

idea

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INSIDE: Biblefresh photo winner revealed



MEN AT CHURCH

Is the Church too feminine?

LOVE WINS?

Response to Rob Bell's controversial book

NATIONS

News from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales

Ships Resourcing Europe Emerging World faiths India Muslim peoples Pioneer Initiatives Next generation

it's your shout



OM's role in the Church is to mobilise people to share the knowledge of Jesus and His love with every generation in every nation. We seek to transform lives and communities in over 110 countries and on our ship the Logos Hope. www.uk.om.org

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Are you a teenager who would you like to meet other Christians your age from around the world? Do you want to make a difference, try out new things, share with other teens at the same time having fun?! If yes, come and join us at TiM. We have great mission opportunities worldwide for you to get together with other teenage Christians to grow in your relationship with Jesus and serve Him. Let the adventure begin! Find out more at www.tim.om.org.

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releasing the power of young faith



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transforming lives and communities

Editor's Note

I met a Mancunian at Whitefield House recently who, despite supporting Manchester City, said he always cheers on United when they play any other team. As a United fan myself his grace had me flummoxed.

I had been ready to defend the red of my team against the blue of his, and indulge in mock argument with him about the various successes of each side, the calibre of player at Old Trafford compared to the City of Manchester Stadium.

But this Mancunian chose grace over rivalry. He picked support instead of slander. And then it got me thinking about this thing called unity. Here we have two teams, from the same city. Despite sporting different colours and players, singing different chants, they are made of the same stuff. In the same way, members of the Church – with its modern songs and evensongs, cathedrals and community halls, casual jeans and cassocks, its liberals and conservatives – should cheer on those with slightly different theologies. Because, ultimately, don't we – like United and City – come from the same place?

As controversy over Rob Bell's new book *Love Wins* rumbles on (see Derek Tidball's review on page 13), we're reminded of how we need to respond to our brothers and sisters in Christ graciously, despite disagreeing. Because a unified Church is surely a stronger one. And a stronger Church might just make people want to join us – especially 'male people', as our feature *Men at Church* (page 28) explores, looking at why the Church is becoming increasingly un-masculine. And maybe our children will want to join us too as Rob Parsons writes on page 21.

There's plenty more in this edition, including a new section bringing news from Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (pages 18-20).

I hope you enjoy it!

Chine



14 Rose Hudson-Wilkin

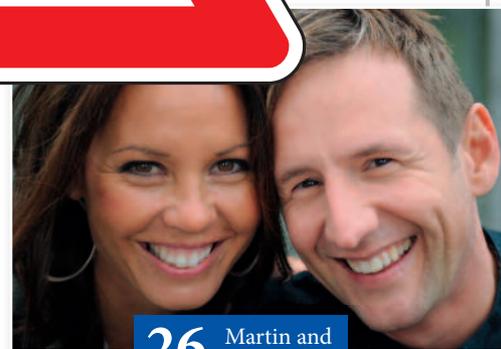
Respond graciously despite disagreeing



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your voice

People Like Us

I was touched and grateful when I read your article about Sandra Lacey (Mar/Apr) and how she coped with losing her husband, Rob. Touched because I know what it's like to be diagnosed with cancer. Grateful to God - and to the NHS - because, unlike Rob, I have been able to be with my daughter and see her grow up and I am able to enjoy my grandson; grateful that my husband, unlike Sandra's, didn't have to suffer bereavement. I'm sure her book will be a blessing to many and I would love to read it and pass it on.
Nancy Gemmell, Paisley

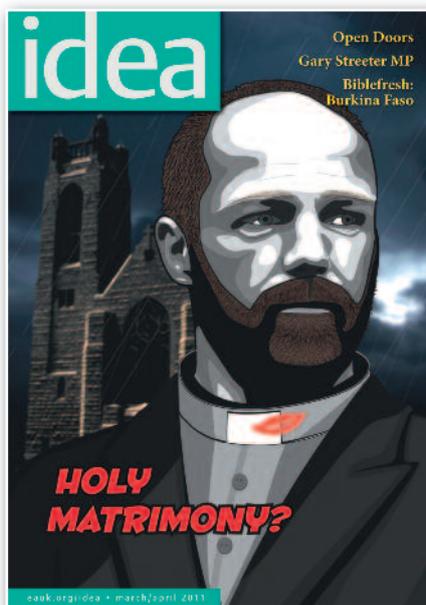
EDITOR'S REPLY: We were moved by the number of touching responses to this article. Several readers responded with their own stories of faith in God in the face of some of the most tragic of circumstances. Some readers shared how suffering has inspired their poetry and writing, while others said it had spurred them on to help others. All those who responded will receive a copy of *People Like Us* by Sandra Lacey and Steve Stickley, with thanks to publisher Zondervan.

Provocative but unsurprising

I might not be alone in pondering your article on *Holy Matrimony* (Mar/Apr) and the results of a survey carried out by Marriage Week Northern Ireland. I guess 1,000 people is a standard number to ask but I notice that only 157 church leaders were asked, therefore 11 per cent of them had stated that they had had an affair which is 17.27. But apparently most of these were women according to the text though you choose to run a rather dark image on your front cover unusually depicting an evangelical church leader as a man with a dog collar. Though a vicar myself I felt this image was not one I wanted my friendly postman to see

through the plastic sleeve as he delivers all my religious post. I do appreciate the image is a provocative one and would be great in an art gallery. All I gathered from the survey is what I already knew - that we live in a fallen world - so no surprises there, and that we are all tempted in many ways just like Jesus, and some yield to a variety of these and many don't. Thankfully through God's grace we can all be restored, even though we don't know what Jesus writes on the ground of our lives.

Philip Smith, Cheltenham



Support singles too

If, as reported in your article *Holy Matrimony?* (March/April 2011), Dave Percival is correct in his belief that churches have a "fear of disenfranchising the unmarried", then churches now have a healthier attitude to and concern for single adults than previously. The May/June 1989 edition of *idea* reported that "churches neglect singles" as its front cover headline. The presence of single adults, such as

myself, in the Church is now more acknowledged. I agree with Mr Percival that churches should support the married and help them prepare for and maintain healthy 'until death do us part' marriages. Thus the way for churches to overcome their fears of giving unequal attention to the married and the single is to increase their support of the unmarried to the same level and quality as is given to the married. Regrettably, many churches still have much catching up to do in the support they provide for single adults.

Phil Hobrough, Stockport

One accord

I was delighted to read your article highlighting the importance of supporting marriage. The statistics quoted are shocking and it is time to wake up to the importance of encouraging healthy marriages especially among our church leaders. Their marriages are the prime target of attack, constantly put on a pedestal or given little space for time out together and there are few places they can turn to when they need support. We have seen churches disbanded through the breakdown of church leaders' marriages and the hurt and pain of individual members of the congregations have a long-lasting damaging effect. Our organisation runs marriage enrichment courses specifically for leaders. Time Out for Leaders is a two/three-day course where church and youth leaders can relax and take some time out for their marriages. We remind couples of God's plan for marriage and talk about communication, conflict, sex and praying together within their marriage. If we can save and protect relationships this will put an end to much of the hurt and pain that is in this country. Our passion is to equip churches so that they in turn can reach out to communities.

Fiona Banes, executive director, One Accord

oneaccord.org.uk

idea

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

Letters and story ideas from members are welcome, and will be considered by the editorial board, which reserves the right to edit letters and stories for length and style. We regret that we are unable to engage in personal correspondence. Unsolicited material will only be returned if accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

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Don't miss this!



13 May

The balanced church and the big society

2.00 – 4.00pm

Louise Morse author & speaker

Janet & Peter Jacob former Home Manager and mental nurse, and Bible Trainer

How the wisdom of the old and the strength of the young in our churches can change society, and how Christian dementia care is showing the way.

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10th–13th May 2011



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- ◆ 'How to help dementia sufferers' – a small booklet with bullet point helps

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Mitsuko Sobata/World Vision

Japan's disasters

The world was stunned in March when Japan was hit by an earthquake, tsunami, and devastating damage to its nuclear plants. With the Sendai coastal region hit by an earthquake measuring 8.9 on the Richter scale, the following tsunami caused unparalleled carnage. Damaged cooling towers led to radiation leaks with teams struggling to contain them. Around 500,000 people were made homeless and at the time of going to press, more than 21,000 people were dead or missing.

Alliance member World Vision UK, which usually works in developing countries, provided relief supplies and shelter for families and children. Dominic Nutt of World Vision said: "The scale of this disaster is so huge...and we know that we can do some very good work with the children there. They are traumatised. Everything they believe in, everything they knew and understood - their parents, their houses, their schools - have been ripped away from them, and the very ground on which they stood has been swept away."

Samaritans Purse, another Alliance member, chartered a plane of relief supplies to the Sendai region, while teams on the ground worked with local churches giving out hygiene kits and water within days of the disaster. Working closely with government officials on the relief effort, the charity asked for UK churches to pray and for donations to help their relief effort.

The Methodist Church's World Mission Fund launched a nationwide appeal on behalf of the United Church of Christ in

Japan (UCCJ). Establishing a relief team in the Sendai region, UCCJ visited sites of 36 damaged churches. Rev Makoto Kato from UCCJ said: "We truly appreciate encouraging prayer following the gigantic earthquake which we have never ever experienced before." Japanese partners linked to the Barnabus Fund also urged people to pray for the many traumatised people in the country.

Global church response

Japan Evangelical Alliance member churches, such as Salvation Army Japan and Japan Alliance Christ Church launched relief operations, and provided online information. The Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church set up a network of local relief, and Baptist World Aid worked closely with the Japan Baptist Union and Okinawa Baptist Convention on relief operations.

Aid agency Tearfund encouraged people to pray for the situation and members of their OneVoice prayer initiative posted prayers online. The Church of England and Baptist Union of Great Britain also hosted online prayers of condolence.

RT

A memorial service was held in Christchurch, New Zealand, by church denominations and other faiths for the victims of the earthquake where 166 people died in February. Prince William, who spoke at the service, offered his condolences to the people of the city and well as to the victims of the Japanese disaster.

Viral Bible

Kick-started by the Christian Motorcycle Association at Spring Harvest Skegness in April, the Viral Bible Project took off with a roar as 10 new Bibles went into circulation around the country.

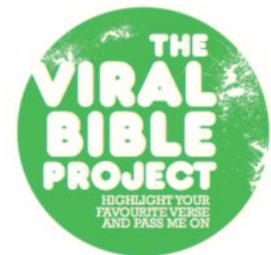
The Bibles are being passed on by hand, linking friends and sharing Bible passages along the way.

Specially-customised NIV Bibles, donated by publishers, Hodder, are being distributed at various Christian festivals such as Keswick, Summer Madness and Leading Edge throughout the summer. Recipients are invited to enter their details and highlight a passage that has challenged or influenced them. Next they log on to a dedicated website to place a 'pin' on a Googlemap, and then pass their Bible on. Each Bible contains a challenge, for example, that each Bible should travel to every county in the UK or be passed to someone of every age.

"It's a creative and fun way of engaging a large number of people with the Bible and with Biblefresh, who may not otherwise get involved," says Krish Kandiah, the Evangelical Alliance's director of churches in mission. "Our prayer is that a love for the Word would sweep through our churches encouraging, challenging and helping us to serve God's purposes better."

The Viral Bible was partly inspired by BookCrossing, the practice of leaving books in public places to be picked up and read by others who in turn repeat the process. In the autumn, it is hoped that the Viral Bible Project, funded with help from the Jerusalem Trust, will go into a second phase, getting spare, unused Bibles off the bookshelves of Christians and into the wider world.

WM



In brief...



JESUS SURF

Following a tour around Cornwall, Wales, the south coast and Ireland, Christian Surfers UK have confirmed dates for the highly popular Jesus Surf Classic outreach surf contest. Being held in Croyde, Devon, on 10-11 September, the event attracts hundreds of the UK's top surfers and this year will be the 19th year of the competition. Dates in October for the Jesus Longboard Classic in Polzeath, Cornwall, now running in its fifth year, are soon to be released. christiansurfers.co.uk

GET A GRIP

Alliance-led campaign Biblefresh will be launching its Get a Grip tour this autumn. Sponsored by CPAS (Church Pastoral Aid Society) events around the country will support churches in looking at the more difficult texts of scripture. With a mixture of lectures, panel question times and a chance for audiences to explore the individual Bible passages they find a challenge. Take away resources will also be available. Dates of the UK tour will be announced in the next edition of *idea*. biblefresh.com

SOUL WOMEN

Women aged 16+ are being invited to Equal, a day run by Soul Survivor on 18 June looking at what it means to be a woman in leadership. Said Mike Pilavachi: "There still seems to be a great deal of confusion over whether female leadership is biblical and we want to do all we can to address that as we're passionate that the Church doesn't miss out on another generation of women leaders." Hosted by Ali Martin and Mike Pilavachi, the event is free. soulsurvivor.com

Going for Gold

With The Games countdown clock set and Olympic park venues ahead of schedule, the 2012 Olympics is being hailed as a golden opportunity for the Church to get involved with the sporting community. The On You Marks Tour will be showing churches how.

Held by More Than Gold during May and June, sessions are being run around the country giving churches tips on how they can support the games and those involved in them, providing ideas on how to run outreach, hospitality and local services. The Baptist Union of Great Britain's head of mission Rev Ian Bunce said: "More than Gold gives the churches the opportunity to be effective and noticeable by working together in response to the 2012 Games – achieving so much more than the sum of the parts."

Getting Christians first involved with the Olympics since its involvement in the 1996 Atlanta Games, More Than Gold will be showing churches how they can provide a range of services to communities as well as those visiting the country for the momentous event.



Michael Johnson races children at the Olympics Stadium

Get sporty: churches could host sports camps, holiday clubs or quiz nights during the Games.

Get homely: providing a place to stay for competitors' relatives and mission helpers, churches will also be taught how to run centres giving practical help, prayer and information.

Get volunteering: with More Than Gold or at the Games themselves.

Get spiritual: chaplains will provide spiritual support to athletes, teams and visitors and support any social issues like homelessness, prostitution, fair trade and the environment that come up during the Games.

Printed materials and DVD resources will be available for churches.

This year's Christian Resources Exhibition will feature the launch of More Than Gold. Turn to page 23 for more information. morethangold.org.uk



Biblefresh at Pentecost Festival

SJI (Share Jesus International), organisers of the Pentecost Festival, are including Biblefresh in their Festival Feel day on Saturday, 11 June.

Methodist Central Hall, Westminster,

London, will be transformed into a Biblefresh zone with a wealth of Bible-centred attractions rolling out from 11am to 5pm. Exhibitions and events include worship, drama, seminars, music,

workshops, and a marketplace. There will be a chance to explore the Pentecost story, pray for the world, and celebrate the birth of the Church.

This fourth Pentecost Festival in London promises to be the biggest and best yet. Starting on Friday, 3 June, a week of evening events including music, theatre, comedy, debates and discussions will culminate in a full weekend of activity.

Saturday's Festival Feel gives churches the opportunity to spill out onto the streets of the capital with events in parks, bars, coffee shops and cafés. There'll be open-air sports activities, art exhibitions in public spaces, and fashion events showcasing ethical clothing. Saturday's finale will be a huge worship event at the O2, hosted by Holy Trinity Brompton, Hillsong and Jesus House. During the worship, 10 more Bibles will be passed around the crowd, as part of The Viral Bible Project.

