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THE MAGAZINE OF THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE
SUMMER 2024

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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

Post-pandemic, it seems like the world has picked up its once-stifled pace and is moving at an accelerated rate, to make up for 'lost' time. Interactions with our nearest and dearest are now often limited to short and brief text bubbles and emojis on our phone screens instead of meetups and lengthy phone calls. There's more screen time and less face time (not to be confused with FaceTime). Trying to sync diaries with our friends and family can feel impossible and arduous, as we scroll past days and weeks in our calendar, announcing clashes to one another and days that are 'no good'.

Against the backdrop of this bustling world we live in, it can be hard to find time to connect and stay connected, to build and maintain relationships and to seize opportunities to share our faith with others. But it's so important that we do.

We are created for connection, and our words are a part of that; maybe a call 'just because', to an old friend, or a word of encouragement for a church leader, or an interaction with a neighbour or colleague who doesn't yet know Jesus, could make all the difference. So, in this edition of *idea* magazine, entitled 'A time to speak', we explore the power of connection and community through testimonies of discipleship and evangelism. We hear about how we can be advocating for our faith in politics, and we explore how Christian leaders are using their voices to share the God story far and wide. My prayer is that these stories will encourage us all and remind us of the many ways God can use us powerfully when we speak.



Nicola Morrison
Editor

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THE GIFT OF WORDS



Dr Alan Wilson explores why communication is vital for building our relationship with God and others and illuminates the multifaceted power of words.

If talking was an Olympic sport, you and I could probably think of a few people who would be serious contenders for a medal! Estimates vary, but a 2007 study suggested that, on average, we use some 16,000 words in a day (the popular claim which you may have seen – that women far outtalk men – is disputed!). Of course, averages being averages, some of us, whether because of circumstances or personality, will land well short while others will exceed their daily quota!

The ability to communicate is a significant part of our humanity. Communications expert Richard Almonte claims that communication with others is vital for our physical health, for meeting our social and identity needs, and skills in practical tasks like buying a car. While communication is more than words, our ability to speak is one of the attributes which God has created within us and it is one that we share with Him. Other species may be able to communicate (did you know that bees dance?), and even understand and mimic human language (just think of dogs and parrots), but you and I have a unique capacity to describe and create meaning, to recall the past and imagine the future by means of a vast, perhaps infinite, range of word combinations. It's certainly true that there is a time to listen – a time to be silent, but there is also a time to speak.

How should we use this God-given capacity?

The gift of words

Before Adam and Eve spoke in Eden, God had spoken Eden (and a whole lot more) into existence. Talking men and women are following the example of a talking God: a God whose word came to various individuals like Abraham or Moses, who has spoken to us through His Son, the Word who was in the beginning, whose Spirit inspired the authors of scripture, and who continues to speak to us for our encouragement and challenge. In empowering us to speak, He invites us to join Him.

There is a time to speak.

Words that influence people

While nothing can match a God whose word brought about and sustains the universe, our words have power: in fact, they have 'the power of life and death.' They can pierce like swords, or they can bring healing. They can be a tree of life, or they can break the spirit.

Many of us can probably recall the impact of words spoken to us in the past, perhaps even decades ago. Maybe it was a mentor who believed in you when no one else did. Perhaps it was a teacher whose harsh, unrelenting criticism still hurts when you think about it. Some of us have experienced words that have been life-shaping, for good or for ill.

It's James, the brother of Jesus, who paints vivid pictures to illustrate the power of our words. Just as a horse can be directed by the bit in its mouth, and as large ships are steered by a small rudder, so our four-inch tongues have an impact that goes far beyond their size. At its worst, the tongue is a fire that can consume the whole course of a person's life.

At their best, our words can inspire and bring joy. They can bring wisdom and understanding. They can breathe fresh courage into a dispirited friend. They can speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves.

There is a time to speak.

Words that point to Jesus

It has often been claimed that St Francis told his followers that they should preach the gospel at all times and if necessary, they should use words. It sounds clever and catchy (though theologically dubious) but evidently it's not exactly what Francis said. It seems that some of his followers were licensed to preach and others not. None of the latter category should take it on themselves to preach, something that would be contrary to the regulations of the church; all, however, should preach with their deeds.

While our lives may point to the reality of the work that Jesus has done

and is doing in us, it is our words that will describe what God has done through Him in His death and resurrection.

It didn't take long for opposition to the name of Jesus to appear in Jerusalem as the apostles preached and performed miracles. Imagine, the religious leaders had no objection to healing miracles that helped remove beggars from the precincts of the temple, but they drew the line at doing so in the name of Jesus! So they warned Peter and John not to stop healing, but to stop speaking in the name of Jesus. "What do you think we should do?" asked Peter and John. *Should we obey you or obey God?* "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

There is a time to speak.

Words that worship God

God loves to hear our voices. He loves to have us speak to Him; in fact, Jesus taught us how to use our words to relate to our Heavenly Father. We can address our praise to Him, we can bring our needs and we can ask for His forgiveness.

We will still be speaking in Heaven and the book of Revelation gives us a preview of the script. The spotlight will be on a throne and our words will be words of worship.

**"You are worthy, our Lord and God,
To receive glory and honour and power,
For you created all things,
And by your will they were created
And have their being."
(Revelation 4:11)**

That will be then, but we do not need to wait till then.

There is a time to speak.

Alan Wilson is a teacher and speaker who lives in Northern Ireland. He is a member of the board of the Evangelical Alliance and is the author of The Crucible of Leadership (Instant Apostle).

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SPOTLIGHT!

Rev Israel Olofinjana, director of One People Commission, sheds light on how we are supporting our members in equipping them to help build an intercultural church.



People often ask me what is the One People Commission (OPC) and what is our

work all about? Two questions that can perhaps help explain the work of the OPC are firstly, if Britain is multicultural and multi-ethnic, what sort of church and mission strategy does the church need to engage such a diverse society? Secondly, if society and church are wrestling with the sin of racism and 'otherness' of our neighbours, how can the church develop a radical approach that can address the sin of racism both in church and society?

These two interrelated questions set the tone for the work of OPC, as we reflect on its genesis. The conversation that led to the start of OPC started in 2010 with a prophetic challenge from senior Black church leaders such as Bishop Wilton Powell (former National Overseer of the Church of God of Prophecy) and Pastor Agu Irukwu (senior pastor of Jesus House). The challenge at an

Evangelical Alliance council meeting was to make the Evangelical Alliance more racially diverse and to address the need to reflect and represent the diversity within the UK church. This led to conversations and consultations over a two-year period (2010–2012). Whilst we as the Evangelical Alliance have made progress and churches in the UK have come a long way in welcoming people of different ethnicities and cultures into our churches, we still have a lot of work to do.

Britain, as a multicultural postmodern society, demands a diverse

economy of churches to help engage that diverse mission field. This in effect means that one community of church cannot reach or engage with the multifaceted issues emerging from a contested multicultural society.

My desire is to help the church further engage and reach multicultural Britain, and to do this it requires an intercultural missionary movement. The work of OPC therefore exists to catalyse this mission movement through church leader roundtable conversations, conferences, resources and networking.



Intercultural church conference



Intercultural Church Conversation

One of our initiatives that reflects this approach is the Intercultural Church Conversation (ICC) which was set up with other partners and stakeholders to centre the significance of developing intercultural churches in the UK. The Intercultural Church Conversation has four key goals: opening up dialogue amongst church leaders, providing leadership support, resourcing the church and working with theological colleges. Through conferences, we aim to educate and equip leaders to think and act more interculturally within their own churches, organisational settings and personal interactions on a day-to-day basis. These online and in-person events highlight and address the following areas:

- Intercultural worship
- Intercultural mission
- Intercultural pastoral care
- Intercultural leadership
- Intercultural diaspora

ICC Leadership Consultation

The ICC Leadership Consultation, first formed and gathered last year, brings together national church leaders across the UK who are involved in intercultural church work in their different streams and denominations. The aim of this leadership consultation is to highlight these broad aims:

1. Connect national leaders engaged in the intercultural church movement.
2. Understand one another's spheres of engagement.
3. Agree broad goals for ongoing co-operation.
4. Identify specific steps we can take together.



