uk

Sky Guide 0128 | Freeview Channel 733 | Freesat Channel 790

TWR-UK is a registered charity in England and Wales, number 233363

Lord, plant our feet



John Goddard, our CRM co-ordinator & memberships insight lead, prays for the furthering of the gospel and for those who are making Jesus known across our nation.

Father, as I dwell on the theme of 'A Time to Grow', I'm drawn to Luke 13:18-19 and Ephesians 1:22-23.

The kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, which when planted grows into a tree. We pray for church plants. As these churches are planted, we pray that they would take root and grow, offering communities connection, compassion and care.

We pray that the influence of Jesus would extend to all parts of our society through the faithful, sacrificial service of our brothers and sisters in Christ.

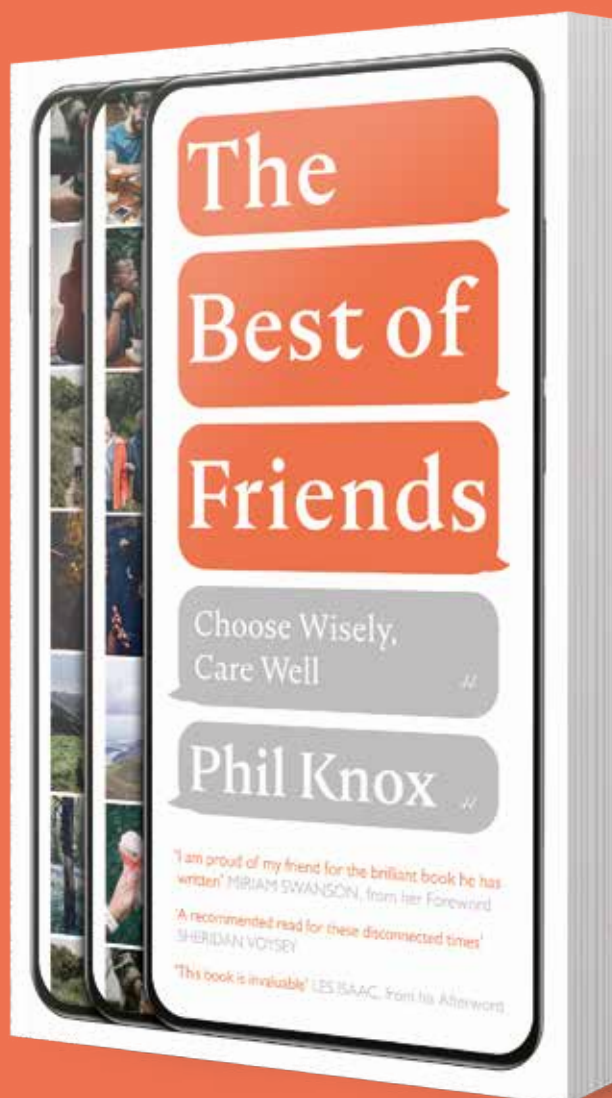
Lord, we thank you so much for those who put themselves forward to serve you and their communities under the spotlight of public scrutiny. We ask that you would sustain them as well as give them favour with you and their fellow man.

Healthy things grow, and our prayer is that, individually and collectively, you would help us to develop healthy habits so that your church would grow to bring people to know Jesus and influence this nation for good. We pray this so that the least, the last, and the lost know that your love is relevant to them today.

Amen.



Explore how to cherish and celebrate the most important relationships in your life, and be the best friend you can be



Available Now • 9781789744248 • £10.99

Phil Knox is an evangelist, speaker and missiologist at the Evangelical Alliance



‘This thoughtful and thought-provoking book should help all of us to have richer, deeper and more lasting friendships.’

Revd Canon J John



 ivpbooks.com

 [/ivpbooks](https://www.facebook.com/ivpbooks)

 [@ivpbookcentre](https://twitter.com/ivpbookcentre)

 [@ivpbooks](https://www.instagram.com/ivpbooks)



10 minutes with...

