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Editor's Note

Superheroes seem to dominate our film and TV screens at the moment, from enormous Hollywood blockbusters like *Iron Man* to low-budget shows like Channel 4's *Misfits*. It seems that we need to have some sort of paranormal ability to make a difference in the world.

Of course, we know better. There are people all around us who are quietly working in the background to have a real impact on society, transforming it for the better. We profile just a handful of them here in this issue (p18), and we'd love to hear what you've done in your community, even if it seems small or seemingly insignificant. Please get in touch, as your story will be a huge encouragement to others.

We can also think that extra powers (winning the lottery perhaps?) are needed in order to survive in this tough economic climate. We have an essay here (p14) examining the financial crunch from a theological perspective for a change. There's also an article about how we can help others in their personal faith journeys (p22), based on some important new research. And our *Talking Points* essay (p24) explores feelings of powerlessness when faced with an omnipotent God.

Finally, this issue also includes the Alliance's annual impact report (p16), this time using numbers to look at ministry over the past year. The Alliance isn't just a group of people working in an office in south London; we are a coalition of people, churches and organisations working around the UK to see the world transformed by God's power. And this report is a snapshot of what all of us, together, have been doing. There's certainly no recession in God's kingdom.



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evangelical alliance
uniting to change society



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Blessed by giving

I have just returned from 10 weeks in Uganda and was very blessed to open *idea* magazine and read the article about Bibles in China (May/June). I love the Bible very much and get great delight in blessing others with Bibles. I have been doing so for many years in Uganda, where I have been giving out Bibles to churches in the villages.

I think people have a lot to offer, and no one should undermine what a difference they can make in our world today. Giving Bibles is such a wonderful blessing and can help so many people to know God in a deeper way in their lives. We make a huge difference every time we provide others with a Bible.

Richard Smart, East Sussex

Serious advice

Your article *How to Engage With a Secular Society* (Jul/Aug) was most interesting, and the question, "Are Christians really being marginalised in Britain", most pertinent. As believers in Christ in these days, we can certainly see how the media undermine the credibility of our faith. More insidious is the attack on our God-inspired Judeo-Christian legal system, once the envy of all peace-seeking people, by the introduction of man-made laws.

Is the Church slumbering and guilty of neglect for not standing up for the kingdom of God? If we do not pull our socks up, Christian believers will have no voice at all; we shall be taken over by other faiths that are more passionate about their beliefs than we are.

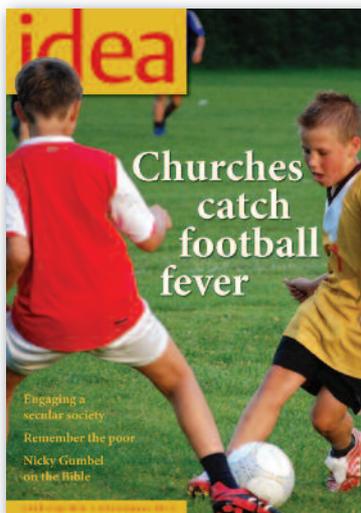
So "Bravo!" to those highlighted in your article for alerting us to the crisis and refusing to hide behind their titles. As the Word of God challenges us, we must "choose this day whom we will serve" (Joshua 24.15).

Sue Tucker, Herefordshire

Curbing freedom

In the Jul/Aug *idea*, two articles (*How to Engage With a Secular Society* and Steve Clifford's *Last Word*) warn us not to be too quick to go to court against those who would seek to persecute us. To some extent I agree that we should be concentrating on reaching out with the Gospel, but we have also seen an alarming threat to religious freedom.

I hope that any Christian would not be involved in making abusive remarks about anyone, homosexual or otherwise, but we



are now clearly working in an environment where we are surrounded by certain individuals trying to trap us.

The Christian Institute has carried out a great job protecting Christians who have fallen foul of the law. Maybe not every individual has been as wise as they should have been, but we are all entitled to the law's protection when we are under attack.

Stephen Carter, Edinburgh

Moral authority

It was with real sadness that I read of the retirement from public life of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. During the apartheid years he would walk into violent situations to try to bring reconciliation. And he has always, to me at least, seemed to represent the moral authority of South Africa. He will be missed hugely in his own country, but also across the world.

We now seem to have bred a generation of leaders who do not command the respect of this small, jovial, 79-year-old man. Instead, we have a leadership more concerned with spin and presentation than with substance and effecting positive change in their communities. This is true of the Church as well as the wider world.