Resources

We have a wealth of resources available to our members that promote, equip and encourage churches across the UK to develop their intercultural church practices both internally and externally. One of the resources we have produced in collaboration with London City Mission is the 'Every day evangelism' podcast and video discussion on intercultural church (lcm.org.uk/resources/the-importance-of-intercultural-churches/). Another project we are currently developing is a booklet that will explore intercultural theology, church and justice.

Work with theological colleges

Lastly, we aim to work with and alongside theological colleges in the UK to introduce, embed and implement intercultural practices in the heart of mainstream theological training. Currently, there are not a huge amount of intercultural theological training modules in mainstream theological colleges. We believe that change must be implemented from all streams of the church and therefore training should be made available and included as an essential for all those stepping into a leadership role in a church, Christian charity, organisation or community.

We are working tirelessly to address racism in church and society. We are constantly having conversations on the issue of race and racism to better understand it and help evangelical Christians and churches, and have commissioned a survey to reflect the

attitudes and practices towards race within the UK evangelical church. We are hoping to release a report of the research and a suite of resources in response, to help our churches on this journey. It is hoped that this piece of work will help our churches develop some theological responses that can shape our church practices around radical hospitality to help address the sin of racism.

Doing all the day-to-day hard work for these projects is a dedicated staff team of five (including one secondment from South Asian Concern). Please do keep us in your prayers as we work towards a vision of intercultural unity, intercultural churches and intercultural justice.

Rev Dr Israel Oluwole Olofinjana is an ordained and accredited Baptist minister and has led two multi-ethnic Baptist churches and an independent charismatic church. Israel is an honorary research fellow at The Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education in Birmingham and is on the advisory group on Race and Theology at the Society for the Study of Theology (SST). He is a consultant to the executive team of Lausanne Europe, advising them on matters related to diaspora ministries in Europe. He is on the Christian Aid working group of Black majority church leaders exploring the intersection of climate justice and racial justice.

Speaking into YOUNG LIVES

Kyle Craig of Young Life Capernaum explains how the organisation is committed to sharing the joy and good news of Jesus with teenagers with additional needs.

“**T**aking time out for one person is so important. It’s so clear that being there for a Capernaum friend is for their benefit, to make them feel worthy.”

This is what a 17-year-old Young Life junior leader told me, after she had buddied up with a young person at an event we ran in partnership with the Tim Tebow Foundation called ‘Night to Shine’.

Night to Shine was a prom night for young people with additional needs. We

were one of 720 churches that hosted this event all around the world on 9 February 2024. We had limousines, a red-carpet experience, karaoke, and lots of dancing! For every young person there with additional needs, we had a 16–19-year-old junior Young Life leader to buddy up with them.

At the end of night we crowned each guest with a crown or a tiara. This was a small gesture that showed how much each of those young people are valued by us and ultimately by God. Paul says in

1 Corinthians 12:21-22, “the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you,’ nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable.”

When we apply this verse to young people with additional needs, it is clear that not only should we value them, but we need them. They are an indispensable part of the body of Christ. We wanted them to know that God has created each one of them to be kings and queens. This is what a family member of a young person said after a Night to Shine:

“What an amazing night. We are so grateful for the hard work you all put in. Those wonderful young buddies giving up their Friday night, a credit to their parents, church and themselves. Perfect from start to finish, not a detail missed. I’ve never seen my niece so happy.”

Young Life Capernaum is a ministry that seeks to introduce young people with additional needs to Jesus and help them grow in their faith through accessible communication, meaningful relationships and fun filled experiences. Prayer has always been and always will be Young Life’s first work. Capernaum in the US started in 1986 because Jim



Some young people enjoying activities at a social evening.



Rayburn, who is the founder of Young Life, prayed that every kid would be reached with the gospel. Capernaum in Northern Ireland exists because of Eden McRoberts' prayers and obedience. This is what she says,

"I started Young Life Capernaum in December 2019, because I wanted my brother Carter to experience a community that would share the gospel with him. Carter has Down's syndrome and I found my own faith through Young Life. I wanted my brother and his friends to feel included, welcomed and loved in a church ministry that wasn't available to him in many other capacities. He was and still is my heart behind starting the ministry."

We believe that it is only through ongoing prayer and dependence on God that every young person with additional needs will be reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is what Faith said about her son's experience at Capernaum:

"My son has a learning disability, and I fear the impact this may have on his development, and life experience. However, I mostly fear the impact this may have on his relationships.

From the moment he was invited

and attended Young Life Capernaum, I noticed a change. My son had a limited number of friends, however, now he is part of a community. A community where he feels at home and has a sense of belonging. His growth in confidence walking into Young Life club is astounding, and I am so proud. I am grateful for the opportunity, not only for my son to attend this club, but be cared for by the most passionate, caring, and committed team."

After Night to Shine, eight junior Young Life leaders have signed up to be buddies for our Capernaum friends. It is my firm belief that meaningful discipleship happens through friendship. We desire to create a space for this to happen. My desire is that churches would catch this vision to reach every kid through mutual friendship and discipleship. I believe this can be the norm in our churches if we truly model Jesus to those around us. Jesus demonstrates through the gospels that the main way He draws people to Himself is through friendship and community. My hope is that many more families with children with additional needs will find a place of acceptance, meaning

and purpose in the body of Christ.

It was clear from the 40 buddies that were a part of Night to Shine that it did not feel like they were 'giving up their night.' Rather, they were the ones who had their lives enriched through the friendship of our young people. God is truly glorified when the body of Christ looks as though He intended. This can only happen through prayer and dependence on God. It has been through prayer that Young Life Capernaum has started in Ukraine, Moldova, North Macedonia and Northern Ireland. Through prayer, Young Life Capernaum hopes to partner with churches all over the UK and Ireland so that every kid with additional needs can be reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

To learn more and get involved, visit: capernaum.younglife.org

Kyle Craig previously worked as a special needs teacher and has been working at Young Life Capernaum as a developer in Northern Ireland since September 2023.

Pastor Will Bassett from Ridgeway Community Church imparts how God used his speech impediment to teach him to fully rely on Him.



HE SPEAKS THROUGH OUR WEAKNESSES



Will and his wife Sarah

I walk up to the pulpit full of hope: this will be the moment God comes through, when my lips work.

Because I prayed. I prepared. I work myself up as if I'm going into a sports match. Come on God, we can do this! Let's go! I start. Everyone's waiting on my words. I don't want to stammer - but that's exactly what happens.

Time slows. I feel every stoppage in my throat. Faces change: smiles become bigger because they want me to be okay; others lean in, perplexed. I forget to breathe. I'm vulnerable. Lord, please help me to speak well. Do something for me, in me! It was all about me. Every thought, feeling and prayer was seeking affirmation.

That was my experience of preaching with a speech impediment.

Called to preach – but how?

I grew up in Wales in a Christian home and became a Christian as a child. As a teenager, I became angry because I felt God led me away from my dream of joining the army. I had one foot in church, one in the world. I became ill and had to stay in hospital. For some reason, I picked up my Bible and read Joshua. I felt called to leadership for God but didn't know what it would look like. I've had a speech impediment most of my life - I don't know why. I didn't speak properly till I was three and had to go to speech therapy. My sisters did most of the speaking for me. I've experienced some trauma - moving countries, being bullied, and failing a year of college - which worsened it.

God isn't calling the able, but the available.