PHIL KNOX

The evangelism and missiology senior specialist at the Evangelical Alliance shares all about his recently released book *The Best of Friends* and why friendships are so crucial to our health and wellbeing.

Tell us a little bit about yourself

I'm an enthusiast – which I found out recently means 'God inspired', which I love. I love my family – I'm married to Dani and we have two boys, Caleb and Jos. I'm happiest when sat around the firepit, surrounded by friends, family and laughter, drinking something tasty. But most of all I'm enthusiastic about Jesus. What moves me to the core is lives changed by Jesus, so I live to see as much of that as possible.

How did you find your faith?

I grew up in a Christian family. My parents were outstanding examples of Jesus followers to me. I chose to follow Jesus as a child, but my major decision moment came at 21 after the death of my dad. In the grief of that moment, and the subsequent loss of my mum, I have known the presence of God with me in an extraordinary way. I would be lost, self-obsessed and a slave to money and approval without Jesus. With Him, I know real life, forgiveness, purpose, and hope for the future. I'm so grateful.

You have recently published your second book entitled *The Best of Friends*, can you tell us a little bit about it and the inspiration behind it?

Friendship is amazing. It is so good for us that if you eat badly and only do a little exercise but have good friends, you are more likely to live longer than someone who keeps themselves physically healthy but is socially isolated. God has wired us for relational connection. And yet we are in relational crisis. Millions of people have no close friends, and 40% of young adults always or often feel lonely.

I wrote *The Best of Friends* because I am convinced that friendship is the most important, but least talked about relationship in the church. We were made to know and be known. Strong churches need strong friendships. Most people come to faith through a friend or family member. I think God is

speaking to His church about this area of our lives and I wanted to play my part in that.

The book looks at friendship through the lens of the Bible as a whole, and the life of Jesus in particular. I want to urge people to be intentional and sacrificial in their friendships and dream of a world where the church is known for its relational unity. Friendship is the antidote to the divisions in our society and good news travels fast through beautiful relational connections.

How does friendship relate to evangelism?

I am a missiologist. I study how people come to faith. All the latest research and almost every story I hear tells us that most new Christians credit a friend with playing the most significant role in their journey to faith. Now, importantly, we don't become friends with people to convert them, we are the best of friends because we are made in the image of the relational God who commands us to love our neighbour. But we do recognise that friendship draws people to the most important relationship of all. We could be more effective in this area as a church. Research shows that 46% of Christians don't know a non-Christian well enough to invite them to church. Being better friends is not just good for us, it's also vital for the kingdom.

What would your friends say about you?

I think they would begin by commenting on my energetic enthusiasm for life and passion for the gospel. They would inevitably mention my closest relationships, but probably first in connection with my family – I do my best to be a 'hands-on' dad. I hope they would choose to notice my heart for people and desire to do what is right, while fully knowing and seeing I'm human and make mistakes. I also hope they think I'm hilarious and throw the best parties they've ever been to.



Good News Bible Family Edition

Growing faith and relationships with the family

At Bible Society, we want to see the Bible at the heart of family life, to grow the faith of each member and, in doing so, strengthen their familial intimacy with one another. So, we created the Good News Bible – Family Edition! We've structured this Bible around five themes: Think, Chat, Do, Create and Watch. Take your time to explore! This Bible is about journeying through the Bible together.

If you are finding it hard to read the Bible together, this Bible offers space for you and your family to reflect on what makes it hard, and why it would be great for your family to explore the Bible. Currently priced at **£34.99**.

Use the discount **GNBFE20** to get 20% off your order and get your family started on their Bible journey.

Let's get the Bible into the centre of family life, to grow in faith and in relationship with each other – whatever family looks like!

If you want to buy this product in bulk, please contact chay.harty@biblesocietyresources.com



RESTORE, RENEW, REBUILD.

Beatrice Smith shares how a seed fund initiative is helping to positively impact communities.



