

idea

THE MAGAZINE OF THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE
WINTER 2025

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A photograph of a woman and two young children sitting on a couch, wrapped in a grey blanket. They are all smiling and looking at a book held by the woman. The child on the right is wrapped in a pink blanket. The background is softly blurred, showing a window and some indoor plants.


**A time
to rest**

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Welcome

This is a busy time of year! And before we know it, the new year has started and is in full swing; resolutions vowing to be more prayerful, hospitable, generous and restful soon seem far-fetched as normal routines resume and the fast pace of life only quickens. “So, when do we rest?” I hear you ask! I have found myself asking that same question, and I pray that this edition of ‘A time to rest’ will help you, as it has me, to answer that exact question, with helpful tips on how to set boundaries, spot the signs of leadership burnout and the transformative benefits that can come from carving out time to spend in God’s presence. We are reminded in Matthew 11:28 that God said: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” Rest is not a character flaw, it is not a sign of weakness or a symptom of a lack of faith, rest is good and God-approved – even our Heavenly Father rested!



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So, I pray that amidst the hustle and bustle of life this season, you too will find time in the Father’s arms to rest, reflect and reset. Be blessed.



Nicola Morrison
 Editor

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REST

Richard Powney unpacks the biblical principles of rest and why less can sometimes achieve more.

How often have you or the person you're speaking with said something like, "life's good, just busy"? In our constantly connected world, with non-stop notifications, draining schedules and costs that feel like they just keep rising, it's easy to understand why many of us are busy. The demands to simply get by are challenging. But I also think there's a seduction to busyness. It can make us feel important, needed, significant.

The instruction to keep the Sabbath, to stop work and rest, is the fourth of the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5:6-21). Shockingly, the punishment for those who did not uphold the Sabbath was death (Exodus 31:14). While we don't have space to unpack this here, it should focus our attention. The instruction to stop work and rest is extremely important for God's people.

Rest and the Bible

In Genesis 2:2-3 we read that after creating the Heavens and the earth, God rested on the seventh day. The idea of God resting is not about what God needed but rather what this act tells us about who God is. In contrast to other deities or rulers, the God of Israel was not a tyrant, working human beings into the ground. Rather, this God was the God of work and rest, a rest that He invites His creation to share in.

In the fourth commandment the Israelites are instructed to rest and allow their dependents, including animals, to rest as well. Keeping the Sabbath, stopping work for one day a week, was an imitation of God's own rest and a sign of Israel's relationship with God. The day was considered holy; it was a portion of time that was set apart and offered back to God (Exodus 20:8-10). The choice to stop and rest is a sign of humble trust in the Creator and giver of life. It was Israel acknowledging their trust in the gracious provision and compassion of their God.

By the time of the New Testament,

many different interpretations were in existence about what did and did not constitute 'work' on the Sabbath. In the gospels of Matthew (Matthew 12), Mark (Mark 2 and 3) and Luke (Luke 6), we find their depictions of how Jesus aroused contempt among His contemporaries because of things He and His disciples did on the Sabbath. In a story told in all three synoptic gospels, Jesus heals a man whose right hand was shrivelled (Luke 6:6). This was considered 'work' by the Pharisees and teachers of the law and made them furious. Jesus' response highlights where the Pharisees had got the focus wrong. They focused on defining 'work' rather than allowing compassion to be their guide. In another interaction, Jesus says that "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

The choice to stop and rest is a sign of humble trust in the Creator and giver of life.

MESS?

What might this mean for us today?

First, it's important to note that Jesus did not say He was doing away with the idea of Sabbath. Rather Jesus re-focused attention on the intention behind God's instruction to keep the Sabbath.

I'm a father of two toddlers and every day there will be a moment (or many moments!) where me or my wife are trying to get the attention of one or both of them. It can be extremely frustrating because they are often totally engrossed in what they're doing or simply distracted. If we draw on this analogy for our relationship with God, I think there is a danger that we're like toddlers. God wants our attention but we're too busy doing our own thing. In his book *The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry*, John Mark Comer highlights that Sabbath was not only about stopping but also delighting in God and His creation. All relationships need dedicated time for them to stay healthy and grow. In the busyness of modern life, the practice of choosing to stop, rest and delight in God is critical

to deepening our relationship with our heavenly Father.

Does this mean that as Christians we should all have a day off each week? And should that day be a Sunday? I think these questions run the risk of falling back into the trap of focusing on defining what counts as work, rather than the principle behind God's instruction to imitate Him by stopping and resting. As disciples of Jesus, we are meant to look distinctive to the world around us. This distinctiveness offers others a glimpse of our Creator – a God who is not a demanding tyrant but a loving Father who invites humanity to share in His divine rest. One aspect of how we can be distinctive is what we do with our time each week. Our modern, ultra-connected world makes us think we need to be constantly productive, informed and entertained, preferably all at the same time. In *Sabbath as Resistance*, Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann describes Sabbath as an act of resistance to this contemporary calling to a rest-less existence. The idea of Sabbath is good

news for us and for the world around us, but it requires discipline. Life with young children is rarely quiet but my wife and I try to find little practices, moments of Sabbath, amidst family life. It's not easy and often doesn't go to plan but we think it's important for ourselves, our family life and our relationship with God.

In Matthew 11:28 Jesus offers to give us rest but He won't force us. We need to choose to model an alternative way, guided by the way of Jesus, that helps us enter into, to use Eugene Peterson's words, "the unforced rhythms of grace" of the kingdom of God. Those rhythms will look different for each of us but they're an important part of us becoming truly human and reflecting to the world the One in whom all rest is found.

Richard is senior research manager at Bible Society. He manages The Patmos Initiative, a project exploring attitudes to the Bible around the world.



SPOTLIGHT!

Ben Jeffrey, our head of church unity, reflects on the powerful impact he has witnessed on church leaders as we continue to support, connect and resource the church across the UK.



Three years ago, during the tail end of the pandemic, the church across the nation was still reeling from lockdowns, face masks and struggling members and leaders confronted with all sorts of restrictions on their ministries. It was at this time that we decided to travel around the country, inviting church leaders to meet with us over food and conversation so that we could share a bit of the national picture and hear more about what Jesus is doing in their communities. Our intention was not to try to gather large crowds but to have rich and meaningful conversations with local leaders.

I remember walking away from the first meeting feeling completely in awe at what God has been doing, yet also profoundly aware of the challenges facing churches across the country and the urgent need for unity. Since then, we have travelled to 33 cities and met with over 800 leaders. We have visited

the largest cities in the nation and have also been to off-the-beaten-track towns and villages. These have been some of the most encouraging meetings and so, here are a few of my personal reflections from our time on the road.

Churches are stretched (and that's good)

In East Yorkshire a leader told me the story of a woman who had walked into their church and brazenly announced, "I am here to discover God and whether faith is real". In years of ministry, I have been told time and time again that this simply does not happen. Except that it now seems to be happening all over the country. More and more I am hearing stories of people reaching out to churches in order to deconstruct their doubts and discover God. Whether it is TikTok, YouTube or spontaneous God encounters, everywhere I go I hear of people searching for Jesus. We are living in an incredible time of opportunity.

This should be a time of celebration,

but the picture is more complicated than that. Alongside these stories, I also hear about how churches are struggling. People who used to come to church fortnightly are now coming monthly. Teams are stretched and rely more and more on fewer people to achieve what they used to. Capacity is low and many churches have been forced to



Church leaders fellowship on unity tour



The pressure on leaders inside and outside the church is heavy. The reason that this matters so much to our leaders is that at its heart, this is a conversation about the place of scripture, faith in adversity and the discipleship of our members.