On Sunday, 12 June, the weekend will come to a close with a chance for people to join in Pentecost celebrations at special services in churches across London.

pentecostfestival.co.uk

WM

BEST OF THE WEB

www.eauk.org

The top stories recently on the Evangelical Alliance's website:

<p>Protect Libyan civilians Efforts to protect ordinary people in Libya should be increased, the Alliance said, after the conflict in the country intensified as reports emerged of people being used as human shields against airstrike attacks.</p>	<p>Alliance response to Shahbaz Bhatti murder The murder of Pakistan's minorities minister and only Christian member of the cabinet was condemned by the Alliance, Archbishops of Canterbury and York and Bishop Azariah of the Church of Pakistan.</p>	<p>Alliance social media – get involved! Follow us on Twitter: twitter.com/EAUknews Follow us on Facebook</p>
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eauk.org

GOSPEL APP

A new iPhone app bringing Premier Christian Radio and Premier Gospel Radio together has been launched. The app gives access to twitter feeds, and enables audiences to make song requests and comments to stations while on the move. Premier Christian Radio station provide teaching, worship, music and testimonies with Premier Gospel Radio hosting Gospel Reggae, Urban, House, Latin, African and Jazz. Said Peter Kerridge from Premier: "We're keen on using new media to reach our listeners, and this app enhances their experience." premier.org.uk

NORTH KOREA

Alliance member Release International has launched a major campaign calling on North Korea to put an end to Christian persecution; with a petition urging the human rights of Christians to be protected. In North Korea, Bibles and Christian meetings are banned and Christians can be jailed, forcing believers to meet secretly often at great personal risk. "We are urging the government of North Korea to allow Christians to worship freely without the threat of persecution," says Andy Dipper, Release CEO. releaseinternational.org

PAKISTANI CHRISTIANS PROTEST

Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali will join in a protest against the blasphemy law of Pakistan that has created a second class citizenship in the country. Organised by the British Pakistani Christian Association, the protest begins outside the Pakistan Embassy in Lowndes Square, Knightsbridge, at 10.30am on Saturday, 2 July. The date commemorates the martyrdom of Sajid and Wajid Maish, two pastors shot dead after being acquitted of a false blasphemy charge in Faisalabad. Others joining in the protest include Stuart Windsor of Christian Solidarity Worldwide and Conservative MP Lee Scott. britishpakistanichristian.blogspot.com

INSPIRE AWARDS 2011

Wanted: local heroes

Every day we hear great stories about people, churches and projects across the UK making a difference because of their Christian faith. We love to tell these stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things – because they inspire us. And we hope they inspire you, too.

Now we want to celebrate those who are really making a difference in their communities. So the Evangelical Alliance has teamed up with *Inspire* magazine to relaunch the Inspire Awards. We want to hear of unsung local heroes that make a difference to the lives they touch.

In November 2009, the second Inspire Awards honoured the winners and runners-up during a ceremony at Westminster. Will you be one of the winners in the 2011 awards?

You can nominate in three categories:

- An individual Christian in the UK who is an inspiring role model



Inspiring Church winners D-Caf (Godmanchester Baptist Church) are presented with their award by Joseph Steinberg of CMS

- A UK church making a dynamic impact on its local community
- A UK-based Christian-run project serving its local area

The prizes

There'll be a wall plaque and prize for the winners in each section: £250 (for individuals), £250 of CPO resources (for churches) and £250 of training from the Evangelical Alliance (for projects) – plus a prestigious awards event in Westminster later in the year for the shortlisted entries.

How to enter

Make your nomination using the form below, and remember – we're looking for outstanding entries that will prove an inspiration to others!

Stories of some of the entrants will be featured in *idea* and *Inspire* magazine over the coming months – as well as on our websites – before entries are judged and shortlists drawn up. The winners will be announced at the Awards event in Westminster.

Now get nominating!

INSPIRE AWARDS 2011

(in partnership with the Evangelical Alliance)

[You can photocopy this form, or send the information by e-mail to inspireawards@eauk.org]

Nominated individual/church/project (delete as required) _____

Their contact details

Address _____

Postcode _____

E-mail _____

Website _____

Describe the work they do in up to 25 words _____

Why do they deserve an Inspire Award? _____

Your details

Your name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

E-mail _____

Tel _____

Your church _____

inspire AWARDS 2011 an initiative of the Evangelical Alliance

evangelical alliance
uniting to change society

Please return this form to:

Inspire Awards, Evangelical Alliance, 186 Kennington Park Road, SE11 4BT

Closing date for entries is: 1 September 2011



Young people urge bishops to focus on next generation

Regeneration: Young delegates meet senior clergymen

More than 120 young people spent the day with the Church of England's most senior clergymen at the recent Regeneration Youth Summit.

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York, Rowan Williams and John Sentamu, joined 32 bishops and 20 youth leaders discussing the future of the Church with the young people in Sheffield on 3 March.

Regeneration is a youth-led initiative for those aged between 15 and 21, and offers them a unique opportunity to meet with bishops on their terms.

During the day, they called on bishops to make the future generation a top priority and discussed how the Church can better equip, resource and reach young

people in the UK.

Regeneration is the brainchild of Mark Russell, chief executive of Church Army. He said: "The Church is wrinkling and shrinking; we are neither reaching nor discipling young people in significant numbers.

"I passionately believe the Christian message has something powerful to speak into young people's lives. Both as a youth worker, and as CEO of a mission agency, I have seen how the Christian message can change lives."

Regeneration is also backed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Church Army's president. He said: "God loves young people, yet so many young people have

little or no connection with our church. As President of Church Army, I am delighted it is sponsoring this major event to address this challenge head-on. I pray this summit helps empower a new generation of young people to make a difference in our world for Jesus Christ."

Alistair Stevenson, who heads up Evangelical Alliance's work with youth and young adults, was invited to attend the day as an outside observer. He said: "It was a real privilege to be a part of such a significant and exciting day and to see how the leadership of the Church of England is willing to hear and learn from young people. It was also great to see such a diverse group come together with a desire to advance God's kingdom and make the name of Jesus known across the country."



Archbishop of Canterbury takes part in a creative ideas session

'Whether there exists a supernatural creator, a God, is one of the most important questions we have to answer.'

- Richard Dawkins

GOD

new evidence

Is God a delusion? Scientists have uncovered amazing facts which show that the universe is finely crafted to make our lives possible.

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4-8 July
Refresh your vision as we look at Ephesians and 'think big' about God.
with Ruth Bushyager

Retirement is not coasting along to heaven
4-8 July
Retirement is a life of continuing usefulness.
with Yemi Ladipo

Let's not waste the pain
11-15 July
Encounter the healing power of the cross of Christ, to break the pain of the past.
with Barry & Mary Kissell

Walk & talk: maps & mysteries
18-22 July
A time to reflect on the mysteries of 'Christ in us, the hope of glory', followed by walks in the stunning scenery of Exmoor.
with James & Inger Denniston

renew refresh resource

Take time-out to be **refreshed** in beautiful North Devon!

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For full details of these events and many other exciting conferences:
www.leeabbey.org.uk
01598 752621 relax@leeabbey.org.uk

Lee Abbey
Christian Community

No ordinary book

Jonathan Oloyede is the convenor of the Global Day of Prayer in London. In 2008, with more than 15 years of pastoral and ministry experience behind them, he and his wife Abbi founded City Chapel, a multicultural church in east London. As a Biblefresh champion he reveals how the Bible has influenced his life.

idea: What is your earliest memory of reading the Bible?

My earliest memories of reading the Bible are from when I became a Christian when I was 18. I'd just entered medical school and had become a Christian, dramatically and supernaturally, and I couldn't put the Bible down. I read it, and read it, and read it – and it was really, really powerful! It changed my whole life. It changed my perception of who Jesus was. I didn't know anything about the Church but I knew so much about the Lord through reading the Bible.

How do you stay fresh in your Bible reading?

I was baptised into a tradition of Christianity that said you had to read your Bible every day. So I grew up reading the morning devotions. The first thing I was given was *Daily Bread*, and that taught me how to read the Bible. I read it lots of times, and right now I have the privilege of leading my church through the Bible in a year. We started in the Acts of the Apostles and we're going from Easter to the next Easter. People are discovering so



Jonathan Oloyede holds up his sign as part of the Biblefresh campaign.

The Bible is everything to us and we should always be reading it, all the time, every day.

many new things keeping them fresh in the scriptures, and it's been a revelation.

How does the Bible impact your day-to-day ministry?

I wouldn't say this is a fall back from my life as a Muslim where the Qur'an was everything, but when I became a Christian the Bible became everything to me. I feel that the Bible should be everything to everybody. People should read the Bible first before they begin to read other books. At conferences when they'd ask me to recommend a book to read, I'd recommend a book in the Bible that I'd just read or re-read. I'd say to them, look, you just have to read this Bible! So I think the Bible is everything to us and we should always be reading it, all the time, every day.

How powerful a book is the Bible?

The Bible is not just an ordinary book; it's the very life and essence of God. We can't just read the Bible as something other men wrote under inspiration, we should see it as the life force of God itself. Jesus said, I am the way, the truth and the life. If a society were to read the Bible it would transfer the life it has... the Bible is like a virus, it corrupts – in a good way – everything it touches. So we



Susa City Tour

14 May – 11 June

Bringing together top Christian politicians and activists from across the political spectrum. Come and hear first-hand what it means to follow in the footsteps of Daniel, Joseph, Esther or Nehemiah. Various dates. susa.info

Internet Evangelism Day

15 May

Internet Evangelism Day encourages churches, Bible colleges, mission agencies and other Christian organisations to consider ways to focus on digital evangelism, either on IE Day Sunday, or throughout the month of May.

internetevangelismday.com

National Family Week

30 May – 5 June

National Family Week is the biggest annual celebration of family life in the UK. The week creates a wealth of opportunity for families to spend time together and works with brand partners and a network of not-for-profit organisations, to provide fun activities and useful resources to combat the biggest barriers to positive family life.

nationalfamilyweek.co.uk

Keswick 2011

16 July – 5 August

Keswick offers something for everyone – life-changing Bible teaching, worship and fellowship, with separate Kids and Youth programmes (ages 3-18), all combined with the chance to relax and enjoy the wonder of the Lake District.

keswickministries.org

New Wine

23 July – 6 August

Come and be part of a huge celebration of God's goodness, generosity and grace. New Wine takes place in three locations over a two-week period.

new-wine.org/summer

need to download the life of the scriptures and the life that's in the Bible into society to act as a viral agent to corrupt the morals – the wrong morals – of our generation. If we let the Bible come in as an all-invading virus that affects the way we think, the way we act, the way we do things, it will transform a whole generation. AM/WM

The Alliance Notice Board (online)

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www.eauk.org/anb



evangelical alliance
helping to change the world



Mike Pilavachi
speaks on true identity

Naujavan: Uniting young Asian Christians

It was a unique sight to see: more than 200 young British Asian Christians gathering to worship God together during the Naujavan event which took place recently.

Naujavan, which simply means 'youth' in Hindi, is an organisation which exists to inspire, develop and equip young British Asians aged between 16 and 30 to grow closer to Jesus.

The event was held at Soul Survivor church in Watford and leader Mike Pilavachi spoke to those gathered about what it really means to have true identity.

Sanjay Rajo, who leads Naujavan with Susheel Das, said: "Being a British Asian Christian has often been described as being a minority within a minority. Although we have this national outlook, our heart is very much focussed on the local church.

"It's massively exciting to be part of this and God has continued to provide for it, leading the way clearly. It has been a fantastic place to make friends from all over the place who share a similar story and for many it has been a huge encouragement as they realise they're not the only one from their background to be following Jesus."

Several main events are held across the country throughout the year and include times of worship, teaching and ministry. Several leadership training events are also held under the title Naujavan Charged – for rising British Asian leaders.

Sanjay said: "We're passionate that young British Asian people would be raised up to reach back into the Asian communities they're from, seeing people saved and nurtured."

Manoj Raitathatha from the Alliance's South Asian Forum added: "For many years South Asian churches and ministries have been working very much in isolation. However, what is both encouraging and exciting is the fact that mainstream denominations and the Asian Church are beginning to collaborate for the greater cause of drawing more South Asians to the knowledge and love of Christ.

"Naujavan proved to be a wonderful partnership bringing together a fusion of Asian and Western worship music, Asian food and inspirational teaching from Mike Pilavachi. I for one was deeply moved to see a partnership which saw young South Asians stepping forward to give their lives to follow Jesus. Clearly together with a spirit of unity we can do so much more to bring the message of God's love to this nation."



Young Asian Christians
worship together

“ My
godmother left a
Christian legacy,
and she inspired
me to do the
same. ”

Beryl's godmother may have died in 1960, but her passion for Bible Society lives on – through her goddaughter and her legacy gift.

"Auntie K shared her enthusiasm for the Bible with me, and gave me this KJV Bible on my 7th birthday," Beryl fondly recalls. "She shared her enthusiasm about Bible Society too. I was moved by stories of new translations being eagerly received all over the world."

Beryl has left a gift in her will to help Bible Society carry on the work her godmother enthused about, all those years ago. Together, their legacy gifts will enable more people to read Scripture in their own languages.

Find out how legacy gifts bless beyond a lifetime

www.christianlegacy.org.uk



Beryl
Shepard

Christian Legacy

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Powerful 7:14 prayer at Parliament

Christians gathered in Parliament Square to pray for the UK and its leaders in an evening prayer event.

Hundreds of people crowded the pavements around Parliament on Tuesday, 15 March, praying for an hour. Most people heard the call to prayer through Facebook and Twitter, coming in small groups from churches across the country and joined by many individuals.

The hour started at 7:14pm in response to the verse in 2 Chronicles which says: "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

Initiated and led by students following the protests over tuition fees that took place before Christmas, this was a chance for the whole church to come together and provide a positive alternative to the riots that marred the earlier protests.

Pat Allerton, who organised the event, said: "7:14 saw hundreds of Christians coming together in the name of Jesus to pray for our nation, government and world at this time. It was a peaceful, beautiful and humbling time, as we sang, held lights and prayed out together. When Big Ben struck 8pm we all dropped to our knees before singing *Amazing Grace*. It was a powerful time. MPs were touched, with one moved to tears after being prayed for, and our worship could even be heard inside Parliament as members went to vote."

Many also took the chance to pray for situations overseas, in particular the crisis in Japan following the earthquake and the continued instability in North Africa and the Middle East.

At the same time more than 40 youth and student workers from across the UK met inside the Houses of Parliament to talk about how we can see our nation transformed through politics. The evening, hosted by Christians in Politics and SUSAs, aimed to equip and resource youth and student workers to understand the importance of political engagement to transform communities and to encourage more young people into politics through joining political parties.

Instead of simply encouraging young people to become worship leaders or church pastors, Christians in Politics and SUSAs have a passion – which the Evangelical Alliance shares – to see young people supported by their churches as they pursue a vocation in politics.

The Alliance's Alistair Stevenson attended the event. He said: "For youth and student workers to encourage greater political engagement

there must be Christian political role models who are willing to share their story and calling with a new generation. These stories might inspire a new generation of Wilberforces."