Desmond Tutu will leave a gap that will be problematic for South Africa's future development, but also will diminish all of our understanding of who God is and what He calls us to on this earth.

Nicole Ball, Powys

Just saying...

Thank you for producing a very good magazine. One section I always read is the letters page, but I was surprised that you chose to print two of the letters in the Jul/Aug issue.

Firstly, the main point of the letter from John Delius is based on the false assumption that we have to pay to sing songs in public worship. I am surprised that no one in your team spotted such a fundamental error.

Secondly, is Colin Whitehead accusing John Stott of platitudes? From what I know of him, I would say that Rev Stott is an excellent example of a man who has read widely and shown respect for people with whom he disagrees. Whitehead says he thinks that "love is more important than being right", which is an excellent example of a platitude.

Peter Grayson, Cumbria

EDITOR'S REPLY: This page is simply what it says at the top: "your voice". It is a chance for readers to interact and express opinions, which might not always have been reflected elsewhere on these pages. As with all of *idea*, not everything on this page represents the views of the Alliance as a whole. Regarding song rights: Delius was not saying that we have to pay to sing songs, but that copyright payment is required to reproduce the lyrics for worship services, such as on slides or in news sheets.

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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Churches are key to 'Big Society'

The Alliance is urging Christians to take advantage of David Cameron's plans for what he called "the biggest, most dramatic redistribution of power" from the state to individuals. He said that the "Big Society" will enable people to help themselves and their own communities.

Alliance General Director Steve Clifford said, "Churches are already the life blood of communities and the lifeline for many on the edge of society," and added that Christians should grasp this opportunity to get further involved.

"We must not pass by on the other side when our neighbours may suffer through funding cuts," he said. "Churches and Christian charities can step in by approaching their local councils to ask how they can best respond to the needs of those around them."

As the Government set up its *Your Square Mile* website to link people to local community groups and social enterprises, Clifford said, "We hope the Government also

looks at the Alliance's Square Mile initiative, which encourages Christians to let their faith impact all of their lives – including caring for those around them."

Meanwhile, Adam Bonner of Alliance member Livability said, "We welcome the idea that the voluntary sector should become even more involved in building inclusive, thriving local communities. This new emphasis on community work could prove a great way to highlight and develop the existing long-term work many churches and Christian projects are already doing and present further opportunities for further involvement."

He noted that funding will continue to be a serious challenge, as the voluntary sector is already struggling financially after the recession. "Churches and Christian projects should welcome the renewed emphasis on local interventions for community cohesion while being careful about taking on contracts that may end up diverting their mission aims," he said.

Christians face death in Nigeria

Alliance member Release International is warning that Christians in Nigeria are "sitting targets", as news emerges that the family of a priest has been murdered in a machete attack. A mob armed with guns and machetes attacked the Christian village of Mazah, on the outskirts of Jos, on 17 July.

According to news reports, they killed the wife, two children and grandson of Rev Nuhu Dawat, a leader in the Church of Christ in Nigeria. Witnesses reported that others were also killed and injured. The attackers, identified as members of the Muslim Fulani tribe, also burned down a church and seven houses.

This is the latest in a series of attacks against Christian villages near Jos, in Plateau state, which have left hundreds dead. According to local rights groups, 1,500 people have been killed in inter-communal violence in the Jos region since the start of 2010.

Release International is working to help persecuted Christians in Nigeria and around the world. On the situation in Nigeria, CEO Andy Dipper said, "Christians appear to be sitting targets. Church leaders are calling on them to respond with grace and avoid violence, which Release supports. But Christians are living in fear of further attacks, and the government seems to be doing little to help them. That has to change."

Plateau state is on the dividing line between the mainly Muslim north and mainly Christian south. Observers fear a push is taking place to drive Christians from the state; 12 northern Nigerian states have already adopted Sharia law, even though the country has a secular constitution.

"Right now, it falls to Christians in the UK and around the world to pray for Nigeria's Christians," said Dipper, who also encourages practical action, such as lobbying MPs to raise the issue on the international agenda.
releaseinternational.org

In brief...