The challenges are real but what surprised me the most was the tone of the conversations. Everywhere I have travelled, leaders speak with hope. There is a feeling that God is moving and that, despite the challenges, we are on the edge of something incredible. There is a growing hunger within the church for God and a greater dependency on prayer. The challenges of culture are dwarfed by an expectation and anticipation that God is moving.

We are stronger together (and that's good)

It may or may not surprise you that the areas that seem to be the strongest are the ones where churches are working together in unity and not isolation. The Bible tells us that there is a blessing in our unity (Psalm 133), and you can see it across the nation. This unity looks different depending on where you visit. This year churches in Middlesbrough put on a large festival across their city. This would never have been possible for one church to accomplish but by working together they have reached people they never could on their own. In Liverpool, Together for the Harvest are bringing churches together to reach

every man, woman and child in their region with the gospel. There is an open-handed kingdom-heartedness that has grown across our country that is inspiring and exciting. Wherever we saw churches flourishing, we saw unity as well.

Ben is the head of church unity and also leads soulcity church, Stockport, which he planted in 2017. He is unapologetically passionate about the local church, reaching people far from God and seeing the movement of Jesus reproduced in others. He also loves good coffee, falling off surfboards and getting lost on mountains!

close. For leaders, it feels like there is a real tension between the pastoral and missional needs of their church. The challenge is to hold both well, to care for the people in our communities whilst also reaching new people with the gospel. One can never be maintained at the expense of the other. However, the ones that are bold in looking outwards are describing an exciting time of growth and fruitfulness.

Culture has changed rapidly (and that's good)

If you had asked me five years ago what the biggest conversation for the church this decade would be, I would have probably guessed technology and online church. I don't think that anyone saw how quickly and divisively the conversation around gender and sexuality would shift. The impact of this conversation cannot be understated. I have met a leader who lost their venues because they hold a traditional view of marriage and sexuality. Another ministry was told that they could no longer work in a school despite the lesson being about anti-violence. I'll never forget the quiet town we visited where a leader came over to us at the end and just began to weep, and said, "I have just felt so isolated and alone".

Locations visited: Barnsley, Birmingham, Black Country, Bournemouth, Brighton, Bristol, Carlisle, Cheltenham, Chester, Coventry, Crawley, Eastbourne, Exeter, Hull, Ipswich, Lancaster, Leeds, Leicester, Liverpool, London Kings Cross, London Wimbledon, Newcastle, Northampton, Nottingham, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Preston, Salford, Sheffield, Southampton, Stockport, Stoke, Taunton, Truro, Wolverhampton and York

RESTING

in the silence...



Lynne Paterson, head of Scotland Evangelical Alliance shares her unique experience of silent retreats, and how a vow of silence for 30 days transformed her for the better.



Let me begin by confessing that I'm a bit of an 'all or nothing' kind of girl. That might give some context for why I decided to start my experience of silent retreats with one that lasted for 30 days. Such a full immersion approach would normally be discouraged by retreat-givers, but I had experienced extended seasons of prayer prior to this, although not in silence, so I understood a little of what it would require of me.

The retreat took place this summer in northern Spain. I had been walking through what felt like a long winter season. Jesus was still very present, but my heart didn't feel as alive and responsive as it once had. The pandemic, five years of working from home and living alone, and some limiting health challenges, all played their part.

My dialogue with God had always been quite noisy, with lots of singing and praying out loud. But after an infection, talking and singing became painful and both had to be curtailed. So, in one sense, silence was forced on me.

I wrestled a lot with God over that period, particularly related to singing, as this had been such a precious part of our relationship. But I continued to pursue Him in the best way I could, desperate for something to shift in my heart as much as my body. That's what this retreat was for me – showing up yet again, making as grand a gesture as I could to put myself in a place where God

might meet me in a new way.

The retreat started with a couple of days of instructions and getting to know the others in our group. But the time quickly came for the chatter to stop and we entered into silence together. The guidelines were intense. No contact with home unless it was an emergency, other than on three planned rest days. Meals were communal but silent. No books other than the Bible, no internet, no music with words. Nothing that could distract from hearing the voice of God.

The only permissible talking was a daily conversation with a trained 'spiritual accompanier' who skillfully helped me process what God was doing and suggested passages to use in prayer for the following day. This was an Ignatian retreat, so the prayer was mainly imaginative contemplation, where you put yourself in gospel scenes with the aim of meeting Jesus there. Over the month we worked our way through the life of Jesus from the annunciation to the ascension. I was excited to learn a new way of connecting with God that might bring fresh life to my soul.

So that was it. Thirty days of me, Jesus, the Bible and my imagination, sitting on a just-comfortable-enough green chair in my sparse room in the retreat centre for four or five hour blocks of prayer a day.

And it was glorious! Of course there were hard parts, like the last 15 minutes of each prayer block where I felt like I had imagined all there was to a

particular gospel story. Or trying to get to sleep at night without a book to make me drowsy. And all... that... time... My clothes had never been so well-ironed or my living space so clean!

But it was glorious because, in some of those hours of prayer, I met with Jesus in profound ways that renewed my mind, my heart, my soul. With all those other noises turned off, my communion with God felt uninterrupted; sometimes it was a conversation, and when dialogue ran out, there was the togetherness of being in the presence of a close friend when no words are needed. In the space and the silence, I remembered who I was.

My soul entered a deep rest. Rest from the endless news cycle and the burdens of a troubled world. Rest from the barrage of digital stimuli that clamour for my attention. Rest from carrying other people's stories to hear God's thoughts above mine. Rest from the plethora of Christian media that help us grow in God but can also become another distraction. When it was just raw 'me and God', I discovered once again that God was enough.

Lynne Paterson joined the Evangelical Alliance as the head of Scotland in September 2024 and is passionate about unity in the church and making Jesus known across the nation of Scotland.



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Running on empty

Mark Hopkins challenges us to find time amidst the busyness of life and to consider that how we work can be just as important as how we rest.



I've always admired marathon runners. The ability to keep going, mile after mile, step after step without stopping is a mental feat of endurance as well as a physical one.

For me, my chosen sports have always had regular breaks built into them; basketball with its rolling substitutions and 'time-outs', and tennis with a drinks break after every other game. Not only do these breaks give you a physical rest, but they also give you time to evaluate how you're doing and rethink your strategy; time to regroup and refocus.

Rest should be an important element in everyone's diary, including a church leader's! Rest is a biblical principle; in fact, it is one of the first principles we learn about in the Bible.

The problem for many of us though isn't the occasional day off, it's how we are living the rest of our lives. I love the quote from church leadership expert Carey Nieuwhof:

"Time off won't heal you when the problem is how you spend your time on. When the way you're living and leading isn't working, all the time off in the world won't fix it."

If we are living our daily lives like a marathon then the occasional day off

or holiday will never give us back the energy we are giving out.

We all need rest – time to pause and think and recover.

It might be taking a walk during the day, even a walk when checking up on emails or answerphone messages.

Build in time with friends and family. For a church leader, ensure there is time with other local leaders who can encourage you, pray for you and hopefully energise you.

Make time for a hobby or activity that you love and that empowers you. This could be sport or exercise, something creative or something mindful.

If possible, walk or take public transport between meetings: taking a slightly slower mode of transport can help give you the time and space needed to think and refocus.

A really great time management tip is to schedule your important or creative work for when you have the most energy and leave those more mundane, routine tasks to the parts of the day you find most tiring.

And most importantly, take a moment each day to rest in God, to read His word, to pray, to listen to Him and to pause in His presence.

Rest is an essential part of our lives, it's a key ingredient for a successful and fulfilling week. We should never be too busy to pause, or too hurried to stop and refocus; whether that is for a whole day retreat or a moment to pause, breathe and look around.

My sporting experience was enhanced by rest, my ability to play well was improved by times to pause and recover, and my life is greatly blessed by times to pause in God, to breathe deeply and see all that He is doing in and through me – take a moment today and this week to pause and rest.