Knowing who He is shows you who you are

I preached my first sermon in front of a church at about 18, the worst experience of my life! I stood for 35 minutes and stammered every word. I didn't preach again for over a year. But the call just became stronger. One particularly tough year, I went out for a late night walk and asked God what I should do. I had an overwhelming sense of His presence and holiness, fell to my knees, raised my arms and started to repeat, "Holy, holy, holy". As is often the case, when you sense who He is, He also shows you who you are - He revealed I wasn't taking my sin seriously. My pursuit of Him changed. I spent more time in the word and prayer.

I visited churches and preached often but my ability to speak was very hit and miss. I graduated and married in 2015 - it was hard for my wife Sarah to watch me sometimes struggle to even preach one word. People asked if I should continue, but I knew it was right. He would provide.

An opportunity arose to pastor in South Africa - to others it seemed crazy. My first week there, I was practising word for word as always. Sarah overheard me and couldn't believe I was fluent. I explained, "That's why I'm finding this so hard - I know I can preach but as soon as I'm up there I can't." She said, "If you can do it in there

When you're racked with unbelief, having someone speak truth when you're struggling to speak it to yourself is amazing.

you can do it out there." Something started to change - believing. When you're racked with unbelief, having someone speak truth when you're struggling to speak it to yourself is amazing.

Things got better in how I worked - I'm my own worst enemy in my mind, but when I step out to preach, I say, "I'm stepping out of my anxieties, doubt, unbelief and what people have said to me, and into your call, power and strength."

The story of Elijah inspires me - facing off false prophets over who's greater, Baal or Jehovah. Elijah follows God and soaks the altar - making his position weaker; everyone thinks he's crazy. But he prays, and fire falls. That's how God wants us as Christians. If we desire fire, weakness is the way.

I remember something switching in my mind as I prepared to preach - I realised, whether I speak well or not, God needs to be glorified, His purposes need to be accomplished. It's obvious, yet it gave me peace. If stammering helps God be glorified, so be it!

Sunday looks different now. During worship, I focus on Jesus and pray for people. I step out of self-focussed thoughts, into His truth and power, and just preach. I pray out loud at the start and God anchors and settles me. Then I'm able to step into the message He wants. Occasionally, it feels like I'm crawling uphill, and I have to fight for every word, but now it's rarer, and I move on. It's not a big focus, it's peripheral.

God isn't calling the able, but the available. It's ongoing; He's still knocking on certain doors in my heart saying, "I need that bit too!"



Some key takeaways from Pastor Will:

Preaching is challenging at the best of times, so here's my three top reminders to encourage you if you've been called to preach:

- 1 Pursue prayer first and foremost. Being in His presence is more important than being in the pulpit.
- 2 Recognise there will be a season of learning to preach and a season of learning to preach *to people* and meet their felt need - not just explaining a passage but serving people the truth in the way they need it.
- 3 The result is more about worship than knowledge - we want to see people respond in prayer, praise and rooting their lives in Him.

Will is the pastor of Ridgeway Community Church Didcot; he loves being husband to Sarah and dad to Grace. Prior to Ridgeway, he pastored in South Africa and was a regular visiting preacher in churches across the UK. He trained at Moorlands Bible College and recently completed his Masters in theology. He's a passionate Welshman, sports fan, gym-goer, movie watcher, book reader and big food lover!

How would Jesus vote?



Danny Webster, our director of advocacy, highlights some key findings from

our recent research report *Thinking faithfully about politics*, and raises the question, are we reflecting Jesus in our political engagement?

If Jesus was eligible to vote in the UK at the upcoming election, what would He do? From our recent survey of evangelical Christians, only 5% thought He would avoid political matters altogether, but just 12% thought He would vote for a particular party – that leaves the large majority of our respondents unsure exactly what that involvement would look like.

Three quarters thought He would protest against corruption and He would befriend politicians of all parties, although that leaves nearly a quarter who seemingly thought there were some politicians He wouldn't befriend. The

truth is that there are no easy answers for what being a follower of Jesus means as we consider how we engage in politics.

What we do know is that God cares about our world, and we are called to play a part. Colossians 1:20 says God is reconciling all things to Himself – things in Heaven and on earth, and while we wait for His kingdom to fully come, our actions on earth today can be part of demonstrating His goodness and His glory throughout the world.

It's great to know and is backed up by our findings that evangelical Christians care about politics. We see this through the very high engagement anticipated with the coming election (more than 90% intend to vote), their participation beyond voting and the range of issues they are passionate about.

It is also clear that evangelical Christians think faithfully about politics. It's not just a practical response to issues around them but is clearly motivated by what they believe.

Thirdly, there is great diversity in how evangelicals engage in politics. There is no monolithic evangelical vote; the spread of support for different parties is not dissimilar to that of the general public.

The evangelicals we surveyed would be more likely to vote for parties that protected free speech in the workplace, opposed assisted suicide, reduced the time limit for abortion, supported safe and legal routes for asylum, backed religious freedom in trade deals and increased the minimum wage. This is not a portfolio of policy preferences that

What we found out



Evangelicals care about politics.



Evangelicals think faithfully about politics.



Evangelicals engage in politics in many different ways.

Where we do engage in party politics, we should ensure it is Him we are following.

neatly map onto any party platform. Issues of poverty and inequality rank top of the list, and policies that support the most vulnerable are the biggest factor influencing how evangelicals vote.

What is the challenge and how can we approach it?

Our task, always but perhaps particularly around the time of an election, is to take politics seriously but to also understand that it is never the final answer. Politics affects many areas of our lives, and we should seek to apply scripture faithfully to our contemporary challenges. While we will often agree with other evangelicals on the principles we are pursuing, we may disagree over particular policies. Where we may share broad positions on policies, we may differ over the priority we give to them. Following Jesus is not dependent on party politics, but where we do engage in party politics, we should ensure it is Him we are following.

Alongside commitment to political engagement, there is deep distrust and hesitation about contemporary politics in the UK. For most evangelicals, neither party leaders nor local candidates provide a strong motivation to vote a particular way. A quarter of respondents are undecided about how to vote, and more than 30% are either floating voters or will vote tactically.

And yet despite this hesitation, 93% want to see more Christians engaged in politics and standing for election. While not always hopeful about the future of the country, evangelicals have hope as to what can be achieved through politics. The coming election provides an opportunity for evangelical Christians to demonstrate their commitment to their communities and wider society. In turn, candidates

seeking election and politicians seeking to lead the country are provided with an opportunity to see the depth and breadth of the church's response to the challenges and opportunities that are before us.

How evangelicals can engage beyond the general election

Elections are an opportunity to influence how our nation is run, but the time leading up to and immediately following an election are also a time when our attention is more attuned to political matters. Maybe we get frustrated with how politicians appeal for our support, or how the media covers the election campaign, nonetheless, it is a chance for us to think about how politics affects us all and how we can contribute to the life of our country.

Churches are not to become party political actors – not least because charity law would place their status in jeopardy. Moreover, as our research illustrates, Christians support a diverse range of parties for myriad reasons. Churches must not be co-opted into becoming rallying points for political agendas or partisan purposes, nor should they only be willing to engage with elected MPs if they are from a particular party. Our research shows that this doesn't happen in the UK – more than 9 out of 10 said that there was no hint of support for parties or politicians from their church, and fewer than 2% said there was explicit encouragement to support certain candidates or parties.

We must also recognise the place of faith in informing how we engage in politics. Politics cannot be completely shut out of our churches. To separate our faith from politics would be to remove something that is central to our lives and identity from the decisions that impact our families, communities and nations.

If we are to see evangelicals engage better with politics, churches praying regularly for their elected representatives is a great place to start and a practice that should stretch far beyond election periods.

These are three things churches can do to help their congregation think faithfully about politics:

1



We should pray for our leaders, and for the elections where they are chosen.