At Spring Harvest we're passionate about creating events and resources that make space for God to do His awe-inspiring work in and through all of us. Last year, as well as occurring online, the Spring Harvest event was experienced in person after a two-year hiatus. The theme was *Restore, Renew, Rebuild*, exploring the biblical book of Nehemiah. It was an opportunity to consider the challenges our communities are currently facing and to call for the church to respond. And respond they did!

Committed to seeing a transformation across our communities, we pledged to donate a portion of the offerings collected from the event to invest back into community projects. As a result, 12 brand new community projects are already under way thanks to the generosity of guests who attended, with more in the pipeline.

An offering tithe, doubled by match funding from Generosity Pathway was set aside for new projects, allowing for applications of up to £5,000.

Lisa Williams from Wiltshire is a qualified music therapist who secured

some funding to set up musical events and choirs under the name 'Hope and Harmony'. Lisa recalls, "The name was given to me by a mother whose non-verbal son turned out to be very verbal after all! This little boy's voice was unlocked through music therapy, inspiring the vision for more choirs."

"In this work we have witnessed love, joy, desperation and sorrow – we have offered hope and harmony to all we have met"

She began to see her vision realised with 'Hope and Harmony Carols', which ran twice over Christmas and received over 150 attendees. She is also about to launch a Dementia café choir. The choirs bring together local churches, businesses and organisations, with people of all ages and needs, to enjoy music together. "In this work we have witnessed love, joy, desperation and sorrow – we have offered hope and harmony to all we have met," says Lisa.

Lisa's next hope is to officially launch 'Hope and Harmony' as a charity. She is grateful for the opportunity. "Spring Harvest has 'fed' me... I have encountered the Holy Spirit so powerfully whenever I have attended that it has been enough to keep me going for the year!" says Lisa.

Another project to receive seed funding was 'Wonderfully Made Messy

Church', specifically for children with additional needs. They were awarded £2,500 to purchase sensory resources and fidget toys to encourage and equip children in worship with their families.

Twenty-two people attended their first session, with children joining in with sensory play, story-reading, sharing a meal together and ending with the UK Makaton blessing. Kathy Robinson, project planner, said, "We were able to do so much with the children and their families – from making wordless books and worship ribbons, to children reading their books to their families (and even to one of the support dogs!) The sensory room was very popular, and the children loved the peaceful atmosphere. We can't thank Spring Harvest enough for the grant that made all of this possible."

Abby Guinness, head of Spring Harvest, said, "It has been wonderful to see the impact of the seed funding this year. When we take time away with God at an event like Spring Harvest, He often inspires us as to how we can meet the needs of those around us. It has worked so well we intend to continue apportioning some of the offering to use in this way each year."

Beatrice Smith is an author, speaker and part of the Spring Harvest planning group. She lives in Manchester and co-leads Restoration Church Tameside. To find out more about Spring Harvest and to register for free, visit: springharvest.org



Wonderfully Made Messy Church

How we increased

OUR ATTENDANCE BY 600%

LifeChurch Eccles organised a carol service that massively eclipsed their normal Sunday service turnout. The majority of this increase came from people who don't normally go to church! This was a staggering result – and team leader **Derek Hughes** illustrates how they did it and how other church leaders can do the same, by asking themselves a few straightforward questions.

Despite the fact that the group had never organised a carol service for the community before, had a tiny annual budget, were relatively unknown in their community and had a very modest congregation, they were able to apply some key strategies to reach their local community and invite them to be a part of their festivities.

I am going to outline some key questions to consider, that will make all the difference for you when organising a church event and help bring in the masses.

We've a lot to cover so let's dive straight in with the first one!



1. Organising the event from the perspective of guests

The planning of your event starts well before publicity or social media strategies; it starts by asking (and then repeatedly asking) this crucial question:

What would connect most with non-church people?

2. Make it a community-focused event

This is a subtle but significant tweak.