Christians in Politics and SUSAs are holding events across the country to encourage churches to see politics as a crucial part of their activity. Throughout February and March events took place in Bristol, St Albans, Southampton and Edinburgh and further events are planned for Oxford, Cambridge and Birmingham in May and June. susa.info

Christians call government to act on gambling

There are nearly half a million people in the UK with gambling problems, according to new research. The Alliance responded to the announcement in a joint statement with other church groups and Christian organisations calling on the Government to tighten rules governing gambling activity.

The Gambling Commission has recently published the third Gambling Prevalence Survey, following previous reports in 1999 and 2007. This report found that the number of people who have gambled in the past year had risen five per cent to 73 per cent, with the rate of problem gambling up from 0.6 per cent to 0.9 per cent. When this is translated to the entire population, it means that there are now around 450,000 problem gamblers – up from around 284,000 in 2007.

The Government is currently considering increasing the stake level for a popular category of gaming machine, and also allowing arcades and bingo halls to have more machines. The Evangelical Alliance has already asked the Government not to take forward their plans and this study gives further evidence as to why such a move would be dangerous. The Gambling Commission suggested that – due to government cuts – this could be the last study of its kind. It is essential for understanding the nature and spread of gambling behaviour that these surveys continue.

In tough economic times, it's all too easy to place a bet as a quick fix answer to get a cash windfall. The reality is, only a small minority come out as winners. The big winners are the betting shops and casinos.

Daniel Webster

Love Wins: Yes, but...

Derek Tidball reviews Rob Bell's controversial new book...

Love Wins is full of confusing half-truths – and each of those words is important!

Love Wins contains truth. It's true that "the indestructible love of God is an unfolding, dynamic reality" and we're all "endlessly being invited to trust, accept, believe, embrace and experience it". Much of what he says about the cross is straight from the Bible. His criticism of some evangelicals for their superficial and misplaced judgmentalism rings true. He's right: biblical teaching on heaven and 'the age to come' is misrepresented if all it does is encourage some to boast, "I've got a ticket to heaven". The Bible presents Christ's work as much wider than the salvation of a few individuals. Eternal life doesn't start "when we die but is about a quality of life lived now". There are many 'Jesuses' being spoken about and it's vital we get the authentic one and not one of our own creation. All this and much more is true.

Love Wins however only presents half the truth, which is disturbing to those who believe in the other half of the truth. Old Testament verses are strung together about God's grace triumphing over Israel's sin and their punishment having a 'sale by' date. But he never mentions repentance as the prophets do. His teaching on hell ducks some hard issues while firing a lot of questions of his own. God's wrath is touched on very inadequately. He says the sacrificial understanding of the cross belongs to a primitive cultural world we no longer inhabit, so he sidesteps a key understanding of the cross. He assumes that people will come round to accept God's love in the end, and doesn't see why death is the irreversible cut-off point. But why does he think people will 'repent' after death when they haven't done so before? He uses some parables that appear to fit his argument but ignores others.

He's good at drawing on 'the hard cases' to make his point and ignoring the rest. It's all very emotive. He's very critical of evangelicalism for its lack of engagement in this world and ignores its huge and long-standing involvement in communities and in helping the poor. Many mission halls supported the vulnerable that others neglected. The great and varied evangelical contribution to society is totally ignored. Perhaps the evangelicals he knows are nasty people. I know a few like that too, but I know many more who aren't.

Above all, *Love Wins* is confusing. I can see why people are asking whether Rob Bell is a universalist or not, because it's unclear. Brilliant communication sometimes gets in the way. The book contains volleys of rapid-fire questions but isn't so good at giving answers. It confuses things like when he uses the parable of the prodigal sons as a parable about heaven and hell. Hell, he says, is the older brother going into the party and so hell is not about separation but integration. But didn't Jesus say...?

The style which peppers the pages with moving stories and ever-lengthening lists or questions would bedazzle you in if you were listening to it. In print, it doesn't work so well. It's a book to which I want to say 'Yes, but...'

But those who wish to criticise this book need to earn the right to do so by being as passionate about sharing Christ's love as Bell is.

▶ Derek Tidball is a member of the Alliance's Board and Council (of which he was previously chair), and formerly principal of the London School of Theology.



“ The legacy my husband left will help disabled children improve their lives. ”

Tessa Hayward remembers her husband, Archdeacon Derek Hayward, when she looks at one of his favourite paintings. "In fact, he was not sentimental about objects; but leaving a legacy to Livability was very important to him. They were very good to us."

Their son Leo was diagnosed with an aggressive nerve disease when he was a little boy, and Livability helped them care for him throughout his life.

"My husband's gift will improve quality of life for other children like Leo," says Tessa. "Derek was servant hearted, and the wellbeing of others is the only memorial he would want."

Through your will, you can give a gift of life. You can begin by visiting www.christianlegacy.org.uk

Tessa Hayward



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Pastoring Parliament

by Chine Mbubaegbu

Rev Rose Hudson-Wilkin sits in her office in the House of Commons as portraits of her 78 predecessors line the walls. None of them bear any resemblance to her. She is both the first woman and the first black person to have held the prestigious office of Speaker's Chaplain, providing a Christian ministry within the corridors of power.

The Speaker's Chaplain conducts the prayers for Parliament in the Chamber at the start of each day's business, takes Holy Communion in St Mary Undercroft, leads memorial services and performs marriages and baptisms.

"I have responsibility for the pastoral welfare of everyone in the Palace of Westminster, whether they be members of the Lords or the Commons, or a staff member," she says. "Six months into the role, I'm finding it fascinating and challenging, and I'm thoroughly enjoying it."

While Rose says she has been welcomed into the House, her appointment by Speaker John Bercow in June 2010 had initially caused some controversy as it was seen as a radical departure from tradition. "There may well have been those who were sceptical that the 79th chaplain is a woman and not only is she a woman, but she's also black. When you're in a place like this, the temptation to stick with tradition is very real.

"There's nothing negative about sticking to tradition, but sometimes we need to cast out into the deep, as our Lord says. Because you never quite know what you might get."

Facing opposition

Rose, who continues to be vicar at the United Benefice of Holy Trinity with St Philip in the east end of London also faced opposition when she was first appointed to her parish. But for Rose, who was born and raised in Montego Bay, the colour of her skin has never been an issue, nor has she seen it as a barrier to fulfilling her purpose.



Rose in her office at Westminster



Rose with Speaker John Bercow

Devin R. Sands - Parliamentary Copyright

"My mark of success is whether people I minister to are connecting with the gospel."

"I'm very comfortable in my skin and comfortable in who I am as God made me. I'm very fortunate to have grown up in the Caribbean," she reminisces. "When you grow up in a place like that, you see reflections of yourself in all walks of life: in politics, in medicine, in education. And when you see reflections of yourself when you are a child, you grow up knowing that you can become and be anything you want to be. There are no stumbling blocks or obstacles that you can't climb over."

So, growing up knowing that she could achieve anything she set her mind to, what led her to the clergy?

Rose – who is married with three children – says she felt a clear call from God on her life at the age of 14, having been raised in the Church. And the rest, as they say, is history. She was commissioned a Church Army Officer in 1982 before carrying out her theological training at Queens Theological College. By 1994 she had been ordained a priest and in 2007 she was appointed a chaplain to the Queen, making her one of just 36 religious leaders who are invited to officiate and preach occasionally at the Queen's Chapel beside St James' Palace.

Rose admits that on receiving a call from the bishop saying Her Majesty wanted to appoint her a Chaplain, she thought it must have been a joke.

Measuring success

Despite her achievements, Rose insists she "does not measure success in terms of those things".

"As we seek success or become successful, we sometimes forget the God who called us out of our Egypts and into our Promised Land. So I measure success in terms of how effective I am when I lead an act of worship," she says. "My mark of success is whether people I minister to are connecting with the gospel."

But how can people be connecting with the gospel in Parliament in an age where we're seeing an increasing separation between church and state, and the lines between the secular and the sacred are being reinforced? For Rose, her role as Speaker's Chaplain is a constant reminder of the country's Christian heritage.

"One of the reasons I applied for this post was that I feel very strongly that we are a Christian country," she says. "Although we're now a multi-faith society, it doesn't take away from our roots.

"I believe that one's faith should not be put in a box that only gets opened on a Sunday and then closed again. Faith is something you live every day. And if you live it every day and you're in this place every day, that faith ought to be expressed.

"Since faith is about life then it ought to be at the heart of politics since politics is also about life."

► To see videos of Rose talking about the Bible and leadership, visit biblefresh.com or eauk.org/slipstream

CV

- Commissioned a Church Army Officer in 1982
- Ordained deacon in 1991
- Ordained priest in 1994
- Appointed chaplain to the Queen in 2007
- Member of the General Synod of the Church of England
- Former chair of the National Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns (CMEAC)
- Former chair of the Worldwide Committee of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK)
- Former member of the Broadcasting Standards Commission



media matters

by Lizzy Millar, press officer

How is it that when a big story breaks widespread confusion ensues?

Confused? So was I when I read in the national newspapers that Eunice and Owen Johns had been banned from fostering children by the High Court as they were accused of being 'anti-gay'.

However, on probing further we later learnt that the judgement does not ban Christians with orthodox beliefs on homosexual conduct from fostering children. As before, local authorities are free to take on Christians.

In fact the court made no ruling whatsoever on the basis that Derby City Council had not in fact rejected the Johns' application to foster.

On this basis, we at the Alliance's press office issued a release stating: "It is not true that Christians are being prevented from fostering and adopting children in spite of increasing evidence that they are being marginalised in public life."

Consequently this was picked up by Andrew Brown in the *Guardian's* Comment is Free blog as well as the British Humanist Society homepage. This in turn generated a steady stream of interview requests for Dr Don Horrocks from the BBC as well as City University students and UCB radio.

To push the positives of Christians involved in fostering and adoption, the Alliance press office did its best to promote the example of Krish Kandiah, one of our directors, who is both a foster carer and an adopter.

Elsewhere in media-land the fascination with our quest for a soulmate showed no sign of abating as the country was gripped by Royal Wedding fever.

In other news, the Alliance also received coverage for our statement which called on the Government to guarantee that churches will genuinely be free to choose whether or not to hold civil partnerships without risk of future anti-discrimination laws following the unexpected amendment to the Civil Partnerships Act in March. Yet another busy two months for the press office at Whitefield House. Over the next two months, who knows what opportunities there will be to bring a Christian voice to our society...

“ Legacy isn't just a word. It keeps our parents' work alive. ”

Stephanie and Jenny grew up in India where their parents, missionaries Eddie and Barbara Askew, managed a Leprosy Mission hospital. "They did an incredible amount for people and families affected by leprosy," says Jenny.

They're reminded of their father through his wonderful books and paintings, like this one.

Eddie and Barbara's legacy gift to the Mission will ensure the work to combat leprosy can continue.

"We miss them every day," the daughters agree, "but we love that the work is still going on in their name."

A legacy can keep a life's work alive. If that's the kind of gift you'd like to make, find out more at

www.christianlegacy.org.uk

Stephanie Bell and Jenny Hawke



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Is the rain coming?

" Earnestly I seek you. My soul thirsts for you. My body longs for you. In a dry and weary land where there is no water." (Psalm 63v1)

by **Fred Drummond**

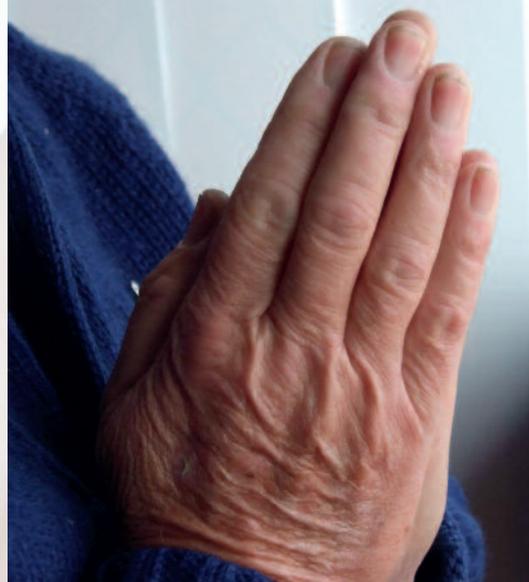
I believe that many of us within the community of faith in the UK are suffering from a spiritual malaise. We are dry and desperate for the presence of God. We lack spiritual intimacy with our saviour. This dryness leads to painful cracks of the heart. The outworking of the dryness leads to certain symptoms that I want to highlight before going on to offer some encouragement. Is this a time when Jesus is beginning to soften the hearts of his people?

"It is not that we no longer believe," he said with passion. "It is just that there have been so few good news stories that people are losing confidence." This church leader is one of several that I have met who have talked about lack of confidence in the gospel's power to change people in this society. Theologically, they still believe that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. However, because of years of decline there are doubts about sharing the good news of Jesus.

This is not just because we have a lack of confidence in how to share, but actually about whether sharing will make any real difference. This is seen in our approach to mission. Many of us long for a holistic view to mission where word and deed come together. In the past we may have been criticised for speaking but not acting. We have sought to evangelise without doing much about issues of justice and mercy. Could it be that once again we have got the balance wrong and now concentrate mostly on social action because we lack the confidence in sharing the story of Jesus? While there are areas of growth and confidence, they are not the norm. Rather, confidence has, for a generation, been at a low ebb.

Re-discovering our identity

Perhaps linked to this is forgetting who we are. In the face of the secularisation, cynicism and consumerism of society we have suffered



a severe memory loss. Like Jason Bourne after he is pulled from the water in the Robert Ludlum series, we have lost our identity. We need to re-discover who we are in Christ. We are loved, forgiven, heirs of God. We are unique and spiritually gifted with a destiny in the one who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We are servants and transformers in Him. We should not allow ourselves to forget who we are.

I think churches should constantly be looking to develop and grow. The programmes and training that we involve ourselves in are vital to the health and wellbeing of the Church. However, when we talk as if the programme or indeed the speaker, worship leader or book will revive our church we grow close to a desperate idolatry. Asking how much time we spend looking for new solutions against how much time we spend seeking Jesus' presence would make an interesting equation. Desperation is a clear sign of dryness. While that may have been our experience for some time I am encouraged to believe that things may be changing. I am not naïve enough to think that everything is suddenly rosy in the garden, but I am convinced that God is prompting His people to draw closer to Jesus with a renewed passion. Intimacy with Jesus is becoming the desire of more hearts. Jesus is delighting in challenging his people to allow him to be all that matters. Is Jesus all that matters?

Let me give you some examples from Scotland where I am based. I believe that in Scotland today there are signs of God dealing with the parched hearts of His people. This is leading to greater prayer and expectancy in various parts of the Church. It is patchy, but genuine change is taking place. In the last year there has been a marked increase in prayer. The Evangelical Alliance, Alpha, Prayer for Scotland and Care, with help from Pete Greig began an initiative called the 'Big If', which saw prayer across the nation for a year. Almost every hour of every day someone was praying for the nation. There is the growth of 24/7 prayer, the emergence of Glasgow House of Prayer, and healing rooms. There is the continued work of Pray for Scotland and countless other prayer ministries springing up. Anecdotal evidence suggests that more churches are developing prayer meetings and ministries. This is really exciting because it seems to be following the biblical pattern of encounter and action. Alongside the prayer there are increased attempts to engage with the wider community. There are real signs of the kingdom advancing and the confidence, while still low, is growing. People are starting to see that the first thing should always be Jesus.