2



We should be informed about the issues at stake and what Christian principles might have to say.

3



We should engage with our representatives and build relationships – churches are a prime place for MPs to hear the concerns of the community they are seeking to represent.

At the Evangelical Alliance, we are passionate about amplifying the voice of the church in political spaces and are regularly in conversation with local MPs and in parliament across the nations. We are regularly producing guidance and support on the ground and in the form of resources to support evangelicals and Christian leaders. To access the full report, visit: eauk.it/GE24

To invite an Evangelical Alliance speaker to your church to explore the findings of our research or to learn more about how to faithfully engage in politics after the election, complete the request form at eauk.org/what-we-do/request-a-speaker

Danny joined the Evangelical Alliance in 2008 and currently leads the advocacy team's work across the UK including public policy work and engagement with the parliaments and assemblies, and respective governments. Danny is passionate about encouraging Christians to integrate their faith within all areas of their life.



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“Christians may experience challenges or even hostility when sharing the gospel, so it is important to know your rights and freedoms. This resource is designed to equip and empower you to know that we have incredible freedoms to speak up for Jesus.”

– Danny Webster,
director of advocacy.



Speak Up

A brief guide to the law
and your gospel freedoms

“We believe that both lives in pregnancy matter to God. Creating a culture that is pro-both lives in pregnancy requires us to speak up. But that can be scary to do when saying it is so counter-cultural. Understanding the freedoms we have in what we can say, where and how matters.”

– Dawn McAvoy, Both Lives UK lead.



“I believe God is raising up men and women, young and old, who are faithful to His teachings and are fearless in speaking gospel truths to this culture. Driven by Acts 4:19–20, they will not settle for anything less than the kingdom of Heaven.”

– Alicia Edmund, head of public policy.



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together making Jesus known



**Speaking up and defending your
Christian rights and values can
seem overwhelming, especially
if you don't know what your
current legal freedoms are.**

Speak Up, a resource from the Evangelical Alliance and the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship, is designed to equip and inspire Christians with confidence and knowledge of the current legal freedoms we have to share our faith.

**If we don't use them, we are
at risk of losing them!**

To download the resource, scan the QR code



A prayer for courage and grace



Damilola Makinde, our advocacy engagement lead, offers a prayer of thanksgiving for God's grace and inspires us to speak courageously.

Lord, we thank you that the earth is yours and everything in it. We thank you for setting us on the earth to know you and to represent you. We honour you for your brilliance in creating the world through your speech, and we are humbled at the commission to co-create with you in ours.

Thank you for giving us influence and authority to steward in your name. We thank you that under your rule, all people and creatures and all of creation flourishes.

Lord, we acknowledge that our world is as it is because we are not as we should be. We have not worshipped you as we ought to. We have not stewarded the authority that you have given us well. We have stayed silent when we should have spoken. We have spoken when we should have stayed silent. We repent of the ways in which we grasp for power and security and use other people to our own ends. We lament the rampant injustice and idolatry of our age.

Lord, we long to be part of the solution and not part of the problem. We ask that you would make us into those who use our words and lives to build up rather than tear down. Thank you that because of Jesus, your light shines in our hearts. We ask that as we abide in Him, your light would shine through us into your world.

We ask that your light would shine in our gathered witness – as we meet as one to celebrate the lordship of Jesus over all things. We ask that your light would shine in our scattered witness – as we are dispersed into the world to witness to the lordship of Jesus over all things. We pray this over our schools, our hospitals, our offices, our shops, our governments. May the light of Jesus be seen through the words and witness of His people all across this land.

In His name,
Amen.



RISE UP!

Women Arise Ministries is a Christian charity empowering women and supporting vulnerable families all around the world. Founder **Joanne Daley** tells us more...



Women Arise Ministries (WAM) Global began in 2004, and was birthed through prayer and the leading of the Holy Spirit, to love, build and encourage and support the spiritual and emotional needs of women of all denominations and to allow those who do not know Jesus the opportunity to see His love in action.

We strive to cater to the whole person, spirit, soul and body, because God wants us well in every area of our lives. Our empowerment meetings are used as a catalyst to bring healing, restoration and knowledge to women irrespective of age, race and culture. Through our presentations, listening and prayer service, women are encouraged and empowered to face their challenges and embrace change. The



Families attend WAM community project.

feedback received has been heartening and makes what we do meaningful:

“I feel loved.”

“Having the space to speak has helped me.”

“I feel I have a voice.”

“Although I came by myself, I did not feel alone.”

Prayer is one of the heartbeats of WAM, so annually our first meeting in all our locations is our Women’s Prayer Breakfast, where we galvanise Christian women to come together and pray the heart of the Father for our families, churches, community and the nations.

God never shows us the full picture of what He has planned for the next chapter. In 2021, I heard the Lord say, it’s time to move the WAM office out of my home. I started to research the cost of an office to present the figures to the board of trustees, but a decision was made that it would be too costly. Although disappointed, I knew what I heard, so continued to seek God. Within a week, we received a donation of £500 from one of our regular attendees, then another £500, then £1,000 and so on until we

had over £4,000 from different donors, to cover the office rent for a year. Two and a half years later, praise God, we are still here!

WAM now run several community projects, encouraging families, male, female and children from different cultures and backgrounds, through our weekly feeding programme (Come Dine With Me). It’s an outreach for families who are struggling to make ends meet and need to utilise our listening service ‘SPACE’ that supports the wellbeing of women in the community as well as our Black young women social action project, Rise Up & Walk.

Resilience is a key attribute to surviving and thriving in our walk with Christ. God has shown us throughout scripture how to stand against all odds. We are surrounded by a great cloud of witness who has shown us that we can run the race of perseverance if we keep our eyes on Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith.

To read Joanne’s personal testimony of answered prayer, visit: eauk.it/raise-up

Joanne Daley is CEO and founder of Women Arise Ministries Global. Co-writers: Adonna Gibson, Anne George, Denise Williams-Bent.

GOOD NEWS for Everyone! is on a mission to make the Bible accessible to everyone, including the young and the destitute, and is having life-changing results.

Spreading the

GOOD NEWS



The aim of GOOD NEWS for Everyone!, formerly known as The Gideons, is simply to introduce others to the Lord Jesus Christ. Since beginning in the UK in 1949, members of the association have been placing and presenting Bibles and testaments into almost every area of everyday life throughout the UK and providing scriptures for distribution in many countries around the world.

By God's grace, numerous testimonies have been received over the years of lives wonderfully transformed – suicides prevented, marriages saved, and many confessing their sins and opening their hearts to receive Jesus as their Lord and Saviour – through reading a copy of God's word.

As members of GOOD NEWS for Everyone! we are often given 'a time to speak' when offering someone a Bible. However, it is true to say that most testimonies received are not because a member of the association has spoken a word of witness – most testimonies are when someone on their own picks up a Bible that may have sat unopened on a shelf for many years or is found in a hotel bedroom drawer, but when opened, God's word speaks to them in a very powerful way.

Our work in schools is probably the most well-known aspect of what we do. Very often someone will say, "I remember receiving a little red book at school". By God's grace and to His glory, about 35 million of these 'little red books' have now been placed into the hands of school pupils throughout this country over the past 70 years.