By organising a community event or service, which positions your church as an enabler – a facilitator of a community event. This can be a very powerful way to engage local people and make the event much more accessible.

Ask yourself how can we create an event that is community-centred?

For us, this approach affected who took part in the service, what we raised money for and the language that we used in publicity. In all our online publicity, we referred to the event as 'Eccles Carol Service' rather than 'LifeChurch Eccles Service'. (Eccles is our local community). Language matters.



3. Pick a venue that gives the right message

For us, we wanted to say: this event is for you, this event will be safe and accessible, this event will have lots of people like you from the community attending.

Therefore, consider, is the venue a place that will be inviting to the community?



4. Invite others to contribute to the service

If this is really a community event, then don't do everything yourself during the service. It will make local people feel like outsiders. Include others and you will widen your appeal.

Consider, could you invite a local community choir to come and sing (this saved us time and energy in organising the music ourselves, which was a nice bonus given our limited resources), or maybe you could ask a local MP or chairperson from a local charity to do a speech perhaps.



5. Social media is probably your best friend

Social media offers massive potential to promote your event but it's a tough battle for attention. Don't announce your event and expect everyone to come. It won't work. You need to be smart and think of some creative and engaging ways to get your message out there. The good news is that it's not that difficult to develop a social media strategy that works, if you've already got others involved with the event.



Here are the main things to consider:

Speak in a way that will attract your audience – non-church people are not desperate to attend an event that gives 'the reason for the season' or 'celebrates the birth of Christ'. I realise that is why you are running the event, but your publicity needs to start where people are at.

Non-church people are more likely to be interested in 'getting Christmassy', 'feeling festive' or doing something good for others. Describe the bits of your service that will appeal most. For us that was: raising funds for a local charity, the community choir, festive refreshments and singing carols.

6. Inspire people to invite their friends and neighbours to the event

It is great if people you don't know attend your event. However, you are more likely to see fruit from those your church already knows. This will make your follow up conversations and relationships much easier and more effective.

Ultimately, it is God's responsibility to grow the church and draw people to Him. We can't manufacture anything or make anything happen on our own. However, God does ask us to think missionally about how we can relate to our changing culture. This is our story about how we tried to do that with our carol service. I hope it was helpful and thought provoking. For more information visit: Lifechurch.uk.net/eccles

Derek Hughes has led LifeChurch Eccles since 2021 and is passionate about churches finding creative ways to relate Jesus to those who don't go to church.



HEART BEHIND THE ART:

AN INTERVIEW WITH EMILY FELTHAM

Actor, writer and director **Emily Feltham** is determined to create a space where individuals feel seen and known through the power of storytelling. Growing up, she loved performing but didn't see people who looked like her on stage. Here, she explains her understanding of church as a 'sanctuary' for those who are marginalised and hurting, and how gospel performances can invite everyone to see their place in Jesus' story.

Emily, 33, has a huge sense of FOMO and wants to join in every interesting conversation she overhears around her. Friends might even joke that she has an opinion on everything, and that those opinions are liable to change, but Emily says she just loves other people and is curious about exploring their point of view.

Born and raised in Bristol, she lives with husband Joseph, and says she loves the town's "friendly, creative feel - scruffy and authentic."

As a child, Emily's mum took her to Sunday church. At seven, she got baptised because she

loved Jesus and "it was the obvious thing to do!" but it was a year later, on a Christian camp, that she says she decided to take responsibility for her own relationship with Jesus. That year, Emily's mum married her stepdad, and she gained two older stepbrothers.

Being mixed race but raised by white parents, Emily felt she had "one foot in one camp and one in the other" when it came to her identity, and didn't get to experience both cultures. And, even though she performed confidently and could make the audience laugh in her school play, as a teenager

Emily believes theatre can have an intermediary role between church and community.

she was discouraged by the fact that she only saw English rose-type actresses up on stage. “You grow up with these unconscious ideas,” she explains, “I used to go to the theatre, and internalise the idea that in Shakespeare plays... there weren’t any mixed race or Black people.”