Through his word and by his Spirit Jesus is calling his people to seek him. A passion for intimacy with Jesus has to be at the centre of all we are doing. In him we find our confidence and our identity. To gaze upon his beauty and majesty and to care about his glory will lead us into personal, spiritual and social transformation.

As part of my role in the Alliance I have the privilege of encouraging and directing prayer. It is an exciting thing to be involved in as this may be a time when in the purposes of God a few showers may be coming.

► **Fred Drummond is national director of Scotland for the Evangelical Alliance, and also prayer and supporters director.**

A week in the life...

Ali Elder, 22, based at City Church, Aberdeen, writes here about his experiences on the DNA discipleship programme...

DNA is a national church-based discipleship programme designed to serve churches, develop leaders and create 21st century disciples. It allows one to cover such a vast and broad variety of ministries while also working through issues of the heart at the same time. One never really know what will come next.

DNA aims to develop women and men for God's kingdom in three areas: head (understanding), hands (servanthood) and heart (character). Whether through serving the local church, being accountable to a member of your placed church, or by gaining learning and knowledge from the teaching, DNA moulds and shapes the individual for God and His kingdom.

We've just had our second residential training block. The week was a lot about receiving from God and hearing from Him, with times of teaching, ministry, worship and prayer with everyone on the DNA course from all over the country. Part of the week was rejecting and getting rid of mindsets and thoughts that I had lived with previously. It particularly helped me develop in leadership, a calling I know God has placed on my life. I grew pastorally, showing care for people and praying for others in a way that came naturally because it was from God's heart. I was asked to lead the international mission trip that I am part of later on in the year, and I was encouraged by the amount of people who came up to me and said they were excited by this prospect and saw leadership as

one of my gifts allowing me to see this gift growing within me through the eyes of others.

All this means that I feel more equipped to deal with leadership situations in the ministries I am involved with in City Church, in working with youth, children and the marginalised. I also feel free from things that have weighed me down in the past and this has continued since I've been home in very practical ways. I've thrown away items that were related to my past life, highlighted issues I need to work on with my discipler and prayed through them. I've also recognised my vulnerable areas and I have begun to learn verses that will help me in those areas and that will protect me. Regular contact at church with my discipler and the other DNA trainees at two further residentials and 13 two-day blocks all help to root what God is doing.

Overall, every week on DNA is different. It's full on, it will test you and stretch you and develop you in ways you never knew existed. DNA focuses on the heart, head and the mind all at the same time in order to develop you as an agent of God in His kingdom. I've learnt so much about God and myself so far this year that I am really excited to see what God has in store for me next. It's intense, non-stop and manic but I don't think I would have it any other way. dna-uk.org



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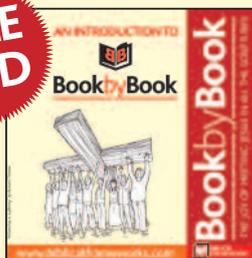
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Stories of Life by Judith Hill

The tattered old book sat in the middle of the vintage style stage, bursting with stories which would soon be told. The photographs and art were in place, the musicians and story-tellers ready. And then the Black Box in Belfast's Cathedral Quarter started to fill up. There was a buzz in the air. The city seemed hungry for hope. *Stories of Life* is a series of events being hosted by Tell It In Colour (TIIC) – as we aim to communicate the hopeful side of life in Northern Ireland. These events feature the songs of Ballymena singer songwriter Stewart McIlrath, who has penned an epic new album *Stories of Life*, based on stories from this very website (album available on iTunes).

"I guess I'm dreaming that more and more of these positive stories would begin to emerge and so this musical venture aims to reveal some of these stories through song; to pick out the colour from the grey," Stewart explains. It is these songs, combined with quirky photos,

inspiring art pieces and oral storytelling which weave together at the Stories of Life nights to express local stories of hope. Musical support was also provided on the night by exciting new band Sons of Caliber.

But as for the stories, one which really seemed to grab the attention of the 130-strong crowd at the launch night was *The Other Side*. It's a song based around Andrew's story. He's a teenager who lives on a north Belfast interface, but defied the divide to be part of a group who gave out gift bags to people in a community he usually feared.

Hilary McCann was one of those who attended the event and said she'd been really inspired through it: "What stood out was just the passion of everyone who was involved, from the music to reading the stories. I just loved being there."

So where next for Tell It In Colour? Our Stories of Life roadshow will be continuing... tellitincolour.com



"The colours in this town could be so bright. Fighting may be on our doorsteps, love can be hard to find sometimes... We've just got to look in the right places, cos there we will find the Stories of Life." (Stewart McIlrath - Stories of Life)

stewartmcilrath.com

Alliance welcomes new NI director

The past few months have seen a number of staff changes in the Alliance's Northern Ireland (NI) office. Most recently



Peter Lynas joined as national director. Peter will be combining this role with his existing post as operations director at Causeway Coast Vineyard Church in Coleraine...

idea: Peter, welcome to the team. Tell us a little about your life before joining the Alliance?

I studied law and practised as a barrister in NI for five years. Having got married, my wife and I then headed off to Regent College in Vancouver where I completed a Masters in Divinity. On returning to the UK, I worked for the Relationships Foundation, a public policy think-tank in Cambridge focussing on family and social policy. Just before the birth of our daughter we returned to NI where I led the *faith@work* initiative at Belfast Bible College helping people apply their faith in the workplace.

Why did you want to work for the Alliance?
The Alliance is about evangelical unity, not for

its own sake, but to point people to God. Similarly, working in advocacy is not about protecting our Christian sub-culture. Rather it's about wanting to transform society. I believe it's a great time for churches to share a prophetic vision that will not only critique the prevailing state of affairs, but also offer hope to a society at a time of transition. Being national director here in NI means I get to be part of that - too good an opportunity to miss!

It's still early days but do you have any specific aims or hopes for the work here?

God's kingdom is breaking in, turning our world upside down, or more accurately, right side up. His kingdom is not from this world, but it is for this world. And so we are to be agents of change and transformation, preparing for the return of the king - we are kingdom carriers. Ultimately I want to help inspire and equip churches in this kingdom vision of transformation. The Big Society agenda and the reduced role of the state will leave more space for churches and Christian organisations to operate. I also want to facilitate a stronger voice within government and the media for Christians in NI.

What do you do in your spare time?
I love snowboarding, wakeboarding, watching

The West Wing and Portstewart Strand (as well as spending quality time with my wife and daughter of course).

Finally - how are you going to cope with an office full of women?

That's why I'm part-time!

Lindsey Holley

Dates for your diary

Day Retreat, Belfast Bible College
7 May
belfastbiblecollege.com

Debriefing for Senders, Mission Agencies Partnership
Hillhall Presbyterian Church Halls
14 May
mapmission.org

Terry Virgo, Redeeming Cities Conference Series
Crescent Arts Centre, Belfast
21 May
redeemercentral.com

Focusfest, Waterfront Hall, Belfast
10-11 June
focusfest.co.uk



Unity For Transformation

Right across Scotland the Church is seeing unity for transformation as the Evangelical Alliance works to bring together a variety of different organisations and churches. Whether in youth work, politics or wider mission, the Evangelical Alliance in Scotland is seeing people coming together in unity to advance God's kingdom.



Churches Vote

A broad coalition of organisations and denominations have come together to develop an online website to help and equip Christians for the Scottish Parliament Election on 5 May. Churches Vote is an initiative developed by organisations including Action Together of Churches in Scotland, CARE, the Catholic Parliamentary Office, Christians Count, the Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office and the Evangelical Alliance. This landmark initiative is one of the first to be supported by nearly every denomination across Scotland and demonstrates a new desire among Christian leaders and organisations to work together for God's kingdom.

The main aim of the initiative is to encourage even greater involvement by Scottish Christians in social action and public affairs, and demonstrate to politicians that the Church is actively and positively engaged with public life in Scotland.

The website provides information on practical aspects of the election, guides to political party policy on topical issues and an interactive map to help people find out if a hustings (all-party meeting for candidates) is taking place in their area. Significantly, the website also includes video clips for all of the main party leaders answering key questions that relate to the Church's engagement with politics and wider society.

The website was officially launched on 22 March in Edinburgh alongside a joint statement which was signed by the leaders of each supporting denomination.

Alistair Stevenson, public policy officer for

the Evangelical Alliance in Scotland, has also been travelling around the country speaking at church leader gatherings about how the Church can encourage political engagement and see the importance of voting in the elections.

Youth workers attend Deep Impact

A recent conference, administered by the Evangelical Alliance in Scotland, saw more than 300 youth workers from across Scotland gather for a weekend of practical and biblical input from skilled youth practitioners and theologians. Now in its fifth year, Deep Impact is run by the Scottish Christian Youth Work Forum (SCYWF), the youth-wing of the



Youth workers attend Deep Impact

Evangelical Alliance in Scotland.

Pete Greig, founder of the 24-7 Prayer movement and the director of prayer at Holy Trinity Brompton, London, spoke in the main sessions. There was also a variety of seminars and workshops looking at various aspects of youth work and theology plus specific opportunities to network with other youth workers from across Scotland.

One attendee said: "Keep up the fantastic work providing an excellent conference with space to reflect, network, receive training and space to seek and listen to God."

SCYWF has a broad membership of the largest national organisations involved in youth work including International Christian College, Scripture Union Scotland, and Youth for Christ.

Alpha Vision Day

Rev Fred Drummond, national director of the Evangelical Alliance in Scotland, led delegates in prayer at the recent Alpha Scotland Vision

Day. Fred gave thanks for the Big If prayer initiative which saw churches and organisations pray 24/7 throughout the last year. The Big If initiative was a partnership of a number of different organisations including Alpha, the Alliance and Pray for Scotland.

More than 750 attended the day with key speakers including Nicky Gumbel, pastor of Morningside Baptist Karl Martin, and the chief executive of Bethany Christian Trust Iain Gordon. Worship was led by Ben Cantelon.

Rev David Cameron, head of the Church of Scotland's Church Without Walls initiative, who co-hosted the day with Alpha Scotland director Paul Davie, said: "Just hearing the way God is transforming lives – it's not that we are talking about something to come, it's happening now, we are living in a time and a season when God is doing that."

South Asian Forum Launches in Scotland

Church leaders gathered for the launch of the first South Asian Forum (SAF) in Scotland. At the event leaders from the South Asian Christian community discussed how they could work more closely and support one another.

Manoj Raithatha, SAF's national co-ordinator, said: "We're fully committed to representing and supporting the South Asian Christian population of Scotland and working in close partnership with the Church in Scotland to draw more South Asians to the knowledge and love of Christ." *Alistair Stevenson*

Dates for your diary

Scottish Parliamentary elections

5 May churchesvote.org

Clan National Leaders Conference, Stirling Baptist Church

17-18 May clangathering.org.uk

National Prayer Breakfast Scotland

1 June

Macdonald Inchyra Grange Hotel
npbs.info

Alive Festival

9-14 June alivefestival.co.uk

Solas 2011 Festival

24-26 June

Wiston solasfestival.co.uk



CICC events tell the Big Story

The Cymru Institute of Contemporary Christianity's (CICC) spring programme had a specific focus on the Bible this year – always contemporary issues facing Christians. The style varied during the series, from drama, to 'big story', to latest academic research – all with a view to helping us in our appreciation and confidence in God's Word.

It was hoped that through events focussing on the greatest story ever told, the people of Wales would reconnect with the grand epic of the Bible and also rediscover their place in God's plan.

The sessions were led by writer and theologian Gerard Kelly, who believes that only a recovery of the Bible's Big Story – the overarching epic of God's love for humanity – can save our churches from their captivity, and our culture from its confusion. Only in this Big Story can the true meaning of humanity be found.

Human beings are storied creatures. Our stories shape our lives, and inform our expectations. The cultures we shape are the sum total of the stories we tell about ourselves, and without a meaningful story to inhabit, we are lost. And yet the Bible's Big Story is today

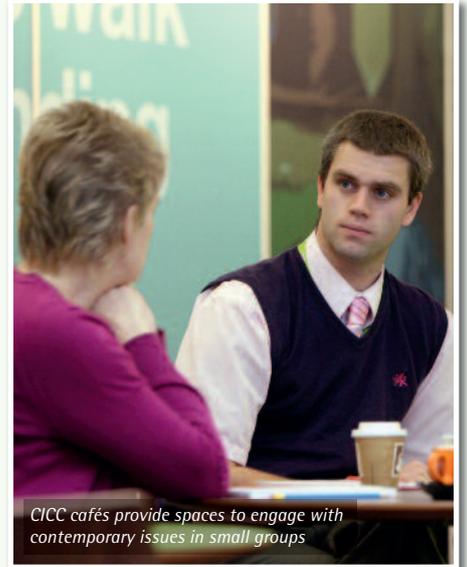
being fast forgotten. Outside our churches, its voice is not heard. Inside our churches, we tend to obsess over detail but miss the grand design: we know the verses, but have lost the vision.

Could renewal come to our churches and our culture through a recovery of the Bible's Big Story?

The Tentmaker – living the biblical life

Through a storytelling style, Dai Woolridge of Going Public Theatre communicated the journey of a man who changed the face of the early Church, and whose New Testament letters have been a major part in us understanding how we too can run the race in the 21st century. From coat rail, to reading in Braille, to jail – this was Paul's story told in a way you've never seen before. Whether you were an old timer, and knew your Bible back to front, or the phrase 'Paul the Apostle' meant nothing to you, this CICC tour in February to Aberystwyth and Cardiff impacted everyone.

In 2011, CICC is taking up the Biblefresh challenge to see how God's message really can bring change in our lives, our churches, our communities and our world.



CICC cafés provide spaces to engage with contemporary issues in small groups

CICC Café – Biblefresh insights

CICC Cafés are opportunities to engage locally in small groups with contemporary issues that are important to us as Christians. Following the Biblefresh theme, CICC also facilitated a cafe-style series in Cardiff on six alternate Sunday evenings, led by Paul Hocking, asking a number of questions about experiences of the Bible.

Participants left each week with a sense of excitement, having engaged deeply with scripture.

Cefn United FC: A testimony of God's grace

In September 2008 a volunteer youth worker and I sat down and drafted out the vision and main aims for a youth five-a-side football team, due to the requests from some un-churched lads in our weekly youth club. The lads bought into the vision and by December 2009, we had two teams training weekly and our first tour of England under our belts. Although these things were great, perhaps the most exciting thing of all was that these lads had committed to a team that was not just about football. Our motto is: "Improving ability and building character." Each week at training we work on both and as a result the football is getting better and characters are growing. The values that underpin the team are trust, respect, honesty, teamwork and commitment. These values are what we discuss during our half-time team talks and what we demand on the pitch on which they play. Although we have much to do and much to learn, so far this holistic and biblical approach has seen many of the boys move on in their faith and one of the captains make a first time commitment to Christ – hopefully the first of many.

On our recent tour to England during half term we had seven of the 13 lads that came with us respond to the gospel. Four of them have started to make steps forward, with one of them choosing to get baptised recently. Following this lad's step of faith, one of his friends who is also on the team chose to give his life to the Lord. We've still got much to learn, but one thing we have learnt is that loving young people and responding to their needs holistically works. This could be because it is what Jesus did!