Mark is part of the unity team with a focus on the East Midlands. Alongside this he leads a church in Nottingham. He is part of the Ground Level Network national team and he runs their leadership and theology training course. Mark also helps oversee the unity prayer movement Nottingham City Prayer. He has a passion to see the local church equipped and empowered, working together for the sake of the kingdom. In whatever spare time is left he is a keen follower of sport and loves a good game of tennis.



A CHANGE IS AS GOOD AS A REST

Alexandra Drew offers an insightful perspective on embracing a different pace and how to still flourish in later life.

They say, 'a change is as good as a rest' and, while I don't know exactly who 'they' are, at Faith in Later Life we often see the truth of this. People who recently dragged themselves over the career finish line, dreaming of long lie-ins and sunny rounds of golf, often find themselves reinvigorated by a change of pace, focus and community.

Certainly, most of the recently retired people I meet don't appear to be resting. They're busy supporting their families with childcare, volunteering at church, acquiring new skills, and saying 'yes' to new opportunities. They only occasionally squeeze in that round of golf! And many for whom retirement is a long-distant memory continue to live pretty active lives.

Of course, people vary, and for some, later life is a time of increased restfulness, particularly towards the end of their lives.

At Faith in Later Life, we recognise that God values and loves us throughout our lives, whether we are young or old, active or not. We encourage churches through our network of church champions to help older people know their worth and continue to participate in the mission of the gospel, flourishing in every stage of later life.

In the Bible, we see people like Moses, Joshua, Anna and Simeon living incredible lives for God, well into old age. Some were physically active, while others became pillars of prayer and wisdom.

That continues today. Many Faith



in Later Life church champions are themselves in later life. They've retired from paid work but now pour their time, experience and passion into ensuring other older people know God's love before they face eternity.

David, a great-grandad in his 80s, shared how serving God in this way has energised him: "When we first retired, we were very busy with the family, but these days I have time to plan and lead seniors events at our church. It's given me a real purpose again."

But it's not just in seniors' work that older people redirect their energies.

I recently spoke with Maggie, a retired teacher, who shared how difficult it was to slow down after decades of work. "I've been teaching since I was 22," she said. "When I first retired, I felt lost, I just wasn't ready to sit down. After some time reconnecting with God, I said yes to helping lead the youth club. I didn't think I'd work with teenagers again, but this is different somehow."

We also hear about people like Sheila, who is no longer able to get involved physically but continues to live with vitality. Now in a care home, Sheila prays for her family, carers and fellow residents every morning. To her son's astonishment, she also regularly gives away tracts and New Testaments to the people she meets.

Listening to people's stories has made me wonder where all this energy comes from in later life. It appears that later life often comes with a shift in capacity for activity, and certain factors seem to bring a restfulness which supports this shift.

1. Rest through choice

After decades of paid work, retirement allows people to step away from the stress of daily responsibilities and choose how they spend their time. There's something reviving about being able to choose what we give our energy to.

2. Rest through perspective

As we age, wisdom often brings a sense of perspective. Challenges that once seemed overwhelming often feel less urgent. Realising that not everything is in our control helps us trust more in God's sovereignty, bringing rest and even peace.

We encourage churches through our network of church champions to help older people know their worth and continue to participate in the mission of the gospel, flourishing in every stage of later life.

3. Strengthening relationships

Later life provides more time to invest in meaningful relationships – with family, friends and God. Building deeper connections brings stability, joy and rest for the soul.

4. A time for reflection and prayer

Retirement offers the chance to engage more fully in prayer, Bible study and reflection. Many are restored as they spend more time in God's presence, growing closer to Him without the distractions of a busy career or family life.

5. Rest in God's promises

Later life brings us closer to the fulfilment of God's promises. Knowing that God will sustain us "even to your old age" (Isaiah 46:4) and the hope of eternal life brings deep comfort. Resting in these promises provides peace and assurance as we face the future.

Even in later life, God calls us to flourish. Rest, it seems, is not so much about inactivity but about renewal – churches are wonderful families where people can know that renewal at all stages of life.

At Faith in Later Life we'd value your prayers for our ongoing work to help older people know Jesus, engage with lifelong discipleship, and respond to God's irrevocable disciple-making call for the rest of their lives.

Alexandra Drew leads the UK charity Faith in Later Life, inspiring and equipping churches for the opportunities and challenges of our ageing population.

What does rest in leadership look like?



Marcus Honeysett, national director of Living Leadership, an organisation to help leaders establish and maintain good patterns for spiritual health, shares the importance of 'leadership rest', especially at the busiest time of year.

I'm in awe of church ministers at any time, but never more than around the festive season. It is such a joyous time. However, many will testify that all the extra events, additional preparation and endless fresh creativity required every year on top of all the normal day-to-day responsibilities of shepherding can lead ministers into exhaustion, even while everyone else is experiencing the joy of Christmas in church.

I work for Living Leadership, a ministry dedicated to helping Christian leaders minister faithfully out of a centre of enjoying God. In Philippians 1, the Apostle Paul says that church leaders work with people for their progress in the faith and their joy in God, so that they glory abundantly in Jesus. What a great picture of Christian ministry! However, it also reveals a danger – what happens when leaders become drained and lose their own joy in Jesus? At that point, ministry starts to lose its spiritual vitality.

Vibrant, spiritually healthy churches are led by vibrant, spiritually healthy leaders. Spending too long in the maxed out zone tempts leaders and churches to do more than can be done spiritually healthily and prayerfully. This works like a slow puncture, gradually draining out our joy in the Lord, until we are just going through the motions.

The extra demands that go along with Christmas mean that it is not only a season of great joy and celebration, but also a key danger point when, to quote Tony Horsfall (teaching and mentoring Christian leader), “Our load can easily exceed our limit”.

As leaders we need to carefully nurture our own spiritual healthiness at all times, but times of increased intensity need even more careful attention. Leaders who are not themselves resting in Jesus, trusting Jesus and enjoying being worshippers can mask it with competence, activity and ‘personableness’, but we fool neither ourselves nor God.

We all have a point where the law of diminishing returns catches up with us – doing more and more but sacrificing our spiritual healthiness in the process. We need to exercise wisdom not try to do more than we can do spiritually healthily and prayerfully. There is always more that could be done, that needs to be done and, under other circumstances, would be good to

do – things that we would be applauded for doing and perhaps criticised for not doing. Therein lies the temptation – leaders can obtain social approval – and avoid criticism – by doing things that cannot be done healthily, things that will damage our spiritual walk with the Lord.

If you are a Christian leader, what factors and patterns in your ministry or personality can cause you to embrace spiritual unhealthiness? To give out more than you receive from Jesus, damaging your capacity to live by the Spirit?

It is critical to be proactive in these areas. When Jesus tells the disciples to come and receive His light yoke and find rest for their souls, He says we need to learn from Him. This isn't learning in the sense of assimilating some new piece of knowledge, but of being permanently apprenticed to the one who wants us to embrace a whole new paradigm – His rest for our souls. The first disciples already had an existing paradigm – the

What would it take for you to get into a place of spiritual freshness with the Lord, and to stay there? What do you need to do to nourish your heart and shepherd your security in Jesus?

oppressive yoke of the Pharisees and of religious performance – so learning to rest with Jesus also meant doing a lot of unlearning. I think there are many parallels in the culture of churches and Christian organisations that measure success (whatever that means) by how much we do. Ask many Christian workers how they are doing and the first thing they will say is “I'm tired”. It may be true, but it is also a badge of honour in a sphere of work that doesn't have healthy ways to measure progress.

Over-extended leaders and churches look like they achieve a lot but are commonly not very happy. Things run out of steam eventually because this is unsustainable and done at the expense of a vibrant spiritual life.