BRIDGING CULTURES. Young people from churches in central Birmingham have been getting to know their Muslim neighbours, learning about other cultures and reaching out in social action in the multi-cultural Balsall Heath area. The three-day cultural experience in June was designed to meet the needs of local people to remove some of the barriers between sectors of the community. Led jointly by Riverside Church and Church Central, the *Hope Twenty10* pilot programme consisted of worship, teaching, co-ordinating sports and cultural-awareness training. One project included clearing the grounds of the nearby mosque.
hopetogether.org.uk

A SPLASH IN BATH. More than 300 people gathered in Bath for Premier Christian Radio's *Woman to Woman* conference in late June. "The event was an opportunity for women to get right with God," said host Maria Toth. "When women say after the conference that their burdens are lifted, the breakthrough they needed has come about or that they are now conquering their addiction to stealing, it brings great joy. It proves that God is alive and active today restoring lives." Toth's radio show is broadcast weekdays from 10.30am to 12.30pm on Premier.
premier.org.uk

VOICES FROM THE MARGINS. A recent Tearfund report on Russia, *Voices from the Margins*, finds that local Protestant church groups are bridging a gap in care for those most vulnerable to HIV. According to the report, criminalising drug addicts in Russia is fuelling the spread of HIV, which is expanding in Central Asia and Eastern Europe faster than any other region in the world. Galia Kutranova, Tearfund's Russia manager, said, "Helping people overcome drug addiction is critical to preventing the spread of HIV in Russia. But it's an uphill task." Tearfund's local church partners provide the bulk of residential drug rehab in Kaliningrad and Sverdlovsk.
tearfund.org



a voice in Parliament

POVERTY AND THE BUDGET. The country's personal debt crisis came into focus at the Christians in Parliament summer reception. Following the austerity measures announced in the emergency budget, the cross-party gathering heard from Alliance member organisation Christians Against Poverty (CAP). Amid the gold and splendour of the Speaker's apartments, CAP founder John Kirby described what life is like for desperate people suffering the stress of being in debt.

CAP gives free debt counselling and solutions through its 131 centres based in local churches through the UK. This involves the charity contacting creditors, prioritising housing and utility bills, and setting the household a budget.

Mr Kirby addressed the gathering of MPs, Lords, lobbyists and Westminster staff in July encouraging them to do what they can to help the poor and to believe they can make a difference. He spoke about his own experiences, saying, "I am living testimony that when poor people are given the right chance, they shine.

"Poor people are not stupid. They are cleverer than many people think. They have been living off their wits for years, and you have to be clever to do that. They can smell pity at a mile. We don't give hand-outs, we give hand-ups." The Bradford-based charity aims to have a centre in every city and town by 2015 and sees the Church as best-placed to offer holistic and lasting care with expertise and support from the head office.

Chair of Christians in Parliament Gary Streeter MP said he was "profoundly impressed" with the work of CAP and would recommend it to his constituents in need. "This was one of the most radical

and outside-of-the-box presentations we've ever had," he said. "I think it's made a real impact. There were plenty of members of Parliament here to hear it and we've gone away with plenty of food for thought." **capuk.org** *DW*

spoke out for the importance of equality and human rights in society. She said that "politics has to be about practice based on value". Coming from a low-income background and having experienced many hardships, she is concerned about Britain's future generation.

Balls said that "offering breakfast at schools is one step towards fighting the problem". David Miliband said that "the members of the Labour Party have the duty to fight injustice". In his opinion, people and politicians need to work together to change society.

Ed Miliband described politics as a



Left to right: CSM Chair Alun Michael, Andy Burnham, Ed Miliband, David Miliband, Ed Balls and Diane Abbott.

LABOUR LEADERSHIP. In July the Christian Socialist Movement (CSM) hosted a hustings with the candidates in the Labour leadership contest. Diane Abbott, Ed Balls, Andy Burnham and David and Ed Miliband gathered at Methodist Central Hall in Westminster to answer the audience's questions about the party's future, vision and values.

The audience of more than 300 had the opportunity to address the candidates directly. They voiced concerns about budget cuts, the economy, education systems and church and faith concerns, as well as international issues such as the war in Afghanistan.

As the candidates introduced themselves with short statements, Abbott

way of helping people. "Our party should be the best community organisation in Britain," he said. Together with the other candidates he is supporting the Sanctuary Pledge, ensuring that Britain remains a refuge for those fleeing persecution.

With the CSM hosting the event, it was no surprise that the questions of the role of the Church in the country came up. Burnham, who is Catholic, explained that "politics and the Church are growing apart. That is why the relationship needs to be rebuilt."