These experiences have made her really deliberate about seeking stories that examine a sense of identity. “I’m interested in the people who get glanced over in the Bible, like Hagar... God’s goodness, and promises [to her], saying, ‘I see you.’”

Emily dreamt of becoming an actor, but was warned not to, because unemployment was high at the time. So, she studied English at Oxford, then trained in museum curation in Exeter, working with global indigenous art.

While in Exeter in 2016, Emily’s stepbrother Paul died unexpectedly. She has also lost her brother Mark, who died in 2005.

In 2016, she recalls a community church service about grief where she had a “tangible experience of who God is – He reaches out with love and comfort in the most difficult times.” She believes church can be a sanctuary, a place people can feel held and comforted – something she understands deeply.

Emily believes theatre can have an intermediary role between church and community and now works for Saltmine Trust, a Christian charity and theatre company which visits churches, putting on affordable performances which she says gives people from outside the church a “fun, positive experience in a church building.”



Emily in *Faultlines*, domestic abuse play and workshop

“Church should be a safe space where people come as they are, feel able to share and be accepted.”

One example was her take on *Rapunzel* which she wrote and starred in: “Rapunzel had curly afro hair, it’s described as out of control, frizzy and wild. She’s struggling, feeling like she had to conform – based in my own experiences... The message was, you are a *masterpiece!*” After a performance in a church with many global majority, Black and Asian people, little girls came up for photos with her because they were so excited! “Church should be a safe space where people come as they are, feel able to share and be accepted,” Emily says.

“I draw inspiration from stories of people who weren’t hugely impactful, didn’t have a huge audience, just identified one little thing that was an injustice in their community, and they collected themselves and decided to address that problem.”

“We sometimes completely underestimate the impact of what pursuing justice does in the world,” she reflects. “It makes people sit up and take notice. I’m inspired by seeing the ripple effect that has in the world.”

“Whenever [Jesus] shares a story, He’s getting people to engage with it in a different way than when He’s preaching or sharing it directly... And that’s what I want to achieve with theatre.”

Find out more about the Saltmine Trust at SaltmineTrust.org.uk

For the extended version of this interview, visit eauk.it/interview



Emily in *Saltmine Passion Play* as Mary Magdalene

GROWING TOGETHER AND GOING TOGETHER

Gavin Calver shares the importance of growing our expectations for God to make a mighty move across our nations. And why we have to grow in community to spread the gospel intended for all.



I am naturally an optimist. My glass isn't half full - like the psalmist's, it overflows (Psalm 23:5). However, as an optimist I can find myself disappointed when things don't turn out as I'd hoped: despite thinking it might be the year to finally win, England manage to lose on penalties again and the grey clouds never fully moved out of the way for the blue sky on the beach. Despite moments of frustration, I naturally remain hopeful of a different outcome the following day. As I pray about the UK, I find myself believing for a major move of God, and longing for a different tomorrow than some of what we've experienced previously. I find great encouragement in believing for more when I look to scripture.

In Acts 5, it is the fact that God is doing extraordinary things that gets the apostles into trouble once more. Unlike my running, with God absolutely nothing is impossible. We like to sing of Him moving mountains and He could do so in a moment in our communities today. We must do all we can to avoid the trap of minimising the Lord's power or making Him small enough that we find Him palatable. There is literally nothing beyond the power of Jesus.

Many of the headlines around us can fill us with despair. However, in a time of political chaos, cultural upheaval, and

a cost of living crisis, we can continue to place our faith in an unwavering God. I believe we are living in an incredible moment for the gospel in the UK, a time to grow. We hear about the recent revivals in China and Iran and these are amazing - it is my belief that the Lord is going to exponentially transform His church here too in the days ahead. We need to begin to expect greater things and grow our imaginations over what He could do. In the midst of this extremely challenging time we are living in, the Lord is moving and He wants us to take hold of the season, and have confidence in Him to move powerfully in our day.