What would it take for you to get into a place of spiritual freshness with the Lord, and to stay there? What do you need to do to nourish your heart and shepherd your security in Jesus?

According to Psalm 37, the answers revolve around trusting the Lord, delighting in the Lord, committing our way to the Lord and hoping in the Lord. What, and who, helps or hinders you from doing so?

Leaders need to be the most spiritually alive kind of people, because other people's joy in God depends on ours (Hebrews 13:17).

Our ministry at Living Leadership is dedicated to helping Christian leaders in these areas. For nearly 20 years, through a wide variety of mentoring and pastoral refreshment opportunities, we have worked with hundreds of leaders and spouses across a wide range of evangelical churches and organisations to help them cultivate a close walk with Jesus. Among our contributions are annual Pastoral Refreshment Conferences, regional Refreshment Days around the UK and Ireland, an online network for pastoral refreshment, networks for ministry spouses and women in ministry, a blog and a wide range of written resources, and a flourishing network of experienced pastors-of-pastors. We are dedicated to encouraging leaders and spouses to live and minister in the love and grace of God by providing tailored pastoral input for those who minister to others and helping those who lead others in worship be worshippers themselves.

Our main Pastoral Refreshment Conferences take place a month after Christmas for a reason. They do what it says on the tin! If you are a Christian leader, or are married to one, why not do yourself a favour and book to come, so you know you have a three-day spiritual mini-break to look forward to when the intensity of the Christmas season may have left you feeling drained. Come and be encouraged in the grace of God with us. You would be so welcome!

To find out more about the Pastoral Refreshment Conference or to access Living Leadership's mentoring opportunities and resources visit: livingleadership.org

Marcus is the director of Living Leadership. He is a husband and dad, and loves encouraging leaders in the love and grace of God and working for spiritual healthiness with churches and organisations.

Home for Good is an organisation committed to finding homes for every child who needs one. **Tony Lewry** shares the transformational story of Tabita...



Tabita's homecoming

Tabita* is a young girl from the Tamang community in Nepal. Her story sheds light on the challenges faced by millions of children living in orphanages globally. Born into one of the most marginalised indigenous groups in Nepal, Tabita was sent to an orphanage, not because she had no parents but because her parents couldn't afford to keep her. Despite her mother's reluctance, Tabita had to leave home in search of a place to stay and a formal education, a heartbreaking experience for her family.

"I didn't want to send her away, but life was very difficult for us," recalls Tabita's mum. "An orphanage seemed like the only chance for Tabita [the eldest of four girls] to get an education. We cried the whole night until dawn broke and it was time for her to go. It felt like an explosion in my heart."

Tabita's story is not unique. Across the world, at least 5.4 million children are living in institutions, with over 80% of them having at least one living parent. Many of these children, like Tabita, are placed in orphanages as a direct result of poverty. Tabita and her mother's story is just one example of the countless families affected by this issue.

While orphanages, children's homes and children's villages aim to meet the basic needs of these children, they unintentionally neglect some of the less evident needs. Research from Harvard University further supports this, revealing that children without families

can lose four months of development for every year they are cared for in an institution.

The Bible makes it clear in Psalm 68:6 that God's plan is to "set the lonely in families", emphasising the importance of family. Of course, scientific evidence fully supports this biblical truth that children thrive best in families, where they can experience stability, love and continuous care.

Recognising these challenges, Home for Good has relaunched Homecoming, a coalition of organisations dedicated to seeing children thrive in families across the globe. This initiative aims to address the desperate need for family care by providing support, resources and advocacy for vulnerable children like Tabita and their families.

Tabita was taken to the orphanage at a very young age and lived there so long that she forgot her native language and her own mother's face – such a high cost for a formal education. But through the work of Hope and Homes for Children, a Homecoming partner organisation, Tabita had her homecoming! Working in partnership with the orphanage, Tabita's family were traced and then given all the support they needed to welcome Tabita home. Counselling, food, school supplies and tuition fees were all provided for Tabita, ensuring she'd never be separated from her family again.

Homecoming is dedicated to seeing this story replicated across

the globe and now invites churches and individuals who care about the wellbeing of vulnerable children to join the cause. The long-term goal is to see the UK church moving towards supporting projects which strengthen families internationally through reintegration programmes and foster care programmes as an alternative to the extreme overuse of orphanages.

By helping churches learn more about Homecoming and its mission, we hope to begin a culture shift within the church which prioritises the needs of children through safe, loving families. We are not calling on the church to immediately stop funding institutions as the sudden drop in funds is likely to make children more vulnerable. However, we are asking the church to consider other ways to solve the issues. It's not right that children with living parents are sent to live in orphanages because of poverty.

If you're interested in supporting this cause or just finding out more, please email info@homecoming.org or visit homecomingproject.org.

**Name changed for privacy.*

Tony currently leads Homecoming, following his recent return from Brazil where he, his wife and amazing team successfully launched a fostering service.



10 minutes with...

ALISA LATTY-ALLEYNE

UK and Ireland director of Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN) **Alisa Latty-Alleyne** shares her ambitious goal to see 1,000,000 souls encounter Jesus through digital evangelism and humanitarian outreach, and why she has every faith that God will make it happen.

Tell us a little bit about yourself and your faith journey

I grew up Roman Catholic but didn't live with God at the centre of my life, instead pursuing money, status, and career success. Despite achieving professional heights, I felt an unexplainable emptiness. After losing my first husband unexpectedly while living in the US, I had a powerful encounter with Jesus, calling me to follow Him. Unsure of what that meant, I moved back to the UK with my young son and left my career behind. After years of struggling and hitting rock bottom, I finally fully surrendered to God, and the transformation in my life over the past four years has been miraculous.

How has your experience impacted you in your present role?

Nothing God plans for us is easy. Since moving into ministry four years ago, I've often felt unqualified for the roles He's called me to. But God has been faithful, reminding me that He doesn't call the qualified, He qualifies the called. I've learned to trust Him, even when the role meant less money or big sacrifices. Through obedience, I am now the first female national director of CBN in the UK and Ireland. Jesus transformed my life, and I want others to know they're not alone. My goal is to create resources to guide new Christians. There is nothing professional or personal in what I do, it is all about God's purpose.

You have an ambitious vision for the network, tell us more

I believe I clearly heard God tell me that He wants us to pursue the salvation of 1,000,000 people through our platform. Believe me, I know this is ambitious and I tried many times to 'double-check' with God that this is what He was saying, and I have had confirmation time and time again, so I am running with the vision! In January 2024, we went to work creating a digital platform to encounter Jesus and respond to the gospel through our digital altar call feature. This leads participants to a six-week online discipleship journey that will ultimately connect them to a church community to continue on their faith journey.

How can we support you?

I am so grateful to have a team that has caught and confirmed the vision. We are building on the bedrock of founder Pat Robinson's mission in 1961, which was to preach the gospel and prepare disciples. We are believing in God for one million salvations, but we cannot do it alone; we need the support and prayers of others who feel led to join us in this mission. Please pray for people to help us build a more advanced digital infrastructure, for financial provision to help us reach a digital generation, and for other ministries to come alongside us so that we can see 1,000,000 souls saved and revival come to our nation.

Be *still* my soul



Fred Drummond shares a prayer for us to rest in the knowledge and faith of God.



Lord,
It Feels Like My life Is spinning Out of control, Everything happens Too fast.
Rush.
Run.
Move.

I know Lord, that is not your plan for me.
You want me to flourish.
Your desire for me is peace and joy in the Spirit.

Help me, God, to find a rhythm that
allows me to work well, and rest well.

Help me to slow down and see you
in the beauty of your creation.
To meet with you in stillness and simplicity,
And find my rest in you.

Help me to see what is really important.
Let me always be aware of your presence.

In Jesus' name
Amen.