Rob McAvoy, sports and youth worker, Bethlehem Life Centre



Dates for your diary

CICC: Can I believe the Bible?

6-7 May, Cardiff, Aberystwyth, Swansea
The CICC is running a series of events in May based on the question: Can I believe the Bible? The talks, including Moral Objections to the Old Testament and Can We Trust the Gospels take place in various locations around Wales.
cicconline.org.uk

Gweini Conference

Cornerstone Church, Swansea
17 May
gweini.org.uk

Wales National Children's and Youth Work Conference

Hope Community Church, Newtown
21 May
wncywc.org.uk

Day of Prayer for Eritrea

26 May
release-eritrea.com



Raise children to love the Church

It's an issue most Christian parents struggle with – handing on their faith to their children. It seems there are no hard and fast rules, but there are definitely pitfalls to avoid and issues to be prepared for, as Rob Parsons reveals in his new book *Getting Your Kids Through Church without them Ending up Hating God*.

When we went around the world, with the Bringing Home the Prodigals tour, I spoke to many so-called prodigals, and discovered that many of them had never ever turned their backs on God. What had put them off church though were other things – disappointment with themselves, believing they didn't match up to some silly list of criteria that never had kept heaven awake, or the way they had seen Christians deal with each other in the local church. What made me even sadder was that many of these young people had a real love for God and a real passion for many things that are on the heart of God.

As children get older, what they like doing changes. Boys, in particular, often don't like singing hymns. They don't want to sit still, or read, or listen to lectures. So when they are 16, they stop coming to church – and we call them prodigals. But they are not, not really. They just don't like reading and listening, singing and sitting still. The same kids might have an incredible heart for the poor or would be the first in

line for getting involved in working on a homeless project. Jesus said these things matter to him. We need to be looking at kids and seeing where we can catch them doing something right, instead of just putting a load of guilt on their backs.

It is a matter of discovering how we can encourage young people. And we need to give them a vision – in the last part of the book, I talk about boring kids out of the kingdom. Jesus said to the disciples: "Come and fish for men. Peter, feed my sheep." What a vision that turned out to be. We need to be challenging kids to do something, to join a mission trip to Rwanda, to work on the streets with under-privileged kids. We have to recognise that some kids are doers.

But, more importantly even than that, we have to get our children ready for three disappointments, that will hit them, whether or not they like sitting and listening. The first is disappointment with themselves. We have to get them ready for the day they feel they have let God down. I meet lots of young people and I ask why they don't go to church anymore. And they say: "I was doing lots of things that were wrong. I was drinking, or I smoked, or I took drugs." It breaks my heart. Yes, it would be better if they had not been doing those things, but there are a million other things they could have been doing, and there are people sat in the pews who are doing them, and who manage to

**We need to be challenging
kids to do something.**



sustain some measure of Christian life. We have to get them ready for disappointment with themselves, and to know there is always a way back.

Secondly, we have to get them ready for disappointment with others. Some of our deepest hurts will be at the hands of people inside the Church. Sometimes the things we do to each other are unspeakable. When a church splits, and they fight over the building, and some of them start up again in the school down the road, there is collateral damage – the children whose spiritual home has been blown apart. They watch as people tear each other apart. Or perhaps they see a leader fall – their pastor, their youth leader, perhaps a national leader. Sometimes we build them up too much, and when they fall, a whole bunch of kids fall with them, because they almost look up to them as though they are Jesus himself.

Hardest of all, we have to get them ready for disappointment with God. When they are little, they pray 'Give me a fine day for my birthday', or 'Make my hamster better', but the time is coming when they will ask God to make their best friend well from cancer, and maybe their friend will seem to recover, but the next year they will be praying by their graveside, crying in the rain. So many people never recover from that day.

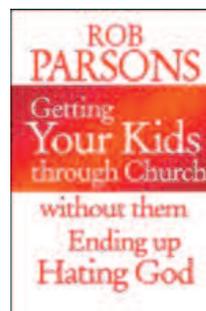
The thing is, we don't tell them the truth, that God doesn't always answer prayers the way we want Him to, because we don't want to put them off. But it is not our job to defend God. If we are not honest about these things, then it will be much harder for them to survive. I see this with middle-aged and older people as well, who hit a time in their lives when things went very wrong. They really believed they had a secret deal with God. They thought they knew how life would be: it might not always go well, but there would be no big things, no children dying, no jobs lost that were not replaced.

There is no deal.

All we can do is love our children, and pray for them, and remember constantly that God loves them more than we do, and He can bring change. Even if our children seem to wander away from faith, we must never forget the importance of the seeds that were sown during their childhood, which can be so powerful. And if our children are doing well, let's not boast, but have an attitude of humility and gratitude to God.

► **Rob Parsons is a best-selling author and speaker on family life and the executive director of Care for the Family. His previous books include *The Heart of Success*, *The Sixty Minute Father* and *The Sixty Minute Mother*.**

► ***Getting Your Kids Through Church Without them Ending up Hating God*, published by Lion Hudson, is out now.**



Uniting to change society

The Alliance is working to build unity among its half a million members across 79 denominations, 3,300 churches and 700 organisations. Members are linked through a UK and worldwide network of evangelical Christians who share in ministry and expertise. Benefits for churches are especially valuable, including access to resources, programmes and campaigns, as well as media training. For more information, visit eauk.org/getinvolved

Meanwhile, the Alliance has welcomed new organisations and churches...

Organisations

Christianity Explored, London
Connect4Life, Alton
Crown Financial Services, Bristol

Churches

Addiscombe Baptist Church, Croydon
ARC – A Radical Church, Forest Gate
Christ Church, Manchester
Fountain Gate Chapel, Leyton
Life Expressions Healing Church, London

Miracle of Faith International Missions, London
New Life Christian Centre International, London
New Life Suwarta Sangat, Kenton
Pontarddulais Elim Church – Beulah, Swansea
RCCG Holy Ghost Zone, London
Redeemed Christian Church of God, Watford
Sureway Assemblies of God, Birmingham
Tadley Community Church, Tadley
The Redeemed Christian Church of God – Mount Zion, London
Trinity Church Brentwood, Brentwood
Triumphant Christ Chapel, Stoke-on-Trent
Woodside Church of the Nazarene, Watford

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CRE: Resourcing the Church

Building the kingdom means being business-like – in the careful and strategic way we use resources at our disposal.

That's how Stuart Rivers sums up the significance of the International Christian Resources Exhibition (CRE) taking place 10–13 May 2011 at Sandown Park, Esher, Surrey.

"Each year we take great care in planning and managing an event that equips and empowers Christian leaders at all levels – from Sunday School teachers to bishops, treasurers to youth leaders," said Stuart, executive director of Bible Society's enterprise division. "We aim to be professional without being impersonal."

Steady growth over the past decade has seen attendance rise to an impressive 13,000 over the event's four days – at a time when many secular shows are struggling to survive. All three floors of Sandown Park will once again be packed with colourful and vibrant stands, representing more than 400 organisations. A Resources Superstore will stock a vast range of books, music and other resources for church and personal use. Exhibitor zones include mind and soul, covering mental and emotional health; and healing and education representing organisations resourcing those who work in schools.

A special focus will be the 2012 Games – Olympics and Paralympics – a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for churches to show what they are made of.

More Than Gold, one of CRE's sponsors, will be at Sandown Park to help churches make the most of the games – using the experience of past events, from Atlanta to Beijing, to reach communities and visitors through programmes of hospitality, outreach and service.

"When the dust has finally settled we hope the 2012 Games will



Stuart Rivers

have enabled thousands of churches to taste the excitement of reaching their communities in fresh and ongoing ways," said More Than Gold's Matt Oliver. "We hope the Games will be renowned for the level of hospitality offered to overseas visitors and the way in which churches were at the heart of it."

More Than Gold's hospitality programme, for example, will enable churches to host athletes' family members – and visitors will find out how they can be part of the programme.

"While London 2012 is a fabulous opportunity for hundreds of churches, our long-term mission at CRE is to resource the Church at every level," said Stuart, who draws on experience in both commercial and ministry sectors.

"Our aim is identical to that of the Bible Society – namely, to build a genuinely meaningful relationship with one in 10 of the churches in Britain." After spending 15 years progressing to global commercial director with Ericsson Enterprise in Sweden, Stuart worked for The Salvation Army, training to become an officer.

"There is simply no other annual event in Europe, representing such a wide range of traditions and resources, where so much can be seen, explored, discussed and harnessed for the good of the church and her witness to the world," said Stuart. "For thousands of local church leaders it is a vital resource where a year's decisions can be made in a day."

► For tickets and more information about CRE, call 01793 418218. creonline.co.uk

► The Alliance is exhibiting at CRE. Come and see us at stand S6, Surrey Hall.



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THURS 12 MAY	10.00AM - 6.00PM
FRI 13 MAY	10.00AM - 4.30PM

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Scriptures in pictures

Sometimes, pictures tell stories far better than words can. And the winning entries to the Biblefresh photo competition certainly showed creatively and profoundly the impact of the greatest story every told...

Launched at the end of last year, the photo competition – part of the Biblefresh initiative encouraging Christians to re-engage with the Bible – invited entrants to take a photo of themselves depicting how the truth of God’s Word has changed their life. They were invited to send in pictures of themselves holding a sign

starting with ‘Now I...’ or ‘Now we...’ and then stating the difference having the Bible has made in their life.

Biblefresh co-ordinator Helen Bastable said: “We thought an interesting angle would be to encourage people to connect their surroundings in some way with the meaning of the words on their sign.



Runner-up: Walk Through the Bible instructors hold their signs at the Dead Sea



Youth winner Abigail Cook reminds us that Jesus warned us against too much “stuff”

The more creative and original the better."

Rachel Valler's (pictured left) was the winning entry – and she received an Apple iPad for her efforts. Standing behind a row of books, her photo reads: "Now I am part of the story." Rachel described the Bible as being "full of the stories of people and their journey with God".

She adds: "I love that the lives we live today are part of the same story – God's story – and that through Jesus and his living Spirit in our world, God is a part of all our stories."

The second prize – a Kindle – was won by Paul Keeys and the Walk Through the Bible Instructors who held the sign "Now I am washed clean" while standing, covered in mud, next to the Dead Sea.

Helen said the Biblefresh team were inspired by the creativity sparked by meditating on the truths of scripture.

"As the deadline fast approached, we received a flood of entries and realised that an extension to the closing date was needed so as not to disappoint our budding photographers," says Helen.

"As we looked at the entries as they streamed in, all we could say was 'Wow!' We weren't disappointed. We received approximately 100 entries even from as far afield as Holland, France and the US. Prisons, ships, stations, hillsides, seashores, towns, villages, bedrooms, classrooms and monuments all featured in the pictures.

"Every subject was covered by the pictures: 'Now it has made me fall more and more deeply in love with him', 'Now I have a light on my path', 'Now I have strength', 'Now I serve', 'Now I rest fearlessly at His feet', 'Now I do not need to strive', 'Now I am free my chains are gone', 'Now I am washed clean', 'Now I know I will never be alone', 'Now it reminds me to believe God's truth and reject my eating disorder's lies.'"

The special youth prize of a Nintendo Wii went to Abigail Cook. Abigail, 15, was inspired into action after hearing reports from her father's trip to a charity for street children in Kolkata, India. Her sign "Now I know stuff isn't important" supports her decision not to place so much value on shopping and acquiring things.

Abigail said: "We have so much stuff in this country, but Jesus said: 'Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions' (Luke 12:15)."

Krish Kandiah, executive director for England and churches in mission for the Alliance, said: "We were heartened by the level and quality of entries that poured in from as far as the US. We hope that these photos will inspire other people to consider the many ways of deepening their understanding of the Bible as each one tells an entirely different story from a unique point of view."



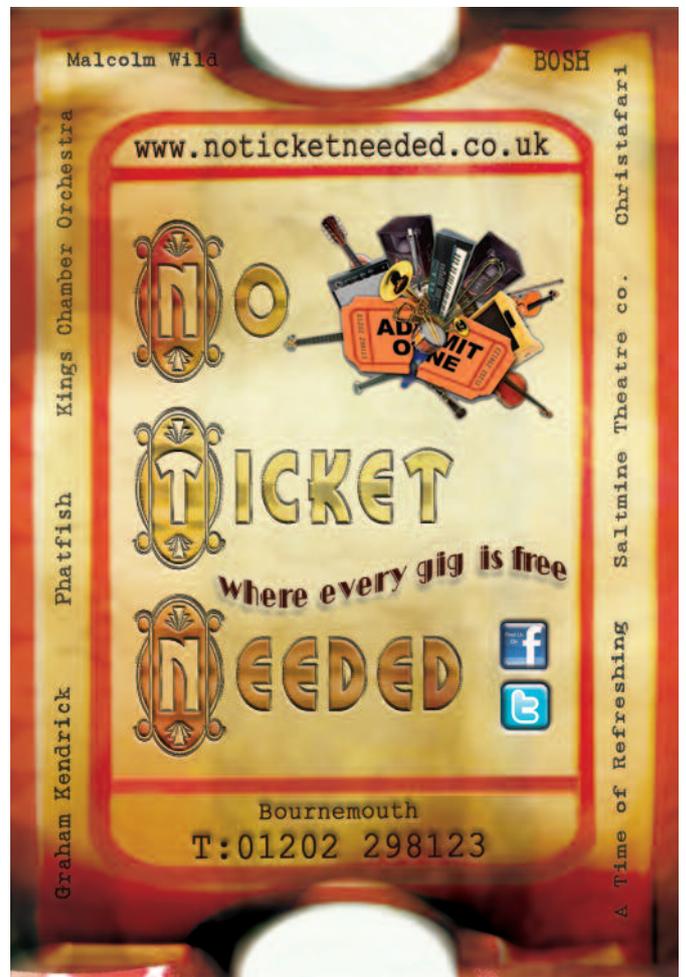
The Bible brings life into focus, says Jo Frost



The Bible is our roadmap, Mike Young's entry shows

Helen adds: "We would like to express our thanks to all the entrants. We were really impressed with the photographs and the stories behind them. In particular we hope that the photo competition has also modelled a creative way of engaging with the Bible and could be used as inspiration for churches to use in their own congregations throughout the Biblefresh year of 2011.

► If you would like to see a selection of the photos submitted, see the photo album on the Biblefresh Facebook page: facebook.com/biblefresh





Meet Mr and Mrs Smith

As lead singer of Delirious? – probably the most successful Christian rock band of all time – he played to thousands all over the world, toured with U2, and penned some of the world's most recognisable worship songs. These days, *Martin Smith* is adapting to being more family man than frontman and, with his wife *Anna*, is taking life in a new direction...

Meet Anna Smith. Hillsong's Darlene Zschech describes her as a "gorgeous, talented, creative, funny, inclusive, godly, and compassionate dynamo". And she's exactly that when I meet her at their home in West Sussex. The Smiths are holding a party to celebrate the launch of their new autobiographical books. *Delirious* charts Martin's journey with the band, while Anna's book *Meet Mrs Smith* tells the untold story of life behind the scenes when Martin was journeying with the band.

The books are the flip-sides of each other and it's unusual to be able to see two sides of the same story at the same time. Anna's book begins with an amusing tale of Martin ringing her from India following an epiphany he has had in which his heart has broken for the poverty-stricken there, just while she's dealing with the "supper-time craziness" associated with preparing dinner for their six children.