Our hope of seeing an impact for the gospel today is also grounded in what is going on throughout the UK. The landscape feels far more open to our message than it has previously. Our recent 'Talking Jesus' report (co-produced by Alpha UK, CV Global, HOPE Together, Kingsgate and The Luis Palau Association) evidences this. Amazingly, it shows that one in three non-Christians, after a conversation with a Christian, want to know more about Jesus Christ. This is so encouraging and is actually up from the last report in 2015, that showed it to be one in five. The ground is fertile and there is such an openness to the gospel. My prayer is that this motivates us to

be bolder, and to believe for growth, in the church.

Within this incredible opportunity to witness, it is vital for the church to be united in our mission in the face of a nation that seems increasingly divided. John 17:20-21 reminds us of the critical prayer that Jesus prayed before He was arrested: "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

We go together; this is the only way that we will bear witness to Him and see His glory. If we go together then we can be assured that the impact will be greater.

We won't get this moment again: dream big with Him, move out courageously and boldly with the knowledge that in Him nothing is impossible. Whether you are an optimist like me or not, let's all pray for a move of God like we've never seen before in the days ahead. My hope is to hear testimonies from all over the UK in the years ahead that are remembered for this simple statement: "In the face of so much cultural confusion and uncertainty I surrendered my life to Jesus, the unchanging one."

***“Just to have a place
to call home again”***

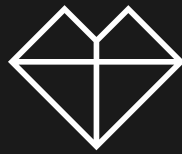


While you're earning up to 5%, your money can house the homeless.

An ethical investment that makes a difference whilst you make a return. As the cost of living crisis bites, your money can make a difference to those experiencing homelessness. We will use your money to purchase property for local Christian organisations to house and support those in need.

- ✓ Invest from £1000
- ✓ Earn up to 5% annually
- ✓ Transform Lives

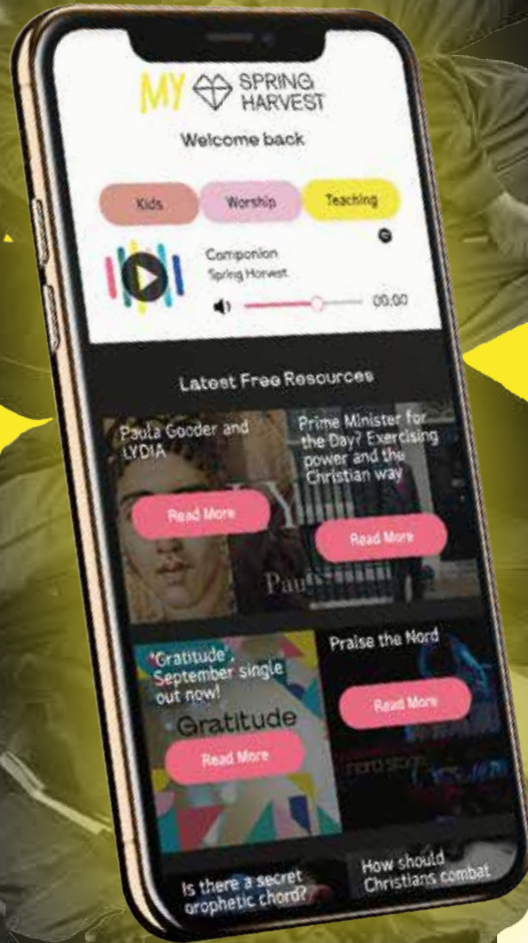
MY



SPRING HARVEST

Freebies

Resources



Teaching

News



Scan to subscribe

Spring Harvest, in your pocket



www.myspringharvest.com

Stay connected to us throughout the year with MY Spring Harvest. Get all our latest news, prayer points and loads of helpful resources from the Spring Harvest team every month.

And it's all free!