Fred Drummond is our head of prayer. He has been an ordained minister of the Church of Scotland for more than 20 years. He has led both traditional and new churches and has a postgraduate degree in missional leadership and a diploma in pastoral theology. Fred is passionate about storytelling, the power of prayer, the gospel, and unity for extending the kingdom of God. He is an author and writer and has led conferences on new church in various countries. Fred seeks to give focus to the prayer support that is so vital to the work of the Evangelical Alliance.

5 TOP TIPS ON HOW TO REST WELL



Emily Rowlands is one of the senior pastors of Festival Church and shares some insights from her own experience as to how we can be better 'resters'.

I have a distant memory of lazing in the summer sun, beside a pool on a Mediterranean holiday and a very dear friend turning to me and saying, “You’re a high-capacity person. I want to learn from you. How do you do so much?”

I nearly fell off my sun lounger. Her perception of me was far removed from

my understanding of myself. *I am not a high-capacity person!* I thought. But my capacity to manage my time had increased, and I believe that is what she was witnessing.

We have been exploring with our church leaders the treasure of rest – this biblical rhythm that God modelled

when He created the earth in six days, resting on the seventh. We have been discovering how the practice of Sabbath (literally to rest, make cease, celebrate) benefits and regenerates us, increasing our capacity. Finding it has been beautiful, but we have to fight for it in a busy, noisy and demanding world.

This is what I have learned...

Create a rhythm

Practising a weekly rhythm of rest and giving a whole day over to it has increased the longevity of my capacity more than confining rest time to one big block (like a sabbatical), or snippets of evenings and half days.



Shift your focus

Rest does not necessarily mean inactivity, rather, that matters of work cease and are replaced by things which draw us closer to God and restore our souls.

Find a balance

It’s important you find whatever expression of rest best suits your season of life. A family with toddlers tumbling over their toys will find a very different expression of rest from one who has fledglings about to fly the nest. I have learnt to recognise that these ever-changing seasons keep us creatively seeking where to find God-given rest. It’s His gift to us and we find Him in the search. We explore, we adapt, and we keep valuing rest until it becomes reality and a rhythm of life, whatever the season.

Change your pace

Protect rest time. It can feel like we are on call 24/7, our attention always being demanded or distracted. In a culture that wrestles with tension between rest and work, where shops never shut, we can be led to believe that the best work ethic is one that never stops.



Jesus did say, “The Sabbath day was made to help people. People were not made to be ruled by the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27, ERV) and I believe He knows best!

Set boundaries

We define our boundaries. We are in control of what constitutes as rest time. What needs to be silenced, or what needs to stop to distinguish rest time for us? To turn all notifications off and be unreachable for a day is incredibly liberating! It’s what I do knowing there are six other days in the week where I am contactable and will respond.



Emily Rowlands is co-vocational as senior pastor of Festival Church and a peripatetic music teacher. She volunteers as a board member of an international charity and is a school governor. Wife to Tim (head of Evangelical Alliance, Wales) and mother of four, she enjoys open water swimming and writing in her rest time.

Gavin Calver imparts how a personal challenge to rest better in the presence of God led to a deeper connection with Him.

Giving God my best and my rest!



Ever since beginning in ministry, I've always valued spending time with

the minister who I first trained under some 25 years ago. On one occasion, I travelled down to see him, and we settled down for a nice coffee in a trendy café. However, the mood of the moment quickly changed when the mild-mannered man known to me became incredibly assertive. He started tackling my personal relationship with Jesus head on, and the questions began to flow: "How is your prayer life? Do you ever let Him lead the conversation? When did you last spend time with Jesus without an agenda? How often do you take time out and retreat with the Lord?" and "Do you have any rhythms of rest?"

I was somewhat taken aback by his stern tone but then the minister crystallised the challenge in the form

How often do you take time out and retreat with the Lord? Do you have any rhythms of rest?

of a strong analogy. He said: "In your marriage would you get away with spending as little time with your wife as you do in your relationship with Jesus? Would how little time you spend resting without an agenda be ok in that relationship too?" I was stunned into silence so the minister continued, "This isn't a guilt trip but simply a challenge. Relationships don't survive on tiny snippets of time. They need quality time. It's no different with God; you need to invest more time in your relationship with Jesus. Proper time, resting and being, not doing."

Hard though it was to hear, he was right. I was not investing enough time in my personal walk with Jesus, and I was not finding rest in Him. We're often so busy in the midst of our fast-paced world that we don't make time and when we do, it is often such a small amount. As a result of that conversation, the challenge was clear; I needed to intentionally make time and space to be with Jesus otherwise it would never happen. A quiet time is great and arrow prayers are brilliant but, like any relationship, quality time is necessary. We need enough time for significant rest, encounter and refreshment.

As a result of that day, some 15 years ago, things have changed massively for me. I have found myself needing to take much more time away from others to be alone with Jesus. For me this has involved taking up running long distances as I struggle to be still and not fall asleep. When I go on a run of six miles or so, I'll find that my body looks after itself. I'm able to retreat from normal life and simply hang out with the Lord. There are no earphones in, it's just quiet and provides the chance for me to be with Jesus on my own. This for me is genuine rest. A change from the normal, a retreat from the daily pressures, a chance to be a child of God and simply find comfort in Him.

We are all different. Many will read this and think of running as anything but restful; however, we will all find rest in different spaces. Some find it really helpful to block out a day or a week and simply 'kick leaves with Jesus', without an agenda. Simply spending time with Him is so good for our spiritual health. Others find going on silent retreats or to retreat centres for a break to be so life-giving. Whatever works for you, let's all do what we can to find rhythms of rest in this profoundly busy world.

I WILL GIVE YOU REST

Thea Macdonald

works with our public leadership programme and explores how as Christians we can break through the ‘all work – no rest’ culture of the workplace.



Public leaders can be found in every aspect of society and in all kinds of workplaces. In Scotland this year the public leader programme is gathering engineers, doctors, fundraisers, founders, teachers, police officers and politicians. Workplaces vary and the attitude to rest will vary from place to place. Finding rest is a great challenge for anyone leading in their workplace when this seems to conflict with our culture’s values. Our Western and capitalist culture is built on the pursuit of productivity, the completion of tasks and efficiency for individual and corporate gains. In public services and charities too, there is a striving for achievement and attaining the goals set for us or by us. But how as Christians can we break through that culture, and who is modelling it for us?

Finding rest is a great challenge for anyone leading in their workplace when this seems to conflict with our culture’s values.

God shares good guidance with us in His word, highlighting that the key to understanding rest is deciding what we are working for in the first place. Psalm 127:1–2 explains that any effort is in vain if not for the Lord, and rest is afforded to us because God lovingly created us for it.

“Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain.

Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain.

In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat – for He grants sleep to those He loves.”

As leaders, building the house is a significant priority for our lives. Those who are pressing into their career and leadership capabilities labour. It is hard work, involves sacrifice and is an active decision to pursue this particular calling. God does not condemn rising early or staying late, but He is clear that it is only fruitful if the Lord is the architect and guardian of our pursuit.

“Thus the Heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work He had been doing; so on the seventh day, He rested from all His

work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done.” Genesis 2:1–2 (NIV)

As Christian public leaders, there is a constant tension in place between pursuing work and ensuring we find rest. If God has called us into a specific role or is developing our leadership in a work environment, there can be great difficulty justifying good and proper rest.

The freedom of finding our rest in God is that it doesn’t have to look one particular way. Sometimes, physical separation from other people and taking steps to clear our minds of overwhelming or busy thoughts is the best route. Quiet and still will be the best way for God’s rest to come upon many of us. Whichever way we rest, pursuing God’s presence in rest helps us to find His presence even when the demands return.

Thea Macdonald leads the Public Leader programme and network in Scotland, and is passionate about gathering and developing emerging Christian leaders.