"I want him in the kitchen with me now, pouring out his heart to me, like a proper married couple going on this journey of discovery *together*," she writes. "Not tonight though. He's somewhere in India, and I'm watching Pop Idol on TV."

Just as the books are different sides of the same story, their authors are the opposites of each other. Entering their house, you would be forgiven for thinking she was the international superstar. She is

glamorous and larger than life. The life of the party. Martin is quiet, contemplative and maybe a little bit shy.

"We're very different," Anna says. "I'm very pragmatic and practical. I like to do things well. Martin can sit and write a song with all this craziness around him. He gets into his musical head space. I've learnt to love that about him. It's there where God speaks to him."

She writes in the book: "We were chalk and cheese, but opposites do attract, and our personalities complemented each other."

Life-changing

The book charts the couple's early days, their courtship, marriage and the horrific car crash which changed their lives forever. While making a four-hour drive home late at night, Martin had fallen asleep for a few seconds and missed a bend in the road and ended up driving head-on into a brick wall. While Anna and band member Jon Thatcher escaped with only minor injuries, when paramedics arrived on the scene, they thought Martin wouldn't make it alive.

During his two-week stay in hospital, he pondered the reasons for the accident. He writes: "People kept on telling me that I was lucky to be alive, but somehow that word *lucky* didn't fit... The night of the crash I'd been singing 'thank You for saving me,' and now it was clear that God

had done it again – He had saved me from death. The question was, what was I going to do about it?... The crash was more than just a collision between metal and brick. It was the point at which my life changed forever."

It was after the crash that Martin asked the other band members Stu G, Jon, Tim and Stew if they wanted to go full time as Delirious?. And the rest they say is history. For 17 years, they reached heights not previously reached by Christian artists, winning a Dove Award, being nominated for a Grammy, singing before popes and princes.

But the Delirious? days are over now. And Martin tells me that in this semi-autobiographical book he wants to "carry on leading an army of history makers, just as he did with the band".

"I want to keep on inspiring them," he says. "I felt it was time to tell my story in a way that was honest; to tell them I have made some mistakes and that these are the things to watch out for in their own journeys.

"I'm so honoured that God let me be a part of this. And now it's time for everybody to look in their own hands and ask what it is they can do. It will be different for everybody. For me, it's writing songs."

Compassion

This is the idea behind CompassionArt, the couple's new venture. It's a charity that aims to "join the dots between art and poverty" by creating music and using all of the proceeds of album sales and royalty cheques towards helping those living in poverty around the world.

They are joined in this ambitious project, which was started in January 2008, by 11 other friends from the Christian music industry, including Matt Redman, Michael W Smith, Israel Houghton, Graham Kendrick and Darlene Zschech.

Michael W Smith recently said of the project: "The time spent writing and recording these songs was one of the highlights of my life, and my hope is that these songs on the CompassionArt album will help feed the poor, satisfy the needs of the oppressed and reach out to the downtrodden."

CompassionArt is very much a project that Anna, Martin and the children are committed to. Anna writes: "We wanted to help breathe life into some of the poorest communities we'd visited, restoring hope and igniting justice.

"It was increasingly difficult to see this desperation and just to return home and get on with life. Our hearts had changed, and we needed to act."

And it is through this project that the couple are able to balance their faith, their passion, their relationship and their family life in new and exciting ways. With Martin spending more time at home rather than constantly touring, Anna is now coming to the fore, although she insists she was never "in the shadows".



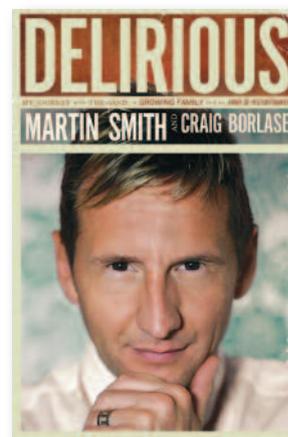
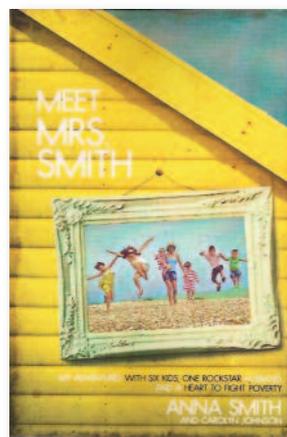
Rock band Delirious? inspired a generation of 'history makers'

So what does Martin think of his wife's new book? "I love it," he says. "I'm so proud of her. She's not used to this world, but this is a whole new season for her. I think women will especially love her book, but guys will too."

compassionart.tv meetmrsmith.com martinmitch.tv

Chine Mbubaegbu

► *Meet Mrs Smith* and *Delirious* are available now, published by David Cook.



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MEN AT CHURCH

The reality is stark. There aren't many men in church. Rebecca Taylor looks at why, despite a number of famous figures being candid about their faith and a strong male leadership and heritage, church just isn't cutting it in the real world of the modern man.

Statistics show the numbers of men in church is waning. According to Carl Beech, leader of Christian Vision for Men (CVM), the Church is not providing what men want. Carl, also a Baptist minister, wants to create a church for the ordinary man. "We want to create a great church for blokes and reach men who are way off the radar of most churches," he says.

Statistics from UK Christian Research based on data taken in 2005 show that 60 per cent of congregations are made up of women. Tearfund research in 2007 also showed a decline with men less interested in Christianity than women, and women more likely to be

regular churchgoers than men.

Numbers of younger men are also falling. CVM's research with *Sorted*, a Christian men's magazine, in 2010 found 18 to 24-year-olds twice as likely to feel uncomfortable in church than other men.

Staying away

But with the majority of churches led and directed by men - figures show there are more than 7,500 male leaders compared to just over 1,000 female - why are men staying away?

Increased use of emotive styles of worship is something many point

to being a factor.

"The rise of the intimacy movement has alienated men and often the type of songs we are singing are not suitable for men," says Carl.

Tony Aylward from the Baptist Men's Movement agrees: "If an Alpha male turns up he finds that he is encouraged to get in touch with his feminine side... This image of what a Christian man is like is not appealing to men."

Having a more balanced style of worship and church services for both men and women would re-dress the balance, according to CVM. And with the popularity of the worship movement with many younger men this would seem to be sensible so that all ages are also catered for.

"Language needs to be re-cast and there needs to be a healthy balance of all styles, stuff for the lads as well as the whole church community," continues Carl.

Sorted magazine research in 2009 showed 60 per cent of men enjoyed singing but were more motivated by 'gutsy' and proclamational classics like *Onward Christian Soldiers* and *How Great Thou Art*.

Featured in new book *Life Change*, which tells the stories of 15 Christian men, Billy Gilvear, who became a Christian after years of alcohol and drug abuse and is now a church leader and prison pastor, agrees. "Holy Trinity Brompton church ran a Hymns and Beer initiative during the Six Nations Rugby. That is what men do at places like Cardiff Park - they sing hymns in the stadiums - it's an environment that suits them."

Talking shop

But it's not just song style. Gaining understanding and trust is key before men are anywhere near talking freely, let alone about spirituality.

Says Billy: "It is very important for men to understand one another. Unless they know the person at the front, men don't like to show emotions."

Their comments ring true. Many men who do go to church are often more likely to be back if they have a mate to talk to. Camaraderie and shared vision means a lot.

According to both Carl and Billy, space to talk about what is going on outside church is also vitally important. "Men need to have space to reflect on the week that was," says Billy. Men think. Women talk. The best way to reach men is often not through ecclesiastical Sunday events but by working in a relational way. With men you need to work a little harder and take them out of the church context sometimes."

Sorted's 2009 research illustrates the point. Men prefer to have church discussions at the pub, paint-balling or 'having a curry'.

Relevance

Spearheaded by male leaders, groups hoping to make church relevant for men are on the increase, suggesting that the word is out that this targeted approach is needed.

Says Carl: "We run 455 men's groups around the country who are working with a couple of thousand churches and we also run 14 regional days a year."

Many men who don't make it to church also cite time as being a major problem. As one male church member says: "It's not that I don't want to worship God, it's that I feel I have crawled towards the end of the week and I need space. Sometimes the last place I want to be is church."

"When we talk about church, we so often talk about Sundays. We should talk more about what we do throughout the week. Work is so important to men," adds Carl.

Meeting in this context is also likely to encourage men who don't believe to spend time with churchgoers. Says Carl: "I live a full lifestyle of having mates who aren't Christians. I go down the gym or the pub. I have made it a practice to get to know people."

Research also shows that making church activities man-friendly ultimately means other family members are likely to take an interest.



"Language needs to be re-cast and there needs to be a healthy balance of all styles, stuff for the lads as well as the whole church community."

In 2003, *Evangelicals Now* published research showing that if a man becomes a Christian, his family is 93 per cent likely to also follow. This is compared to 17 per cent when a mother converts and three per cent if a child comes to Christ.

Hands-on

Getting involved in a cause or sport is also a way in which men form bonds.

Last year, 21 men from Jesus House, a church in Brent Cross, London, went to Romania and worked with international charity Habitat for Humanity to build homes. Colin Tomlin from the church says: "The response to doing this was enormous. The men involved were saying 'This is tangible, hands on...' and they loved it."

Holding a highly popular Jesus Surf Classic contest every year, Christian Surfers UK attracts both the top competitive surfers in the country and sees thousands of people - most of whom are men and don't normally go to church - take part or spectate.

Having a range of things running for men is key, says Tony: "To get men together you need food and drink, sport and a project or adventure and it is easy to get men together. Men play together, work together and eat and drink together."

Inspirational men

With a rich heritage in radical male leaders and inspirational Bible figures, the Church has a head start in finding inspiration from the past



“...the way best at reaching men, is often not through ecclesiastical Sunday events but by working in a relational way. With men you need to work a little harder and take them out of the church context sometimes.”

and present. Having inspirational male leaders like this is also vital for the balance between meeting men in their contemporary culture, and providing biblical spiritual teaching that is relevant.

Famous faces being bold about their faith in the public arena should also help encourage and inspire increased church attendance, with Bear Grylls presenting Alpha films and promotions, U2's Bono's work in international development and sporting legends rugby player Ugo Monye and Linvoy Primus being more upfront about their faith than ever. So does it help?

For Billy it does. "One of the most inspirational men for me is Bono. He gets Jesus, loves Jesus and is a man's man," he says. On their tours they take a pastor with them. I saw them in concert – he got 10,000 people all singing *Amazing Grace!* Hairs on your back kind of stuff!"

A radical heritage

As well as drawing on nurturing support of women, as a man of spiritual power and strength, Jesus also surrounded himself with strong men. His disciples were men who had been working all of their lives in jobs needing strength and responsibility.

Four out of the 12 were fishermen – a dangerous job now even with weather forecasting and satellite navigation. In those days, it meant dicing with death on treacherous seas. Following Jesus' death, Paul, supported himself by making tents (Acts 18:3).

Says Billy: "Jesus was radical – he's my hero and he certainly wasn't weak. He was a tough guy. My prayer is for more life-changing testimonies like the ones in *Life Change* – for men to get trained and take it out there. An army of men's men who go for it."

Adds Carl: "From a mission perspective we need to reach out. We need a healthy balance of all styles of worship and a desire to make faith work for men."

Action – what churches are doing

Leicestershire – Harborough Evangelical Church holds karting, skittles, social action teams, paintballing, and games nights, golf and breakfast mornings for men and has seen church numbers among men increase.

Liverpool, Aintree – starting out in its men's ministry Old Roan Baptist Church runs activities designed for men who don't attend church, including *Band of Brothers* TV and discussion nights, fishing and cycling clubs. They are also involved in men's conferences across the region.

London – Jesus House in Brent Cross runs community programmes for men not normally in church including summer football academies.

Brighton – Church of Christ the King holds days and events for

both men in the church and those who aren't, with two football teams playing in local leagues. The church also runs cricket and rugby teams that play one off games locally.

Resources

Christian Vision for Men – provide resources to more than 400 men's groups, host an iTunes chart-topping podcast and run codelife.org founded by Carl Beech, a site dedicated to helping men lead full-on Jesus-centred lives.

Life Change, Alpha Publications – 15 men tell their extraordinary inspirational stories of lives changed through an encounter with God; from violent men who now volunteer to help others, drug addicts overcoming addictions to convicts now leading law-abiding lives.

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The Most Famous Book in the World

The Bible has shaped British society, character and language for centuries, and was the rock on which the nation was built. No translation has contributed more to this process than the 1611 King James Version. The 400th anniversary year of its publication is being celebrated through the launch of a new title in which 22 Christian personalities reveal their favourite Bible passages. The book's compiler James Hastings tells *Claire Musters* the story behind *The Most Famous Book in the World...*

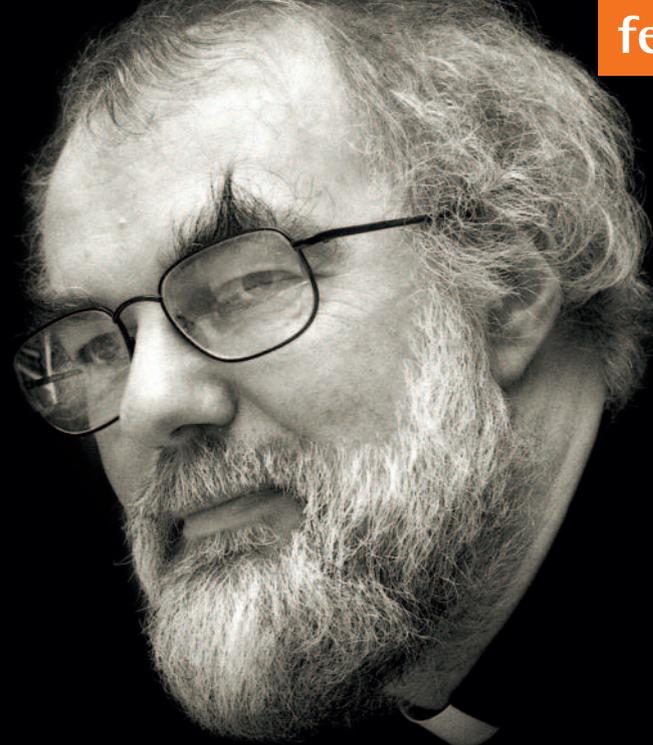


Photo by Adam Greene

The King James Bible is loved by so many people that in this, its anniversary year, there are many books, TV, film and online products planned. James thinks that this level of interest in a version of the Bible is "awesome". He regards his book to be "an easy reference point, easy-to-dip-into book/commentary" and hopes that it could be used "perhaps in morning or evening prayer, Bible study or for inspiration". But it isn't just a book for dedicated Christians. He hopes non-Christians or those who haven't read the Bible in a while will also be inspired to reach for whatever Bible they have to hand and let the Holy Spirit speak to them. He says: "I have interviewed many people, some famous, some not, who say they picked up the Bible one day, dusted it off and started to read and their lives changed forever. The Word is alive, not just pages of type."

The contributors range from the Archbishops of York and Canterbury to Anne Widdecombe, Nicky Gumbel to comedian Milton Jones and footballer Linvoy Primus. This diversity ensures an often-surprising set of responses. "To have an archbishop, a Catholic cardinal, a politician, a professional comic, a human rights campaigner and a former Vogue model and ex-wife of a Rolling Stone member all talking in one book about the Bible, makes interesting and enlightening reading," says James.