And we continue to be encouraged by the many letters and emails we receive from school pupils expressing appreciation for the gift of a copy of God's word:

"Thank you, your organisation helped me to find God. You came to my school about a year ago and handed out the New Testament and Psalms. You have changed my life forever and for the better. I read a part of it every night and I am on the second time round already!" – Emily

"From what I had read in the New Testament, I became convinced of my own sinfulness. I am glad to say that from this I came to the Lord for forgiveness and have come to know the Lord as my Saviour." – Ian

"It has helped me through so many difficult situations and once when I thought there was nothing left for me, I got my Bible and I remembered there was, and there always will be something to cling onto. It has silently got me through things that I found really hard to live with." – Alyce

Prisons are another place where a Bible is often read in the solitude of a prison cell, with wonderful results! When God's word speaks when no other person is present, it can be a very powerful thing! Andy is just one such example. Serving a life sentence for murder, the result of a drunken argument, Andy's outlook on life was very bleak and hopeless, until one night in his prison cell. Here's his testimony:

"In August 2006, while in prison, I decided to take my own life. My situation had become so hopeless I'd lost the will to live, and planned to end my life. At that moment a quiet voice spoke to me 'Just read that Bible.' On the shelf sat a copy of the New Testament and Psalms placed by GOOD NEWS

for Everyone! I opened the book at the beginning of Matthew's Gospel and started to read. At Luke's Gospel, I encountered the story of the lost son, my tears started to flow, my hopelessness disappeared and the wretchedness I had suffered went. Most of all, the idea I firmly believed that I was unworthy of forgiveness was taken from me.

"The angry, frightened desperate person I had become ceased to exist right there and then. I was encouraged by Jesus' words where He spoke of the brother who was 'dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found', I had been found indeed. I wept openly with joy. Suddenly I had hope. I couldn't have told you what for, I just knew I had hope. I wanted to live, there wasn't any difficulty I wasn't ready to face...

"If no Bible had been in that prison cell, I would be in Hell right now; instead of living my life in the joy of the Lord!"

What a wonderful thing is the power of the word of God. No one else in that prison cell but the word of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Let us pray that many will hear that voice that speaks.

To find out more, go to goodnewsuk.com or contact us at: info@goodnewsuk.com

Iain Mair is the executive director of GOOD NEWS for Everyone! based in Lutterworth, Leicestershire, a position he has held for over 20 years. Iain and his wife Jenny have two married sons and three granddaughters.

TALKING JESUS



Our mission team shed light on the powerful insights from our *Talking Jesus* report and why we should all feel empowered to boldly share the gospel with those around us.

“There came a moment when I decided to, virtually in my mind, ditch the burdensome rucksack and this changed things for me forever. With God’s help, it freed me up to have the most genuine, lifegiving conversations with friends.”

In 2020, Dictionary.com named ‘unprecedented’ as the People’s Choice Word of the Year, explaining that the word was used so frequently that year that it eventually became a cliché. I remember often using it myself. For many, big life events or ‘unprecedented’ situations are catalysts to a search for a meaningful worldview or a way to make sense of life, as the *Talking Jesus* research shows. We have an opportunity, as Christians, to speak of hope during these times and we have the answers in Jesus that many are seeking.

The *Talking Jesus* report, published in April 2022, aimed to shed light on the state of faith in the UK, how people come to faith and how Christians can share Jesus more effectively with communities and friends. We learned from this report that major or ‘unprecedented’ life events, positive or negative, are the single biggest influence on adults who go on to become Christians, with **23%** of practising Christians choosing this option above ‘attending a physical church service’ (21%) or ‘Christian family’ (20%). It’s likely that the 2020 pandemic heavily shaped this statistic. Momentous life events leave us searching and, generally, more open spiritually.

Take, for example, our collective response to the death of Queen Elizabeth II, just a few months later in 2022. As a nation, we entered a similarly ‘unprecedented’ period of mourning, which most had never experienced in their lifetimes. The departure of a figure so intrinsic to British identity was a key event in the lives of many people and, interestingly, it prompted a desire to honour the values she so clearly emulated all her life – the distinctly Christian values of faith, sacrifice, and service. Personal and profoundly spiritual tributes to the late Queen dominated social media feeds for days. Our national response to this significant life event involved a shared reach for meaning, for the ‘something more’, and

brought the hope of the Christian faith to the surface.

The report’s statistic around life events is huge for those who faithfully lead our churches into mission. The people we seek to reach with the gospel are navigating significant and often complex life events, and at any one time may be dealing with a family bereavement, a new birth, recent redundancy, a new home, a breakup, or a diagnosis. Mark Hopkins, one of our regional unity champions who also leads a church in Nottingham, commented that the *Talking Jesus* research “...will form the central part of our thinking and discussion on how we can be an effective missional church moving forward. Those we serve are most likely already looking for answers, and this should heavily shape our approach to church-wide mission.”

The *Talking Jesus* research reveals that the first active and practising Christian thought of by non-Christians is not a church leader, but someone close to them – **35%** said that it was a friend, and **31%** said a family member. And, when asked their thoughts on what that Christian was like, the top results were ‘friendly’ (**62%**) and ‘caring’ (**50%**). Not only are our non-Christian friends thinking of us first – they actually like us!

But when it comes to sharing Jesus at work, the school gate, university halls, toddler groups, or at the gym, all too often we approach these opportunities feeling overwhelmed with responsibility or armed for defence. Rachael Heffer, head of mission at the Evangelical Alliance, felt this too. But now she sees things differently: “In my mind it felt like I was wearing a heavy rucksack, weighed down with rocks, and the pressure to say the right thing felt heavy weighted and burdensome. However, at a certain point I became aware that the ‘baggage’ was all on my side as the Christian! There came a moment when I decided to, virtually

in my mind, ditch the burdensome rucksack and this changed things for me forever. With God’s help, it freed me up to have the most genuine, lifegiving conversations with friends. The *Talking Jesus* research enlightens the church as to how open people are, across the UK, to engage with Christians and to speak of things of faith.”

The joys and sorrows of our common human experience provide opportunities for us, as Christians, to present the only lens through which we can find true meaning. Removing our self-inflicted baggage will release us to do this, especially with the new mother next door, or with a recently bereaved colleague, or in the wake of a catastrophic news story. May we all have the boldness to cast off our heavy rucksacks and, with these encouraging statistics ringing in our ears, share Jesus with our searching world.



Talking Jesus

Talking Jesus Report 2022

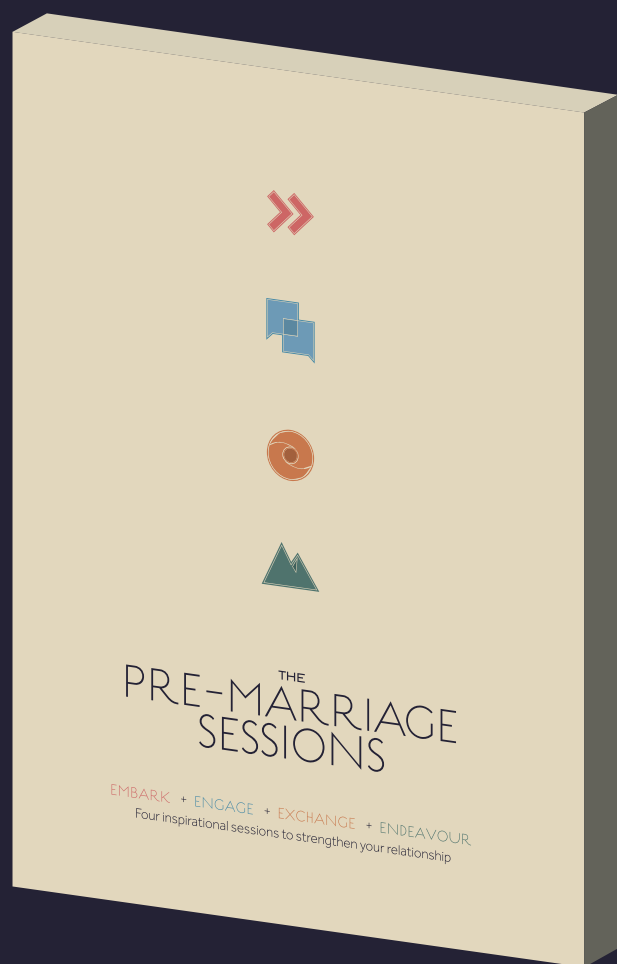
What people in the UK think of Jesus, Christians and evangelism

To learn more about the *Talking Jesus* report and our suite of resources, scan the QR code or visit: talkingjesus.org



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Speak Holy Spirit

Pastor Kwame Osae, leader of Milton Keynes Christian Centre, shares his testimony and explains how confessing Jesus as Lord over his life has powerfully impacted his faith journey.