The elections will take place in September, and the result will be announced at the annual party conference at the end of the month.

eauk.org/pq

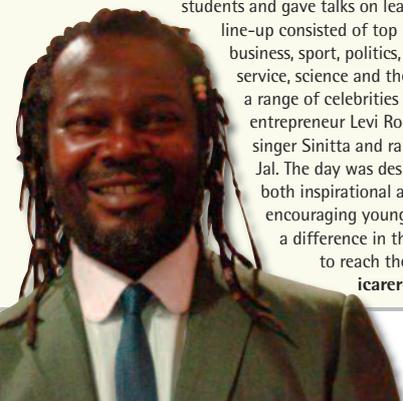
SG

CELEBRITY ROLE MODELS. Hundreds of students took part in the *I Care Revolution* in June, an emerging leaders day at the O2 organised by Hillsong. Speakers mixed with the students and gave talks on leadership. The line-up consisted of top leaders in business, sport, politics, community service, science and the arts, including a range of celebrities such as entrepreneur Levi Roots (pictured), singer Sinitta and rap star Emmanuel Jal. The day was designed to be both inspirational and practical, encouraging young people to make a difference in their society and to reach their full potential.

icarerevolution.com

AUTHENTIC CHURCH – ENGAGED. A passion to see communities transformed by the local church is behind a one-day Community Mission Conference that will be held on 1 October at Westminster Chapel in London. The programme aims to inspire and resource Christians in ways to maintain a strong faith while engaging with society. There will be practical workshops, a resource area and opportunities to share experiences and concerns, as well as times of worship and prayer led by people involved in community work. Speakers include Nicky Gumbel, David Westlake and the Alliance's Krish Kandiah. **communitymission.org.uk/events**

VOCAL ABOUT JUSTICE. A new national competition will enable young people to put their creativity to use writing songs about discrimination. The charities Act 4 and Through the Roof, with the support of Christian hip-hop artist Baliva, have launched *Project Inclusion*, inviting young people to write a song addressing discrimination and disability, performing it to spread awareness, then entering the annual competition. Winners will record their work on a CD. "Sadly, we live in a world where exclusion exists," said Baliva. "I'm excited about being involved and by the prospect of thousands of young people sharing the inclusive message with others." **throughtheroof.org**



Stephanie Gliniski



Bible Society/Claire Kenball

Taking the Rush Challenge

Young people from around the country will be climbing Mount Kilimanjaro next year to raise money to bring the life-changing message of the Bible to people living with HIV. And, having climbed the 19,500ft mountain, they'll then spend time with young people living with HIV in rural Tanzania.

The Rush Challenge scheme is the idea of Bible Society's Youth Development Officer Jamie Hill. "This is a great thing to do," he said. "Young people will see the

Bible changing people's lives and then they'll be able to think through how that can happen in their own society.

"I was really inspired by meeting a 17-year-old called Cecilia, who lives with HIV. I'd like to see thousands of girls like Cecilia given the same joy and life through the work of Bible Society."

Cecilia (pictured with her grandparents) is from Nala in northern Tanzania and is one of thousands of people whose lives have been transformed

by Bible Society of Tanzania's Good Samaritan Project. When she was 9, Cecilia fell seriously ill with measles, and her parents gave blood for a transfusion to save her life. What they didn't know was that they were both HIV positive and they passed the virus on to their daughter. Cecilia's parents both died, and when at the age of 12 she tested HIV positive her grandparents made her live alone in a storeroom in the family home.

"We thought that through eating and sharing a room with her we would be infected," said her grandfather, 73-year-old Yohane Mwangatua Ndahane.

Cecilia prayed that someone would come and help her family understand more about HIV, and soon a local church minister told her about the Good Samaritan Project, which last year alone helped 6,000 people like Cecilia. It uses the parable of the Good Samaritan to show people they're unique in God's eyes and that He loves them. It also teaches about living with HIV.

"My dream is that Bible Society will be able to raise enough funds to double the number of Good Samaritan projects in the next few years," said Jamie Hill, "and so help many more people like Cecilia."

biblesociety.org.uk/rushliveitgiveit RF

Giving is more important than ever

Churches and religious charities will be forced to close if Christians' regular giving continues to decline. This is the finding of the report *Why Christians Give*, commissioned by the Alliance from researchers McConkey-Johnston. The report blames churches for failing to preach about the importance of giving.