"In this book, well-known people speak about their own faith, their

own joys and struggles and love of Jesus. They come from different walks of life, different backgrounds and faith walks, but they all have one thing in common - the Bible."

Each contributor introduces their favourite passage, provides their own mini-commentary on it and also highlights its relevance for us today in an often new and challenging way. James was surprised at the huge diversity of choice.

As a former tabloid journalist James used to interview celebrities and says he still enjoys that but from a Christian perspective. He believes that every testimony holds great power, but when people discover that someone on TV or in the news is actually a Christian it can make their words very powerful indeed. "For example, Milton Jones is recognised as one of TV's funniest funny men. He is a regular on *Mock The Week* and has his own show on BBC Radio. His shows sell out at theatres all over the country. He is also a committed Christian and has done various Christian festivals. Many people I speak to have no idea he is a Christian and they are intrigued by what passage he has chosen and why. He could perhaps reach non-Christians in a way that a bishop may not. But that is not to belittle the contributions of the Archbishops of York or Canterbury or Cardinal O'Brien of Scotland."

► **Published on 15 April** *The Most Famous Book in the World* retails at **£4.99** (10 per cent of all profits go to The Bible Society).

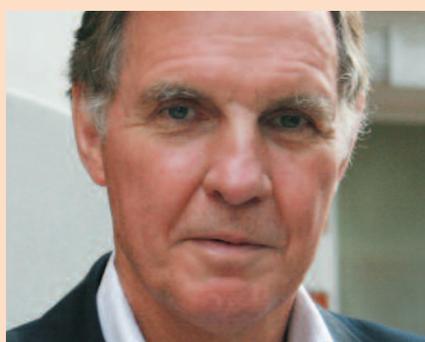
Favourite verses...



"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."

John 10:10

John Sentamu, Archbishop of York



"Out of the depths I have cried unto thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications."

Psalms 130: 1-2

Jonathan Aitken



"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

2 Corinthians 3:18

Rebecca St James, singer

The evolution of Christianity Explored

Commercial companies don't survive if they haven't researched their products. And the same is true of any Christian ministry.



Christianity Explored presenters Barry Cooper and Rico Tice

However, that normal, healthy process becomes more difficult when it means evolving material, such as Christianity Explored, which is anchored in the timeless truths of the Bible and will be launching its revised edition in May. How does one update a course which has already enabled tens of thousands to embrace the Christian faith and which many people think is pretty good already?

What is Christianity Explored?

Over the past 10 years Christianity Explored, which recently joined as a member of the Alliance, has become a tried and trusted, often highly informal, method of sharing the gospel. It works by introducing people to the real Jesus from the pages of the Bible. It explores who he was, what he achieved and what it means to follow him today. The course works through Mark's gospel, with every session based around a Bible study and a short talk or DVD followed by questions.

Evangelist Rico Tice, co-author of Christianity Explored, says: "There are two wonderful moments when teaching the material. The first is when you explain to church leaders, be they elders, pastors, vicars, bishops or even archbishops - and I've seen this in them all - that Mark's Gospel can be summarised in just three words: identity, mission and call. Who is Jesus? Why did he come? What does it mean to follow him? And as you explain that and they see that summary and they see its depth, their eyes light up, literally they flare, as they get that, because they can see not only is it a summary, but it enables their people to let the gospel tell the gospel, to have such a simple summary that goes right to the heart of almost every verse of the book."

He adds: "The second notable moment is obviously when non-Christians are on the course, and this is far more wonderful. Their eyes light up as they encounter Jesus, as they hear talks from the front, as he is discussed in the material in groups, as they go home and read about him, again discovering for themselves who Jesus is, why he came and what it means to follow, but above all seeing the miracle of God opening their blind eyes to His son."

It has proved incredibly popular both in the UK and, increasingly, overseas in places such as the US, Canada and Australia. It has expanded so much that more than 5,000 courses are now being held at any one time, in 57 countries around the world. It is used in many different contexts too, not only in traditional missions but also in settings as diverse as schools and prisons.

This means it works for people of all ages, classes, races and educational achievements. And since its flexible format operates as well in small gatherings ('coffee morning evangelism') as it does in large, set-piece events, it is very easy for small groups to use it to reach out



to their friends and families with the gospel. It even works well for one-to-one, personal evangelism opportunities, too.

What's changed?

Since its inception, Christianity Explored has encouraged a wealth of feedback from its users. Capturing this important information has underpinned many of the decisions taken about how best to update the course.

The most significant revision is that the new edition has been sharpened and shortened from 10 main sessions down to seven; the Weekend Away has also been altered to a single Day Away. This makes it far more streamlined and manageable. Each session now focuses on a single theme, making the course leaner, more logical and easier to understand. To that end, the session on grace has been completely rewritten, that on the resurrection completely reworked and a brand new one on the parable of the sower added.

Despite refreshing updates, some aspects of the course remain the same, so churches will recognise its evangelistic programme, which is always thoroughly grounded in Mark's gospel. And it continues to offer a crystal clear exploration of sin and its eternal consequences, in order that the sheer wonder of God's grace can be understood, appreciated and responded to.

The course has always proved incredibly popular with conservative evangelical churches. But in recent months and years, more and more churches in other traditions have started using the material. This is because the course appeals to any Christian who trusts in the Bible and wants to explore who Jesus is with those who don't know him. And this trend is set to accelerate when the new material is launched.

The launch

Given its popularity on both sides of the Atlantic, simultaneous launch events took place in May. The main UK launch will be at the Christian Resources Exhibition at Sandown, Surrey, on 10 May. On the same day, in the US, evangelist Rico Tice will address Alastair Begg's 2011 Basics conference in Cleveland, Ohio. Christianity Explored training director Craig Dyer addressed the Gospel Coalition conference in Chicago in April, with Rico Tice speaking at New Word Alive in north Wales three days earlier.

Iain Taylor christianityexplored.org



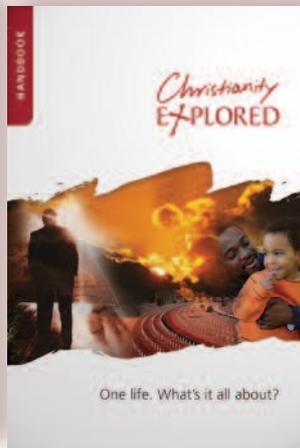
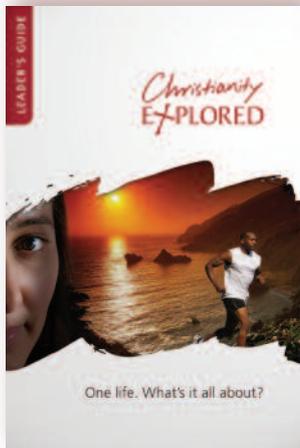
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The long road

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Looking for conversation starters, *Sophie Lister* finds relevant themes in popular culture...

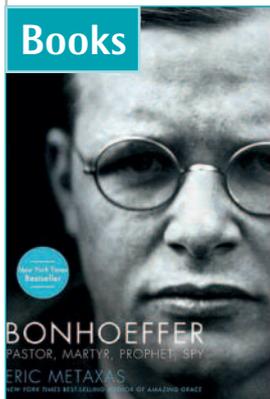
Each of us, at one time or another, feels like getting away from it all. Amid the pressures of everyday life, we often feel less than 'spiritual', and long to pursue the things that really matter. But in this day and age, is it even possible to make a break from the rat race? Where do we go to search for meaning? And what might we find?

The Way, which was released on 15 April, is the story of a man who goes on such a journey. Tom (Martin Sheen) is a no-nonsense

doctor who lives an ordinary life in California. But when his adventurous son (Emilio Estevez) is killed while walking the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage in Spain, Tom is forced to reassess his outlook. He decides to walk the 800-kilometre path in his son's memory, leaving behind his comforts and familiar routine.

In real life, thousands of people take the pilgrimage every year, journeying across the Pyrenees and through the Spanish countryside to the cathedral where, legend has it, the bones of St James are

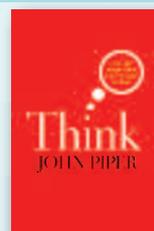
Books



BONHOEFFER: PASTOR, MARTYR, PROPHET, SPY by Eric Metaxas (Thomas Nelson)
Dietrich Bonhoeffer wore many hats, but the one he is most remembered for is that of martyr. In Metaxas's biography we are given detailed insight into the life and mind of a man who transformed his cerebral Christianity into a truly "living faith", which eventually led to his death for the sake of ending the persecution of the Jews during the Holocaust in Germany. *Bonhoeffer* tells the fascinating story of the upbringing, education, ministry, espionage and martyrdom of this influential, well-heeled German Christian who gave his life for others rather than give in to the false doctrines of Hitler and the Third Reich. A highly recommended read. **AM**

WHAT GOOD IS GOD?
by Philip Yancey (Hodder Faith)
Philip Yancey takes this age-old question on a whistle-stop tour of 10 destinations he has visited as a journalist which tested it in reality, from the Mumbai terrorist attacks to a gathering of women coming out of prostitution in Wisconsin. Yancey addresses each person and situation with sensitivity and through their experiences shows the importance people place in God's faithfulness when their faith is severely tested. Read this book for compelling stories of real people facing tough circumstances who re-discovered God's grace and redemption. **AM**

THINK by John Piper (IVP)
John Piper sets out to "help Christians think about thinking". Piper successfully ties together thinking earnestly about God and treasuring and loving Him, arguing that the mind and the heart are inextricably linked when it comes to worship, studying the Bible and how we treat others. However, Piper has a tendency throughout the book to get caught up in stale agendas and arguments to combat what he sees as the rise of relativism both within Christianity and society in general. He thus devotes two entire chapters to the subject of relativism, which could have been better used to write positively about the rise of scholarship within the Christian community in the past few decades. **AM**





buried. To many the Camino is simply a cultural trail, or a physical challenge – but others take to the road for spiritual reasons. Whether they are committed Catholics or not, the route provides a chance to reflect on life. In the film, Tom's pilgrimage becomes a chance for him to grieve the son he never really understood, and to piece himself back together.

He is not the only film hero of recent years to take to the road in a search for spiritual re-connection. Last year, Julia Roberts played Liz Gilbert in *Eat Pray Love*, an adaptation of the popular autobiographical novel. Sensing that her apparently perfect home, job and marriage don't truly satisfy her, Liz chooses to leave her husband and set off on a journey of self-discovery. "I used to have this appetite for food, for my life, and it's just gone," she says. "I want to go some place where I can marvel at something."

The question of whether Liz's travels are an honest search or an indulgence is troubling. She visits Italy, India and Bali, picking up life lessons as she goes – but she leaves several casualties in her wake before the film's too-perfect conclusion. Her husband and lover are both discarded when the going gets tough, while the people she meets along the way seem to exist only to further her interests. Her answers are often shaped by what she wants and finds easy, rather than by any external truth.

Shared happiness

A more extreme approach is taken by Chris McCandless (Emile Hirsch) in 2007's *Into the Wild*, which is also based on a true story. Sick of the materialism and superficiality which surround him, the young graduate dramatically cuts ties with civilization and heads for the wilderness. Believing that only nature's freedom can fill the hole inside him, he refuses even to tell his family where he's going, and

Happiness is only real when shared.

shrugs off those who try to befriend him. But he eventually learns, to his cost, that "happiness is only real when shared".

Tom's pilgrimage in *The Way* is perhaps a more fulfilling spiritual quest because it leads him deeper into relationship with others. Where Liz conducts relationships at her convenience, and Chris sees reliance on others as a trap to be avoided, Tom shares his journey with a group of fellow-pilgrims. The misfits and seekers he meets along the road become a surrogate family, and it is these ordinary bonds – hardly 'spiritual' as many would understand the word – which begin to heal him. Community and relationship may sound like overly simple answers to complex questions, but the truth is that they lie at the heart of reality.

These things aren't confined to expeditions away from the everyday. If a God of relationship really does exist, and has invited us to know Him, then our hunger for meaning and spirituality is valid – and our lives can take on new significance wherever we are. Most of us won't ever walk the Camino de Santiago, or jet around the world to find ourselves, or abandon the trappings of modernity for a life in the wilderness. But that doesn't stop us from making the most extraordinary journey of all.

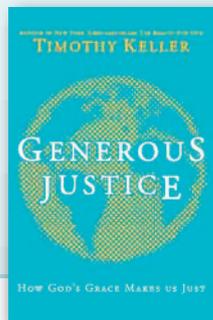
► *The Way* is out now.

Sophie Lister writes for Culturewatch.org

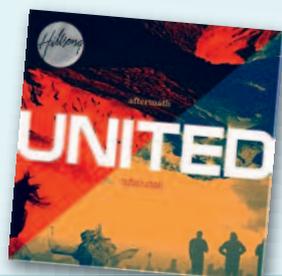


WHATEVER HAPPENED TO KATHY KEAY?
by Marion Osgood (RoberPenberthy)
In this moving portrait of Kathy Keay, a vibrant woman who worked tirelessly in the evangelical world particularly on the Men, Women and God movement, Marion Osgood paints a picture of a woman facing intense inner struggles but who chose to follow her calling. Until her tragic death in 1994, Kathy – a former press officer at the Evangelical Alliance – inspired the Christian world and is said to have been heavily involved in bringing about the ordination of women in the Church of England. A touching book that will move both those who knew her and those who did not.

GENEROUS JUSTICE
by Timothy Keller (Hodder Faith)
New York pastor Tim Keller tries to address a wide range of audiences in his latest book – suspicious orthodox Christians, passionate younger evangelicals, agnostics. To all he tries to make the case that the Bible is devoted to promoting justice and therefore is a key part of the Christian faith. At points, Keller is too ambitious in trying to address all the concerns of these audiences. But upon finishing the book it would be hard for any reader to not be convinced of God's concern for the poor as laid out in the Bible, and his commands for His followers to live Christ-like, sacrificial lives for those less fortunate. AM



CDs
AFTERMATH by Hillsong United (Hillsong Music)
In *Aftermath*, Hillsong United have been able to provide an atmospheric sound, drawing the listener in to worship with their increasing crescendos of drum beats and guitar chords. It's the outfit's second studio album and the 11th title – the rest being live worship albums. Yet another slick operation from the Australian team, with highlights being *Awakening* and the title track. CM



hot topics

The Alliance's Forum for Change co-ordinator *Marijke Hoek* helps us examine theological questions in our daily lives...

Art: Revealing God's presence in His world

In the first half of the 20th century, the Pentecostal Howard Carter attended art college. He lived for his art. Yet, he felt he had to make a choice between Christ and art. And so: "One day never to be forgotten, Howard walked out of the art school, leaving everything behind – paints, brushes, palette, canvasses, modeling, tools – everything, and never went back. Christ had triumphed gloriously." Carter became chair of the British Assemblies of God.

Half a century later, church leadership asked a young musician to choose between being a rock artist or a Christian. He chose both. Ever since, U2 has inspired generations, while Bono uses his fame as a platform to draw attention to biblical justice for the extreme poor. Both his music and advocacy are 'class acts': two strands twined in one vocation.