A photograph of a woman with blonde hair, wearing a light blue top, smiling and looking down at a young child. The child, with brown hair and wearing a maroon long-sleeved shirt and a yellow beaded necklace, is focused on playing with sand in a sandbox. The child's hands are visible, and they are surrounded by colorful toys like a yellow shovel and a blue bucket. A white bucket is also visible on the right side of the frame. The background is softly blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting with natural light.

**LEAD
ME BACK
TO YOU,
LORD!**

Cara MacDonald reflects on finding rest as a working mother of five and offers encouragement for all those struggling and striving to find a work–life–faith balance.



Just stop and take a breath, I told myself. It was 6am on a Tuesday morning and my mind was whirring

as I attempted a mental run down of all I had to achieve in the day. My chest tightened as I ran over the contents of each school bag, trying to remember who needed which sports kit today and which of the children would need to be picked up from school. *Had I checked the homework and signed the consent forms? Could I drop off at school and still make it to work on time?* Scanning the unread messages from my gazillion group chats and suddenly realising I had forgotten to phone my mum back, I could feel my stomach churn as I considered meetings and deadlines along with dog walking, ironing and that growing crack in the bathroom ceiling!

As a working mum of five children, it doesn't matter how much forward planning takes place, chaos reigns, as unforeseen challenges disrupt even the most robust scheduling, as margins for error are eroded by traffic jams and tantrums. At the end of each day, I resolve that tomorrow will be different and that my to-do list will be covered in ticks. That day hasn't yet come, and I find myself wondering if I am chasing the impossible dream. Being all things to all people is exhausting. *Am I enough?*

My priorities in life are simple: family and faith, wellbeing and work, church and community, yet the competing demands of each combine to make life complex. Having determined what is most important in my life, I try my best to allocate my time and attention accordingly, but often I get distracted or fail to prioritise wisely, focusing on things which are easy rather than those that are worthy. When time is scarce and life seems to be stuck in firefighting mode, I find that even things that I have identified as important in my life slip down the to-do list, with my energy for faith- and church-related activity being the first casualty.

I try to justify it to myself. I'll pray

later, my family need me right now. I'll catch up on my Bible reading tomorrow, the house won't clean itself. I've got important emails to reply to, it won't hurt if I miss house group as a 'one-off'. Some of the excuses I make to myself are more valid than others. My family are young and demand a lot: my presence, my time, my love, care and advice are vital to them and the guilt I feel when I fall short of being the parent I want to be can often reduce me to tears. Saying yes to godly pursuits sometimes means saying no to them – what a choice.

But if I'm honest, I know in my heart that if I really wanted to make Jesus front and centre in my life, then I could find a way to balance both by reducing time spent on things that don't matter. Perhaps if more time was spent endearing myself to my heavenly Father through prayer, and being truly in the moment with my children took priority over flicking through Facebook likes, there would be no choice to make.

I tell myself I'll get back on track, but days without praying can become weeks, one missed Sunday becomes two or three. What's the point, I tell myself, it's not like I can really do anything for God anyway. The church has plenty of others to help who are less busy than me, no one will miss me. Time and again I deceive myself that dropping my 'faith plate' if the others are spinning is ok and the cracks in my relationship with Jesus become ravines. It's a vicious circle; the further away I drift, the more ashamed I am. The more self-pity I feel, the more I convince myself that that there's no way back.

But I am all too aware of how empty a life without God can be...

I became a Christian six years ago when I relocated with my family and was trying to forge a new life for us all in an unknown place. At the time I felt lost, not just in the geographical sense, but in terms of life altogether. I was anxious to make connections, when I stumbled upon a local toddler group. The warm welcome, the instant sense of belonging and feeling of completeness I experienced when I met those who

ran the group ignited something in me I didn't even know was there. From the first day the church hall (where it was held) became a place of sanctuary and peace, and soon after, a weekly refuge. It was where I found happiness and connection each Sunday as I yearned to know more about what I saw and heard and longed to become more like those I met there. I knew they were different, and after a while I realised the difference was Jesus.

Thinking back to those early days of discovering church and embarking on my walk with Jesus breathes life back into my relationship with Him. I am once again filled up with the transformative power of faith, and the memories of who I once was and the shadow of the life I lived without God are enough to jolt me into repositioning Jesus at the top of my to-do list.

My journey has taught me that a busy and complex life shouldn't be a barrier to deepening in faith and sharing God with others.

Each morning, amid the mental acrobatics of working out what the day will hold, I reflect on Colossians 3:17 which tells us that "Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." Can I be all things to all people? Maybe not, but I can stand tall and look up as others look around, showing the difference that being all things to God can make and that really is enough.

Cara is our mission co-ordinator and lives in Glasgow with her husband Alex and five young children. She is a member of Newton Mearns Baptist Church and helps out with their activities for children and young people. Previously, Cara has worked in administration in both retail and finance and has also worked in the lobbying sector in Scotland. She has a degree in politics and a master's in public policy.

A TEENAGER'S JOURNEY FROM RESTLESSNESS TO JOY



Andrew Bunt from *Living Out* shares his own personal story of restlessness and how the church can provide opportunities for young adults to ask the big questions.

I was a restless teenager. I don't know how much of that was observable externally, but internally my mind was always whirring; I worried about everything, and my emotions were all over the place. Looking back now, I think there were various factors at play, but one of the big questions I was grappling with was around faith and sexuality.

I became a Christian when I was about five years old. I thought my life would go the way it always seemed to for Christian kids like me - I'd grow up, get married and have a few children. But when I reached my early teens, romantic and sexual desires began to emerge that were consistently for guys rather than girls. It took me a while to work out what was going on, but by my mid-teens, I was having to grapple with some big, uncomfortable questions - *How could I follow Jesus while experiencing*

same-sex attraction? Would I ever be able to tell anyone? And if I never got married, what would life be like? Facing those questions was scary and isolating and left me restless.

The particulars of my story won't be shared by everyone, but I think many teenagers experience a similar restlessness as they face big questions about themselves, the world and God.

In a way, that's normal. Teenagers are emerging adults. They're growing from children who largely share the beliefs of their primary caregivers to adults who hold their own beliefs. That journey is good and God-designed, but it's not easy. Teenagers often question all sorts of things as they process their own experiences and what they see and hear in the world around them.

Young people need the freedom to ask questions, critically evaluate and express doubt so that they can reach

their own conclusions and start to form their own beliefs. They also need the freedom to feel and express the deep emotions that often accompany these questions and churches can play a vital role in facilitating this.

As adults, whether as parents, youth leaders or friends, this can feel daunting and we may worry that if we let young people ask their questions, share their doubts, and express the emotions tied up with these questions, that there is a chance they'll reach the wrong conclusions, or reject what God says. And of course, they might.

Many teenagers experience a similar restlessness as they face big questions about themselves, the world and God.

Andrew on the Kaleidoscope
video series for Living Out

But if we don't allow young people the space to explore their questions, they won't form their own personal beliefs, and then their beliefs won't be able to withstand the pressures they'll face as they grow and encounter different perspectives and new questions. Allowing young people to explore their questions means they can put down deep roots of belief that will hold them secure as they enter adulthood and the new challenges it will bring them.

When we allow young people to genuinely explore their questions, we're not abandoning them, we're entrusting them to the God who loves them even more than we do.

As I look back on my own journey, I'm so grateful that God equipped me and placed me in contexts where I could explore my questions and establish my own beliefs. He helped me see that faithfulness to Jesus is possible even if I experience same-sex attraction for the rest of my life and that never getting married isn't a curse but could be a blessing. I saw that He has good answers to my questions, the best answers, true answers, and I began to experience that His ways are life-giving. God helped me find true rest through His good news on sexuality.

I saw that He has good answers to my questions, the best answers, true answers, and I began to experience that His ways are life-giving. God helped me find true rest through His good news on sexuality.