I was raised in Ghana. I attended Presbyterian Boys' boarding school in the capital city of Accra. During those years, the Scripture Union meetings were vibrant, and I attended as and when, though I hadn't fully committed to Jesus Christ at the time. Despite occasional inclinations, I hesitated to fully embrace faith. However, a significant encounter during a Scripture Union-led trip to a crusade at the Accra sports stadium in the 1986/87 school year changed everything!

Following the event, where renowned leaders of faith spoke and offered opportunities to surrender to Jesus, I found myself responding to the call. Though only a teenager at the time, I felt a stirring in my heart and uttered a prayer of surrender. This moment marked the beginning of my journey with Christ.

Growing up, I struggled with a respiratory disease, and I remember my mother would administer medication whenever I had a crisis. Yet, during the crusade a call for healing prompted me to place my hand on my chest in faith. Miraculously, over time, I experienced complete healing from my afflictions, solidifying my commitment to follow Jesus.

However, in subsequent years, I faltered in my faith journey, succumbing to the allure of a lifestyle contrary to my professed beliefs. Addiction to smoking

I felt a stirring in my heart and uttered a prayer of surrender.

and alcohol consumed me, leading to a reckless and nocturnal existence. Yet, amidst this darkness, a pivotal dream was the precursor to a new journey in Christ.

In the dream, amidst chaos and uncertainty, I saw two groups of people – one at peace, the other troubled. I found myself among the troubled, questioning Jesus, who was on the side of those at peace, *why I wasn't on His side?* It was then that the Lord reminded me of times when I had not heeded His word and walked in disobedience to His invitation. The dream shook me to my core, and so on awakening I rededicated my life to Jesus.

This recommitment sparked a radical transformation in my life: passionate about serving in God's house, I began as an usher and eventually engaged in open-air evangelism, leading others to Christ. Despite scepticism from friends, my steadfast dedication to faith endured.

Around that same time, whilst working alongside my father in our family business, God's divine intervention spared me from a near-fatal accident. Recognising God's protection, it galvanised my faith and commitment to Jesus.

Not long after that, my parents presented me with the opportunity to further my studies in the UK as a thank you for assisting them in the family business. I accepted after much deliberation at the thought of leaving the confines of my family and community in Ghana.

While studying in the UK, I immersed

myself in a vibrant church community, and this gave me the opportunity to serve in various teams and in leadership roles.

Upon completing my studies, I embraced serving God in full-time ministry as a member of staff and subsequently embarked on church planting as a lead pastor in the Buckinghamshire and Midlands areas. This gave me the opportunity to equip teams in the church, teaching and preaching God's word, and most importantly witnessing people come into transformation by virtue of their relationship with our Lord Jesus.

In the ensuing years, I have had the opportunity to serve in various leadership roles in the body of Christ and I have found it all rewarding though challenging.

Now, as I reflect on my journey, I am filled with gratitude for God's faithfulness. From the initial encounter at Accra Sports Stadium to the present day, God's hand has guided me through every twist and turn. It is with humility and thanksgiving that I share my story, acknowledging His grace and mercy throughout.

To connect with Pastor Kwame or find out more about MKCC, visit: mkcc.org.uk

Pastor Kwame is the pastor of Milton Keynes Christian Centre. He is married to Fiona, and together they have four wonderful children.

How can we speak

boldly

about our faith in a postmodern world?



Katherine Brown, our Being Human engagement

lead, explores why we should be aware of the counter-cultural model of evangelism, and why we should push through and do it anyway...

I think the hardest part of sharing faith isn't when people reject me, or when it gets awkward - it's actually the moment right before I do it. I enjoy chatting about Jesus, but every time I'm presented with an opportunity to take a conversation deeper or to initiate a faith chat, it's a wrestle, a conscious decision, and an internal battle. There are many times that I experience this, like when I'm getting ready to leave my flat to knock on my neighbour's door - it would be so much easier to just stay home; when I'm getting my hair cut and the hairdresser starts talking about what she's manifesting, I could just nod along, instead of asking questions. Or when the girl at the gym asks me what I'm up to this weekend, I could just give half an answer. In these situations, I am always wondering, *do I want to disrupt the status quo? Do I want to shatter the facade that I'm just like them? Do I want to stand out and potentially make things awkward, or be the 'weird' person they talk about to their friends?*

But when I do make the decision to go for it, I never regret it, even if it does get uncomfortable. Who knows what God will do when even the tiniest seed is planted? It's worth disrupting the norms, standing out or being the topic of conversation if it creates an opportunity to share the goodness that is Jesus!

Breaking down barriers and cultural norms

I'm always buzzing when I have a faith conversation, no matter what the outcome. And yet I still go through the nerve-wracking decision-making process every time I am presented with an opportunity. So why is there such a wrestle in me? Why am I so concerned about fitting in, when we are called to be set apart?

Maybe it's a British thing, or a desire for comfort, or for ease. Perhaps it comes from a desire to avoid being noticed or making a fuss, or a desire to be accepted and get along with others. But I think a big part of it is something much deeper;



This cultural story and others seep into our churches without us even realising it, and we're at risk of being more shaped by cultural stories than we are the gospel.

Christians have always been people called to speak up, to stand out, and to disrupt the status quo.

it's down to some of the cultural stories that have been ingrained in the fabric of the western world. Postmodernism is one of these stories, and it says: "Your truth is your truth, so keep it private." This cultural story and others seep into our churches without us even realising it, and we're at risk of being shaped more by cultural stories than we are the gospel - most of the time we don't even notice it happening! When the story of postmodernism blends into our stories as Christians, we believe the lie that the best thing to do is to live privately, keep quiet, and to go along with the 'natural order'. This might not seem like a big deal - you're not giving up on your faith, you're an active member of a great church, you serve, you give, but the postmodernist story creates huge problems because the Christian life isn't marked out by keeping quiet and retreating into Christian communities. Christians have always been people called to speak up, to stand out, and to disrupt the status quo.

For a Christian, it's an almost impossible task to blend in, because the culture is at odds with the kingdom. The only place we can successfully blend in is within our Christian communities, surrounded by people who believe all the same things as us. Think about it - if you have non-Christian friends, it's actually quite hard to avoid talking about Jesus; if you really know your neighbours, it's challenging to hide how differently you live; and if you ask the person making your coffee about their life, you're not really toeing the cultural line! But when we retreat into Christian communities, never interacting in any impactful way with non-Christians, the postmodern story is dictating our lives, not the gospel. Christian community is where we are rooted, but we are called to go together to reach the world around us. The great commission stands in direct odds with the cultural storyline that says, 'keep your views private', and opposes the mandate on our lives.

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name

of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

Therefore, go and make disciples, not therefore wait until people show up at your church. The great commission is for all of us, no matter what our circumstances. All of us are called to stand out, to speak up, to live radically differently in our normal, everyday, ordinary lives.

In the simplest terms, the great commission means being ready to talk about Jesus, to explain why we live, give and love in the way we do. It means expecting and creating opportunities to share the gospel, believing that the story that has captivated our hearts and transformed our lives will transform the world around us. For many of us, this is as simple as making sure we have enough time in our lives to build genuine friendships with people who don't know Jesus.