Another half century later, NT Wright recounts his upbringing in a world where the arts constituted "the pretty border around the edge of reality, rather than a window on reality itself. The arts were for recreation and relaxation for those who liked that kind of thing, but...we didn't expect them to impinge on how we organised the world, how we ran the country, how we did our work, or indeed how we understood and expressed our faith".

Dualistic theology

Too often we have embraced a dualistic theology that divides mind from body and humanity from the divine. Also, a separation

between the spiritual and the material in western culture has influenced our evangelical expression of church. And so, we have at times separated the arts from faith and have favoured the 'Word' as the primary means of engaging with the creator and the world.

John tells us: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us (1:14)." The beauty of this love story reveals God's desire to be intimately present. He is present within us now as our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.

The artist's calling is to reveal God's presence in this world. Be they poet, painter, writer, sculptor, musician or performer, the artist tends to see beyond the surface of things; to observe colour, texture, shape and form, to be alert to sound, smell, emotion and movement. They aim to contain what they see through image, word, object or performance. Perhaps we need to rediscover our sense of wonder at the mystery of the indwelling of God in His creation. And to draw attention to the minutiae of daily living, to things often unseen or passed by, and in this way seek to expose the human condition; to reveal both its beauty and its vulnerability; to try and hold in perfect tension the reality of the present moment, with all its pain and suffering, alongside the certain hope of the glory that is to come.

The poet sees with the eyes of possibility – observing in the ordinary the hope of the hand of God continuing His work of creation, bringing all things together in Him.

The imagination of the artist sees the world as it will be, through the seed of hope and truth present within the ordinariness of the present moment, be that the reflection of God in a beautiful landscape, or in the loving eyes of a friend during times of sorrow and loss.

Through the arts we can draw our attention to humanity's journey – from the pain of Good Friday to the hope and beauty of Easter Sunday. As Christian artists we need to shy away from sentimental interpretations of the gospel, reducing art to little more than religious propaganda and instead to embrace honesty in our portrayal of the wounding and the crosses that we bear as well as the light and hope of the resurrection.

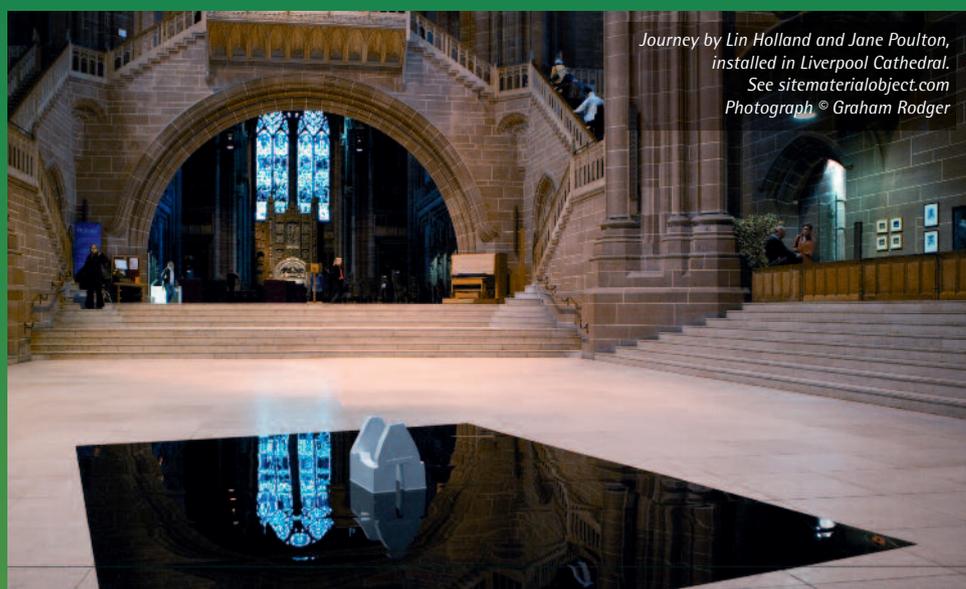
New world

We need to challenge the atheistic artistic expressions that dominate our galleries and screens with their violent and ugly reflections of the meaninglessness and pointlessness of life. In the words of NT Wright: "The vocation of the artist is to speak of the present as beautiful in itself but as pointing beyond itself, to enable us to see both the glory that already fills the earth and the glory that shall flood it to overflowing... The artist is thus to be like the Israelite spies in the desert, bringing back fruit from the promised land to be tasted in advance... to tell the story of the new world so that people can taste it, and want it, even while acknowledging the reality of the desert in which we presently live."

We are all expressions of God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Ephesians 2:10). Our vocations find their roots in who we are and the sense of purpose we have. Among a multitude of roles, the Spirit of God is still creating. In our architecture, urban planning, literature, education, movies, music, visual arts, enterprise and community work there are endless possibilities to create spaces that reflect the value of people and creation and so contribute to an environment where we all flourish. Art invites mystery and possibility; it awakens the inner spaces of spirit and soul where our belief and faith emerge. In this way, we bring expressions of the divine into everyday life. Our prophetic presence draws attention to the Creator who has set eternity in the human heart (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

Photo reproduced by kind permission of the artists.

Marijke Hoek writing in conjunction with Lesley Sutton, artist



Journey by Lin Holland and Jane Poulton, installed in Liverpool Cathedral. See sitematerialobject.com Photograph © Graham Rodger

The right words

Wordsmith-turned-curate Steve Morris is an ex-punk rocker, music journalist and former creative director and managing partner at Burton Morris – the agency behind brands such as Sainsbury's *Taste the Difference*. He tells *idea* about his varied career, and ditching the creative industry for the clergy...

idea: As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

I knew from a very early age (around 10 years old) that I wanted to be a writer. I had some very inspiring English teachers and I just loved reading. I think I also wanted to be a pilot. Pilots seemed very glamorous indeed. We were one of those families that used to go on package holidays and the flight was always a buzz. But the writing thing really took hold. I was always writing poems and stories. Then in the 1970s I was a punk rocker and ran a little music magazine. We called them fanzines. I used to interview people in loud and nasty bands and I loved it. It all started from there really. There was never any doubt I was going to write.

How did you get involved in branding?

By accident. I was managing editor at the Open College and I used to write a lot of the copy myself. I went freelance in 1990. I thought I'd be writing about the things I knew about – Plain English and Consumer Affairs. I took on a job for a friend who ran a pressure group for whistleblowers. I did it for nothing and as a favour he introduced me to a small company that was on the up that did design. We got a really big job for Lloyds TSB and I suddenly realised how much I enjoyed branding and how what I'd learned as a writer and editor was really helpful.

What is your favourite word?

Love.

How has your faith impacted your career?

Very dramatically. I was an atheist until I was 40. Then due to a number of factors a teacher invited my wife and I to church (the first time she'd ever done such a thing). It was a Pentecostal Free Church. To my total amazement I had a profound meeting with God soon after. I knew something had happened to me but wanted to test it. So I took a year's sabbatical and went to Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, to study Christian Apologetics. It was amazing. I came back to work running the brand agency for a while but I knew I was being called to be a priest. So I went back to Wycliffe and am now ordained in the Church of England.

What has been the highlight of your career(s) so far?

As far as branding goes...working on some really huge projects. It was always exciting to do a project and then see the results on billboards and TV and the like.

...and the lowlight?

I really struggled in my first job after I left university. I was pretty miserable, missed UEA very much and felt quite crushed.

Why did you decide to ditch branding for the clergy?

The very minute I converted I knew with the same certainty that I'd one day be a writer, that God wanted me to be a pastor.

How does life as a curate compare to your previous careers?

It couldn't be more different. When you're leading a business, especially in the creative world, it is rather rarified. You tend to travel



a lot, be the centre of attention and the temptation is to swell rather than grow. When you get to know people who lead organisations you see that they are often rather unhappy and very stressed, or that the megalomania takes hold. Becoming a curate is so different. It has meant going back to being a novice and a learner – which is humbling but very good for you. I love the privilege of being there to pray for people and be with them when the rubber hits the road. I love it that one minute you're stacking chairs and the next preparing a sermon or chatting to people about their faith. It certainly has its challenges, but it's as though God's given me a chance to have a totally fresh start and I'm very grateful to serve Him and the parish. The other thing is that being a curate throws you into an intense working relationship with your vicar. I have learned so much from mine, Steve Newbold.

You tried to be a pop star in the 1980s. What was that like?

It sounds a lot better than it was really. The early days were wonderful. We got together at UEA in Norwich. We pretty quickly got a deal and put out a first single. It did quite well and got plenty of airplay. We found ourselves travelling around in a van doing gigs and it was so exciting. We went on Radio One sessions, released two albums, a handful of singles, and played loads of gigs. But to be truthful, I was relieved when it was over. The pressure of nearly making it was a bit depressing.

How has music influenced your life?

It has been one of the few constants. I have loved music since I was a teenager. Growing up in Northolt and going to comprehensive school, music gave me a sense of escape and identity. For a period of three years, I went to a gig every night of the year, except Christmas Day. I was promoting bands then and writing for the music papers. Music has got me through some very bad times and been with me in some good ones too. I first went to church when I was 40 because I caught Hillsong on *Songs of Praise*. The music always put me off going to church, but when I heard more contemporary worship songs I thought I might be able to go to church and see what it was like. The rest is history!

What lessons has life taught you?

Life is hard. Don't expect it to be easy. I have had some very hard and difficult times in my life. My wife collapsed some years ago during the London Marathon and nearly died. I have faced great personal adversity. Some terrible lows. I hate it when people say things like if it doesn't kill you it makes you stronger. Rubbish. Pain sucks.

Three books everyone should read...

Catcher in the Rye, *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*

I didn't get where I am today without...

Growing up in Northolt.

Who inspires you?

My wife. My children.

Disagreeing agreeably

General Director Steve Clifford says that as one body in Christ, let's focus on our mission and not those things of secondary importance.

I find it hard to believe it is more than two years since I first started this job. Ann keeps saying I can't keep talking about 'L plates' and learning curves, but I still feel this has continued to be my daily experience in the role.

One of the high points for me over the last 24 months has been meeting up with fellow evangelical leaders from many parts of the country, a cross-section of denominations, streams, ethnic backgrounds and of course theological persuasions. If I haven't reached your part of the country yet I'm really sorry but I'm on my way. One of my predecessors, Clive Calver, who is now pastoring a church in America, commented in the 1980s that according to his calculations there were 12 tribes of evangelicals. We have gained a few more since then but as I have met up for coffee, tea, an occasional meal (and even a curry or two), I realised I was privileged to be meeting many great people, who are doing some stunning work, are passionate about serving God and making a difference where he has called them. I have also had the privilege of seeing first-hand, the Church at work on the ground and coming together from across our tribal groups to see communities reached for the gospel.

As an Evangelical Alliance our history is one of providing a meeting place for a wide body of evangelical Christians; finding a place of unity around a broad statement of faith and a series of practical resolutions. The statement of faith provides some boundaries for that word 'evangelical' while the practical resolutions put down some markers as to how we relate to each other as brothers and sisters in Christ with whom we might not always agree. It seems right from the start, way back in 1846, there was a recognition that we would need to work hard in order to maintain good relations.

Loving one another

Over the years, there's been a lot of attention to the statement of faith. Articles and books have been written, debates held, sermons preached but perhaps not enough attention has been given to the practical resolutions. How can we learn to disagree agreeably, holding onto our strong convictions while remaining true to our higher calling to "love one another as he commanded us" (1 John 3:23)? As an Evangelical Alliance we are committed to modelling a generous expression of our evangelical convictions in order to see that articulated in our relationships not just to fellow evangelicals but to the wider body of Christ.

Evangelical Christians, according to D.W. Beddington in his key work *Evangelicals in Modern Britain*, find their unity around four areas of conviction: the authority of scripture, the centrality of the

cross in our understanding of God's work in the world, the call for personal salvation and an active engagement with society. With this as a backdrop, and the Evangelical Alliance's statement of faith as a helpful summary, we quickly realise that there is a great deal that we can find ourselves disagreeing about.

I have been amazed over the years how, in so many areas of theology, ministry and lifestyle, things which I thought were pretty obvious from scripture actually were not so obvious to others. The wonderful story is told of an international congress, where one European delegation was so deeply offended that a South American beauty queen had been given platform time that they walked out in protest. Why? They felt that the exploitation and degradation of women had simply been accepted and not challenged. As the session finished, and the rest of the delegates left the hall, they were met in the hallway by the Europeans happily smoking their cigarettes and pipes, unaware how that could be regarded by Christians in other parts of the world.

As evangelical Christians we unite in key areas of faith and action but we also differ on so many. Let me list a few: women in leadership, end times, the place of Israel, the nature of hell, war, how we trust scripture, how best to explain the cross, response to climate change, baptism, church governance... I could go on.

The big question

So the big question is - how are we going to handle our differences? How are we going to love each other even when we are convinced our brother or sister is 'just wrong'? Let me make a few suggestions: a good place for all of us is humility. You know I could be wrong, and even if I'm right, I could be disqualified from sharing my opinion because of my bad attitude. Secondly, how about respect? We are family together, brothers and sisters in

Christ, surely that requires me to come to an appreciation of my family members even though I disagree with them? Thirdly, believe the best. It is so easy to slip into a way of thinking that puts the worst possible interpretation on what has been said or done. Gossip robs a person of their reputation - it's theft yet we can easily fall into it. Finally, let's make sure that when differences appear, we are committed to speaking and listening to each other - come to think of it, maybe more listening would help.

So two years into the job, here is my plea. We have a God-given call on all of our lives to participate in his mission for this world. Why would we allow ourselves to get distracted and waste ourselves on issues which - as previous Alliance director Gilbert Kirby was so fond of saying - in light of eternity, are of secondary importance?



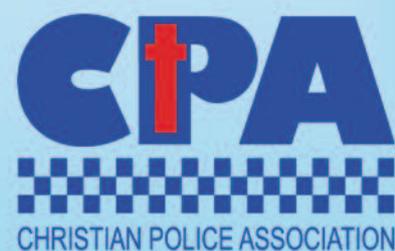
As evangelical Christians we unite in key areas of faith and action but we also differ on so many.

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR POLICE

THURSDAY 2 JUNE 2011

Pray for:

- *Safety whilst on duty*
- *Success in bringing offenders to justice*
- *Success in reducing crime*
- *Christian Police Officers and staff*



Registered charity number: 220482

Find out how to build prayerful and practical support for your police at www.coact.org.uk

For more information about the work of the CPA visit www.cpauk.net or phone **01234 272865**

**71% less
young people in
church over the
last twenty years**

**What are we passing
on to our children?**

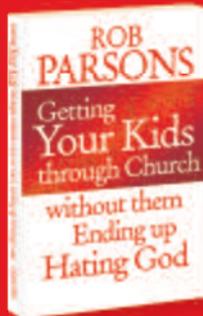
**This spring, Care for the Family
launches a major new initiative...**

Mostly, our children don't turn their backs on God but on something else. This initiative is designed to help parents, church members, youthworkers and church leaders understand what that "something" may be - and together do something about it.

Ways you can help stop a generation being lost to the church:

1 Read the book

Published by
Monarch Books.
Release date:
April 2011.
Download the
first chapter
FREE or
pre-order
the book



2 Join us on tour

As we tour the UK this Autumn we'll discover together how to prevent a generation of young people walking away from church.



3 Share online

Keep up to date with the project and add your voice to the conversation by joining us on Facebook and Twitter.

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