And because I faced those questions as a teenager, as I entered the adult world and encountered different perspectives and faced different challenges, the roots that had been put down through those years helped me hold fast to what God says and and in Him find rest for my soul.

If we want to help teenagers find rest today, we need to make space for them to explore their questions.

Living Out has recently released Kaleidoscope - a video-based series designed to help churches do exactly that. To find out more and download the series visit: livingout.org/kaleidoscope





HEART BEHIND THE ART: AN INTERVIEW WITH JACQUI PARKINSON

When Jacquie lost her first husband in her early 50s she was left to continue the passion project that he encouraged. Here she shares why she is more enthused than ever to use her art to bring people all over the world closer to God.

Jacquie grew up in Wythenshawe, Manchester as a child but has lived much of her adult life in London. From as far back as she can remember, she has always been creatively inspired, and as a child enjoyed ‘artistically’ scribbling on the walls behind the sofa and colouring in between the lines of colouring books.

At 14 she was invited by a friend to go on a church holiday. At the time, Jacquie didn’t know it had to do with the church – she admits that if she had, she probably wouldn’t have gone. During the trip, she heard a man preach about Jesus and was intrigued to learn more. When she went home and told her parents who were non-believers that she had accepted Jesus into her life and was now a Christian, her father quipped, “Never mind love, it won’t last long.”

Despite the lack of encouragement at home, Jacquie started attending church, but admittedly found it too stiff and “struggled with the tradition of it all” but stuck at it as she was “curious and enjoyed the autonomy of youth group”. She remembers being gifted the New Testament and Psalms and scribbling notes throughout, questioning and searching for understanding and meaning and crossing things off when she found answers to her questions.

Some time later the opportunity to direct a play called ‘Prodigal Daughter’ came about and Jacquie leaned into the unique opportunity and was captivated by the creative outlet performing arts provided. She says, “I loved the idea of pushing boundaries and this play allowed me to do that.”

Jacqui's first husband the late Rev Rob Frost became a minister of a church, but three years in, Jacqui found herself still struggling to fit into the role of a minister's wife and eventually "lost all confidence". She recalls being undermined, ignored and overwhelmed by others' expectations, "I would hide behind the door if people knocked on the door, I didn't know who I was, or who I was supposed to be."

She accredits her saving grace as her former experience with Church Missionary Society (CMS) where she went to Kenya and taught Maths for a year and found that to be "pivotal" for her "as it meant I could step out and do something on my own, and that did increase my faith," says Jacqui.

The couple then moved to London where Jacqui, filled with a new lease of freedom, began to explore what she wanted to do and where God was calling her. She began studying for a degree in art and drama and went on to become an art and drama teacher while Rob went into full-time itinerant ministry. But it was Rob who challenged her five years later on 1 January 2003 to set a New Year's resolution, and after he persisted, not willing to take no for an answer, she vowed to take a textiles course. Sensing her reluctance, Rob sought out a course and enrolled Jacqui and to her surprise, she "loved it!"

But she was almost instantly disappointed when she found out that the course had unexpectedly been discontinued. Jacqui felt like God had presented her with a challenge - "give up or do a degree?" But doing a degree meant that she would have to give up



her role at the Lantern Arts Centre she and Rob had founded. Conflicted but obedient to where she felt God was leading her, she enrolled on a degree course in embroidered textiles.

Sadly, Rob would not live to see Jacqui accomplish the dream that he had inspired her to pursue, as he passed away soon after, following a short battle with cancer.

It was at this time that Jacqui's creative outlet became cathartic, and she created a grief series with handkerchiefs, symbolic as "handkerchiefs hold the sadness of past generations".

After Rob's death, Jacqui moved to Devon. In her own words, she was "a mess" and didn't know what she wanted to do, but she knew she wanted her art to "tell a story and for the images to be accessible to everyone", including people like her mum and dad - "just ordinary people".

Soon after in 2013, Jacqui started her first exhibition project 'Thread Through Revelation', completing it in 2016 - 14 huge panels re-imagining the visions from the book of Revelation.

Around this time, it would be the same friend that had invited her to church all those years ago as a teenager that would invite her to a very important dinner at her home. Little did Jacqui know that she was being set up on a blind date and that it would be at this very dinner that she would be introduced to her future husband Andrew (who had also been blindsided)!

Jacqui is modest and humble when I relay to her the eventful details of the life she has lived, and her unwavering ambition as she talks about her current project and why she is so passionate about depicting scenes from the Bible. She talks of her love for "transforming old sheets into something spectacular" and finding the beauty in "things that seem useless and have been discarded" and likens it to how God sees us; precious and valuable despite our flaws and outward (un)appeal.

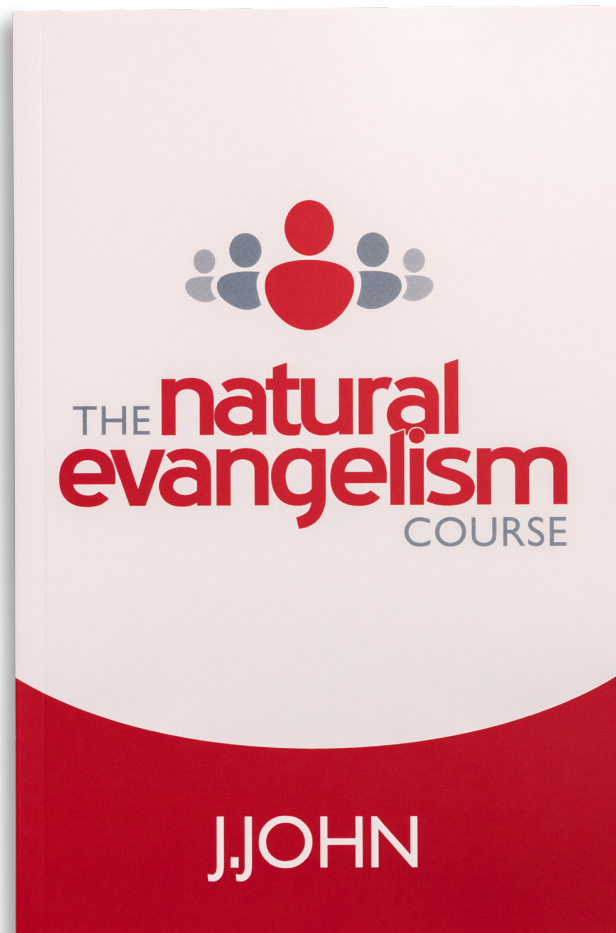
She talks about how each panel takes up to three months, but that she finds "rest" and "joy" in combining her passion for exploring the Bible with her creative outlet: "Finding purpose is restful."

Jacqui says she wants people to "encounter God through the visual" and is spurred on by the challenge. She confesses that for long periods she is left looking at a blank piece of paper but remains calm and waits to hear from God for inspiration.

'Thread Through the Cross' is Jacqui's latest upcoming exhibition. This will be her third, following the success of 'Thread Through Creation' and 'Thread Through Revelation'. It consists of 18 large panels of fabric, nearly three metres high and up to three metres wide, depicting re-imagined scenes from the life of Jesus and she's writing a book to go with it! All three exhibitions are coming to create 'Threads of the Bible', which will consist of 44 huge panels. It will visit Liverpool Anglican Cathedral from 16 January 2025 and then move on to Southwell Minister and Ely Cathedral.



THE **natural** evangelism COURSE



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ANNUAL REPORT SNAPSHOT 2023-24

**Just as a body,
though one, has
many parts, but
all its many parts
form one body, so
it is with Christ.**

1 Corinthians 12:12



What an incredible year it has been! First, I want to say thank you - we are so grateful to the more than 5,000 new personal members who joined the Evangelical Alliance this year. We remain so thankful to the many who have been with us for longer too and we look forward to journeying together as we continue to serve our membership wholeheartedly.