From the formation of the early church to now, Christians have always lived in ways that are distinct in the culture that surrounds them - like a match in the dark, highlighter on a page, a unicycle locked up at the train station, or laughter in a silent room, Christians stand out in the world around them. So, let's not settle for the cultural storyline that forces us into Christian bubbles, or allow fear or awkwardness to stop us from sharing our faith. Let's step out, speak up and go on the adventure of talking about the good news.

Katherine joined the Evangelical Alliance in 2023 to be part of the Being Human team. Before this, she worked in student ministry, equipping students to share their faith with their friends. Katherine became a Christian while at drama school, and she's passionate about evangelism, storytelling and seeing young adults thrive in church.



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Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) is the world's largest humanitarian air service, bringing Christian help, hope and healing to those in need.

Inviting people to experience the kindness of God

David Hill is passionate about evangelism. He explains how a small resource he created 14 years ago has evolved into a multi-church, multi-city movement, which is seeing thousands of people consider Jesus.

An attractive logo has been appearing in various places. The logo I'm referring to simply says: "trypraying." This intriguing and gently provocative invitation is appearing on banners outside churches, on buses across towns and cities and on social media.

At its heart, trypraying is an invitation for those who are not Christian and don't 'do' church to experience the kindness of God. The trypraying booklet, which is at the core of this initiative, is a seven-day prayer guide for people who are willing to give it a try. It helps them pray about something important to them and, crucially, helps them engage with the message of Jesus.

We have received hundreds of stories from people it has touched and transformed:

"It's awesome to see those adverts. That little booklet changed my life."

"I'll tell you what trypraying has done for us: it's brought the churches together."

"By the end of the week, I asked Jesus into my life, as the booklet suggests, and had a powerful experience actually feeling His presence flood my heart."

Over the last 14 years, trypraying has grown from being a simple evangelism resource, to a project for a church, and now, a multi-church strategy for a town or a city. Its simplicity and accessibility have helped it grow with around 600 churches using it in the last 12 months. The booklet explains the gospel with accessible language interspersed with stories of answered prayer and things a person can do to help them discover God at work in their lives.

I believe that people who use this booklet run a high risk of becoming Christians and that's a risk we're happy about!

Wilson's wife left a copy on their living room coffee table. He said: "It

seemed to get a little closer to my chair every time I came home! Eventually, I read it in bed, the whole booklet in a 'one-er'! At the end, I simply looked up to the ceiling and said, 'Hello.'" That was the beginning of his journey which included an Alpha course and his coming to faith.

Dorothy gave a booklet to her brother. She slipped it in his pocket at the station when he got on a train after Christmas. A few days later he phoned her. He had got to day six of the booklet and said, "I think I have just become a Christian!"

Mary: "I am a 'card-carrying' Christian of many years who finds it difficult to share my faith without over-complicating it. trypraying is fantastic."

Bus advertising has been a powerful part of the project. Beginning in Edinburgh, the campaign is now across the whole of Scotland and in several places in England. It has created a 'brand awareness' of over 50% from market research that has been done. That's a conversation starter for the Christians with their friends and a provocative, but kind, message to the whole population.

A minister in Edinburgh came up with the idea of putting booklets in a Perspex box on the railings of his church. The idea has caught on and scores of churches are doing this. But it's not only churches: now individuals are putting these boxes outside, holding a few booklets on their garden gate or fence. Booklets are gradually being taken and then topped up with more. One church has already replenished over 500.

The idea has caught on in other countries as well: Australia, and New



Zealand, the USA, the Czech Republic and now a French and Spanish booklet have also been printed with interest in other countries.

Although this 'macro story' is exciting, the heart of it all is individual Christians having a conversation about their faith with their friends and those friends beginning a conversation with God about their life.

This autumn, maybe your church will invite your community to try trypraying. It's an opportunity for churches to work together, congregations to be mobilised and Christians to simply share their faith with friends and neighbours. It will be a creative, visible mix of banners, booklets, boxes and buses all pointing people upwards!

For more information, contact hello@trypraying.org

What's this all about?

See trypraying.org

Looking for resources?

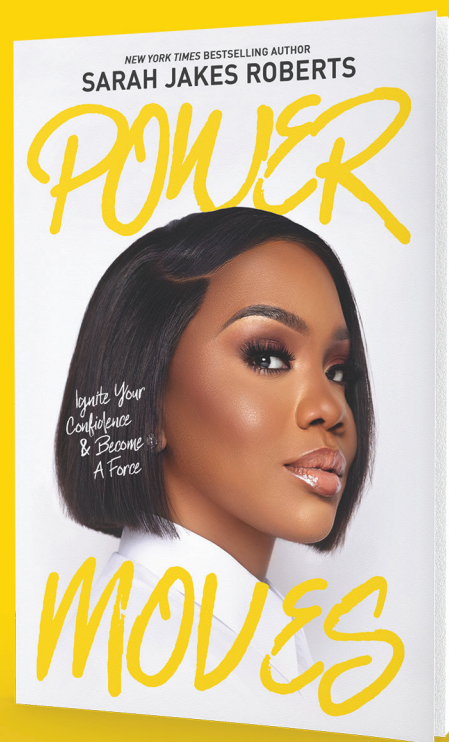
See do.trypraying.org

David is the author of trypraying, a prayer guide for people who are not religious and don't 'do' church. He's keen to help churches engage in united prayer and evangelism.



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SARAH JAKES ROBERTS knows firsthand that the ability to determine your truth without judgment is the beginning of harnessing authentic power in Christ. When we do the work of embracing where we are, we create space for God's love to meet us in our most raw form and then polish us to shine like never before.



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The Navigator: boldly going where Bibles and missionaries cannot go



Andrew Hawkins, the UK/Europe director at Leading The Way, asks, how can you share the gospel in the midst of war, sophisticated firewalls or in a place facing government suppression of the internet? Getting God's word deep into the heart of closed countries and remote regions can be a real challenge. Which is why he and his team came up with the Navigator – Leading The Way's pocket missionary.

Available in nearly 30 of the world's most spoken languages, Navigators are designed to overcome obstacles to the gospel in hard-to-reach places.

One user from Sierra Leone writes, "What a blessing that you are spreading God's word to all parts of the world! Thank you for helping us bless those God loves."

Impacting remote places with the navigator

Users from Albania and Pakistan said:

"God brought this Navigator at just the right time. My mother's heart was ready to receive the gospel. She now wants to be baptised." – Albania

"Nobody had ever told me the truth of Jesus Christ. After listening to the Navigator... my life has been changed. I am also guiding my friends and family to Jesus." – Pakistan

The Navigator audio device is compact, durable, and solar-powered and has an audio version of the New Testament and up to 150 Bible teachings from founder Dr Youssef. Through this pocket missionary device, the gospel is reaching rural villages, refugee camps, drug towns, blind communities, leprosy colonies, prisons, underground churches and persecuted believers confined to their homes.

A church leader from UAE said: "A lady from Vietnam has been visiting our church. Her English is very poor, so she

struggles to understand the sermons at the church. She comes originally from a Buddhist background. She was very excited to receive the Navigator in Vietnamese and I am praying the Lord will use it to give her a greater understanding of the gospel." – UAE

A user from Ukraine said: "I was born without legs. I am 76 and a Christian but have not been able to go to church for several years, because the left side of my body is paralysed. My eyesight is also pretty weak, because of diabetes, [so] it's difficult for me to read my Bible. My pastor brought me a Navigator, it has become a great spiritual blessing through which I can listen to God's word and sermons."

Reaching asylum seekers and refugees in UK churches

Hope Church in Hounslow has been reaching the Farsi-speaking community and The Tron Church in Glasgow is piloting the Navigator also among Farsi attendees whose English is limited.

Rev Claire Clarke, vicar at Hope Church Hounslow shares, "We have handed out many Navigators to refugees and asylum seekers. About 20 did the Alpha course and each took a Navigator and reported back over the following weeks how helpful it was to hear teaching and the Bible being read in their own language."