There have been countless highlights - we have been so encouraged as we have equipped many churches, organisations and individuals to make Jesus known this year, and our range of innovative mission and discipleship resources continue to be well received. The many opportunities we have had to engage with policymakers continue to be a great blessing, and we have spoken up wherever possible on behalf of evangelicals. It has also been wonderful to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of our One People Commission; this vital work continues

to seek to bring unity across all ethnicities.

Across the four nations of the UK, we have cheered on local church leaders, supporting and helping our members on the ground wherever God has positioned you.

It's been a great personal joy for me to minister and visit many member ministries; the breadth of churches we serve is a delight and I have also loved seeing many people give their lives to Jesus.

I am so grateful to the amazing staff team and board that I serve with. However, the Evangelical Alliance is not a staff team, it is a membership organisation, and I am profoundly thankful to every church, organisation and personal member who stands with us. Let's continue to make Jesus known together throughout the United Kingdom.

Every blessing,

Gavin Calver

Gavin Calver
CEO

Celebrating a year of highlights...

Record growth:
5,000+
new personal members!

April

We forged new relationships with government ministers after we welcomed the *Bloom Report*, calling on the government to deepen its engagement with faith groups.



June

We represented our members at the National Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast in Westminster Hall.

August

Evangelical parents and carers responded in great numbers to our survey on Relationships, Sex and Health Education, and we highlighted your concerns to government and parliamentarians.

May

We brought together representatives from 50 organisations and member churches in Scotland for an amazing day of prayer for the nation.

July

As part of a six-way mission partnership, we launched the refreshed Talking Jesus website and new resources to help churches grow in confident evangelism.

September

We equipped Christian parents, carers and leaders to navigate conversations about relationships and sex education with *Time to Talk*.

Sharing hope to the nation:

150+

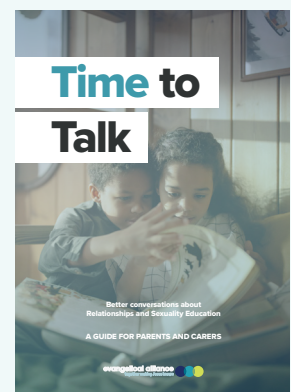
TV, radio and podcast appearances carrying the voice of the UK church

“A game-changer”, “vital”, “hugely encouraging”, and “a ray of hope” – church leaders’ responses to the *Talking Jesus* research

Helping you find what you need:

700,000+

visits to our website, providing evangelicals with quality resources for mission, unity and advocacy



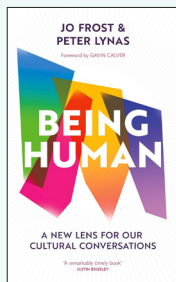


We're here for our members: more than **1,000** speaking engagements, talks, teaching sessions and meetings with church and organisational leaders

We're speaking up: **100+** appearances before government, parliamentary engagements or meetings with civil servants, politicians, MPs, MLAs, MSPs, MSs and other policymakers

October

We released *Being Human: A new lens for our cultural conversations* – a guide for everyone who wants to live out and share the good, true and beautiful biblical vision of what it is to be human.



December

We celebrated 10 years of the One People Commission as we work to build unity across all ethnicities in the evangelical church.

February

We helped government and media to better understand evangelicals in Northern Ireland by publishing the *Good news people* report, with positive results, to inform future engagement.



November

We gathered online for the International Day of Prayer for the persecuted church with three of our member organisations – almost 2,000 people signed up to the event.



March

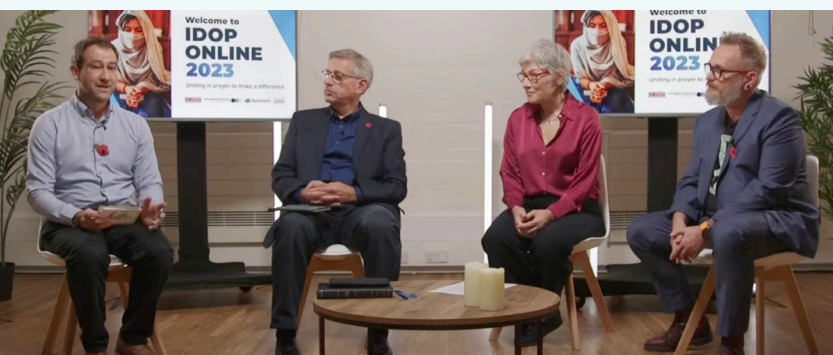
Our Wales team led prayers for the nation at the Welsh Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast – a powerful time of worship and celebration of Wales' spiritual heritage.



Coming alongside the next generation: we empowered **24** young leaders to be culture-shapers on our Public Leader programme

January

In our work to envision a society in which both women and the unborn are championed and supported, we expanded our Both Lives initiative from Northern Ireland into a UK-wide initiative.



We're reaching new audiences: **30,000+** listens and downloads of our podcasts

Financial review

“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.”

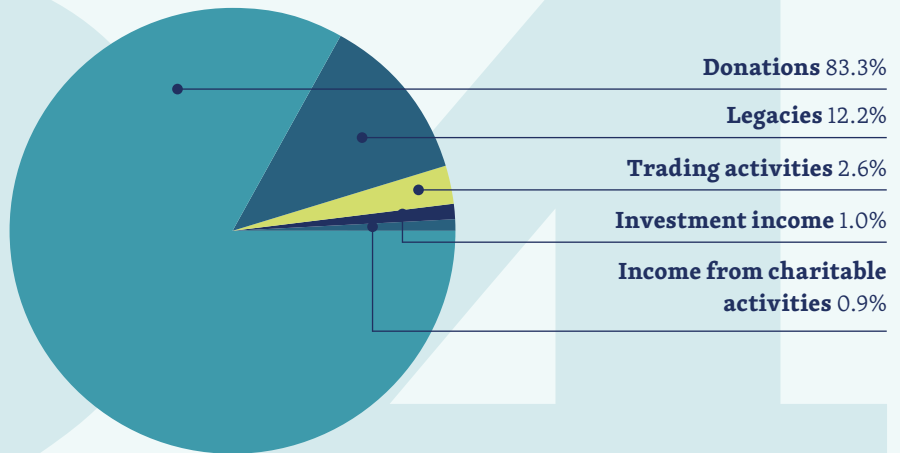
1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

INCOME

£2,899,594

up from £2,590,073 last year

We are so thankful to God for a good year in terms of overall income growth, with exceptional legacy income and growing memberships, both of which have offset a reduction in income from charitable trusts.



EXPENDITURE

£2,931,152

up from £2,761,442 last year

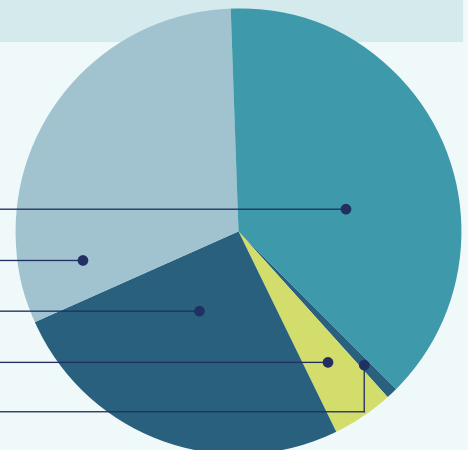
Unity and mission initiatives 38.0%

Communications and membership 31.3%

Advocacy initiatives 25.5%

Fundraising and publicity 4.3%

Income generation 0.9%



Expenditure during the year was increased across our charitable activities and in line with our strategic objectives. A significant increase in membership numbers has inevitably generated increased costs to support that membership.



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and give your money a
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or more years

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provide a home for
someone in need

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money is repayable