So, as we try to distribute this tool globally, please pray for us.

- **Pray** for every Navigator to reach the right person and win them to Christ.
- **Pray** for greater uptake and use in the UK among our diverse population.
- **Pray** for the wider ministry of Leading The Way with Dr Michael Youssef.

If you would like to find out more about receiving and using Navigators in your church or community, email ahawkins@ltw.org



Overseas user of a Navigator device.



What does it take to overcome trauma in early life, exude joy and be a positive presence?

Enter **Nicola Morrison**, our very own editor, journalist and author, for whom life has been far from plain sailing...

HEART BEHIND THE ART:

AN INTERVIEW WITH NICOLA MORRISON



By Helen Locke,
editorial co-ordinator,
Evangelical Alliance

Faced with a barrage of difficulties to overcome in early life and young adulthood, including bullying, self-harm, loss and even multiple suicide attempts, her story is one of overcoming to find her identity in Christ. After over a decade at the BBC working predominantly as a broadcast journalist, and covering breaking news, she has just published her autobiography *Victory Is My Name* (Austin Macauley Publishers).

Those who know Nicola as the bubbly, confident and assured presence she is today might be surprised to learn of the difficult start she had in life.

“People will struggle to reconcile the girl in the book with the reality of me today, but at the same time I think that’s an amazing testament to God... it could only be God.” She hopes people want to know Jesus after reading her story and that it could even be used as a tool for evangelism amongst her friends and family that are not-yet Christians.

There have been harrowing moments: at just six years old, she was physically assaulted in the playground in the view of teachers who did nothing. At 14, she went into care due to domestic abuse. At 17, she experienced homelessness, became legally estranged from her parents, and was rushed into an ambulance after a suicide attempt.

As she gives readings of her book, for example of a chapter about the racism, bullying and self-loathing she

experienced as a result, it’s enough to bring anyone to tears (including me!). As a young girl, Nicola experienced harsh words from family and friends scrutinising her appearance, as well as racist bullying at school which compounded an intense longing to be someone else, that led her to self-harm.

“My lowest times were when the enemy was able to convince me I was on my own, was not normal, and there was no hope,” she shares, “surrounded by

People will struggle to reconcile the girl in the book with the reality of me today, but at the same time I think that’s an amazing testament to God... it could only be God.

The joy that defines Nicola today is drawn from a deep and daily sense of gratitude to God.

those lies... that you're not going to have the life that other people have."

As she entered adolescence, she believed reading and writing was her only escape. With a lifelong love of words, from a young age, journaling became her survival tactic and a cathartic plea for help to someone, anyone, (before she knew that someone was God), to get her out of her difficult home and school life. A lover of words, hearing and telling stories has been a constant passion in her life and she would 'interview' friends and family as a pre-teen to hone her budding journalistic skills.

"Writing was my voice in an otherwise muted existence."

Lost in her books, she could go anywhere; her favourites were stories about Black girls with frizzy hair who looked just like her. She always maxed out her library card and remembers crying when she couldn't afford the books her young friends were buying at primary school.

By the age of 14, she had learned about God, prayer, salvation, that there was something greater than her and that she needed help to get out of her myriad of difficult situations. But it wasn't until the age of 18, attending church with a family member, that she fully



Nicola in bookstore after her book release



Nicola interviewing at premier of *The Chosen*

understood God's presence, gave her life to God and got baptised. She felt for the first time in her life she was not alone, there was a Friend next to her who was in things with her. That was transitional for her and gave her an outlet; she went from knowing she had access to God, to actually accepting His invitation. She is now confident and secure in the loving arms of God her Father.

"I say I'm in recovery, because any time you've suffered from a debilitating issue, you're rewiring yourself every day to undo the mindset. Every day, I have to remind myself, *you are normal, fearfully and wonderfully made, you are not alone and there is always hope in your future*. I am always countering the lies with the presence of God."

Throughout her adult life as a Christian, Nicola would frequently empathise with people going through dark times and would open up in intense moments and see that people would be impacted by her personal story, how much she had walked through, and her empathy as a result. She wrote down her story during lockdown as a cathartic exercise, but then felt the Holy Spirit call her to share her story publicly.

But putting it all together in a book was a different challenge altogether. How would she protect and honour all the people in her story while being authentic?

"Scared is an understatement! I was terrified of how differently people would see me... It was an obedience thing." She had to discern God's voice and be reassured that He would help her, even

if publishing the book would bring fresh challenges.

"It's been reaffirmed by how many open doors have happened since... I've had reassurance all the way along of Him ordering my steps and saying, once again, you are not alone.

"The trade-off is that, if it serves someone, brings them to Christ, stops someone taking their life or self-harming, then it has been worth sharing my story. I wrote the book I wish I had had during my darkest times."

The joy that defines Nicola today is drawn from a deep and daily sense of gratitude to God.

"It's survivors' joy. I am better equipped today than I ever was. I am so grateful for another chance.

"I often pray, God, if you don't give me another single thing I ask for, I am rich. If I only survived everything I went through, I am complete, I am content..."

"He reminds me often of what He's put inside me. He's given me authority to command things that are not of His will to flee; I have a boldness now that I didn't have before."

Victory Is My Name is available from all good online book retailers now.

To connect with Nicola, you can visit nikki-news.com and follow her on socials.



Gavin Calver, CEO of the Evangelical Alliance, illustrates how showing up and delivering the word can sometimes be all that is required to inspire a mighty move from God.



There is power in the tongue!



I've loved having the privilege of speaking all over the UK for the past 25 years. In my role here at the Evangelical Alliance, we serve such a huge diversity of churches and whenever I go and visit different places and spaces, it's wonderful to see this in action. When I used to work at Youth for Christ, one of the real highlights was getting to speak in young offenders' institutes where you would encounter many young men who were desperately looking for hope. Though these youth prisons could be intimidating, one of the great advantages of preaching there was that you always got a good crowd, as the lads would get longer out of their cells if they went to chapel. Additionally, if they responded to your message they would get even longer out of their cell whilst they were being prayed with; if you'd gone in thinking that you had lost your evangelistic touch you would leave believing you were the next Billy Graham!

Every time I spoke, every young man would respond. However, it was hard at times to know quite how much impact you were having on their lives. You hoped a real impact was being made, but it was so difficult to know. This is why it was so wonderful to speak at a church not that long ago where a lady came up to me after the service thanking me for my ministry. I naively assumed that she was speaking about my preaching that morning and said that it had been a real pleasure to be with them and a delight to speak. She swiftly interrupted me and said, "Oh no, I'm not thanking you for today's talk, that was really average. I'm thanking you for 10 years ago when you went into a particular young offenders' institute to preach and my son, who was an inmate at the time, surrendered his life to Jesus." She continued and said, "what's amazing is that that same son is now going into the same young offenders' institute as part of the chaplaincy team to help other young men encounter Jesus for themselves too." I was absolutely blown

away, as over the years I had learned to accept that the impact I saw in young offenders' institutions was arguably not entirely accurate. However, to hear of one life turned inside out, upside down and back to front for Jesus was such an encouragement and reminded me again of the life changing impact of the gospel.

Our words have real power, and when we speak up for Jesus the impact can be far beyond anything we would ever imagine. We're living in a time when so much of our society feels hopeless, yet we carry the true hope of Jesus and have the joy of sharing this with all those around us.

So, let's raise our voice about the Jesus we love and follow and let's do all we can to make Him known together. Let's be Christians who in our day speak out about the hope we have in the Lord, sharing that good news with those around us. Let's leave the results to the Lord, after all, the fact that a young man's life in prison was totally turned around was all down to Jesus: I was simply available to speak up for Him in that place.

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