"The Church isn't teaching about stewardship any longer," said the report's author, Redina Kolaneci. However, the findings show that evangelical Christians are generous givers. A typical regular giver is aged 55-64 and gives roughly £3,000 to charity and church each year, three times the amount given by non-churchgoers.

Evangelicals give 11.5 per cent of their household income to church and charity each month. But the report also found that 20 per cent of congregations weren't being taught about the importance of stewardship.

"We are bombarded by messages on consumerism, so our mindset is towards spending on ourselves rather than giving," said

Kolaneci. "Stewardship and a sense of care for the poor has always been part of who Christians are. My concern is that, as time goes by, that is now missing in our churches.

"Older people who are now in their 50s, 60s and 70s have still got that sense of responsibility, when actually the younger generation have become more accustomed to getting things for themselves rather than giving their money away. People think, 'I can't afford to give more.'"

Most under threat are local churches, as Christians are now less likely to automatically give to their denomination or church, the report found. "People don't give habitually anymore," said Kolaneci. "They shop around for causes that they have an interest in."

The report also says that the recession is likely to affect Christian giving, as only a quarter of evangelicals said that their giving was unlikely to be impacted by the current financial crisis. HS

► A free summary of the key findings can be found at: mccconkey-johnston.co.uk/researchongiving

MONEY FOR MEMBERS. At age 23, minister Michael Kosmas has launched a church in South East London that offers financial assistance to members. Kingdom Assembly held its first service on 8 August at the Albany Theatre in Deptford, and Kosmas hopes that it will exemplify the ideals of the Church in Acts, where people served God, shared their earthly possessions and supported each other. "Kingdom Assembly is going to be a church that's real and relevant," he said. "In time, I would like it to be viewed as a central hub in the community that is open to everyone." kingdomassembly.org.uk



WHEN SOMEONE DIES. Alliance member agency Care has published a 20-page booklet offering practical advice to those who have lost a loved one. Designed to help steer the bereaved through the maze of decisions and arrangements, *When Someone Dies* also addresses the emotional challenges, including where to find further assistance if necessary, as well as how to prepare wills and legacies. "While there's a wealth of information about what to do in the event of someone's death," said Care Chairman Lyndon Bowring, "I've never come across a simple guide covering all the aspects of what needs to happen." care.org.uk/shop

CREATIVE CHURCH. In their continuing efforts to explore new forms of church, the Sheffield Centre has revamped its *Encounters on the Edge* website to provide online access to its quarterly publications, which look at the wide range of church plants and fresh expressions coming out of the Anglican Church. Subscribers get a 40 per cent discount on back issues and can also download copies to their computers. Part of Church Army, the Sheffield Centre is a national research unit that exists to discover what creative Christian people are doing at the edges of the Church to engage with today's modern cultures in mission. encountersontheedge.org.uk

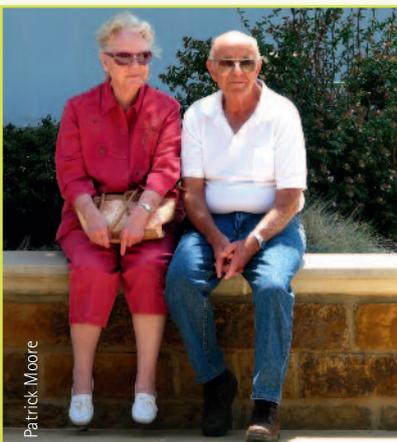
Spree across Scotland



Urban Saints

Urban Saints in Scotland is making its Spree holidays a major focus of 2011. Building on the success of *Spree in the Borders* since 2006 and *Skye Spree* since 2008, plans are underway to introduce a new *Highlands Spree* in September 2011 based in the Abernethy Trust centre in Nethy Bridge near Aviemore. Spree is a high-energy, low-cost evangelistic weekend designed for youth groups. Another new initiative is working to take Spree on the road, training young emerging leaders who will bring the Spree experience to places beyond the reach of current weekend events. The idea is to have a team of 30 people with a truckload of equipment driving around Scotland running mini Sprees in partnership with local churches. Charlie Morris, director of Urban Saints in Scotland, said, "One of the key secrets of Spree is that busy youth leaders can bring their children and young people and spend the weekend having fun alongside them. They are then able to follow up and build on steps of faith made at Spree."

urbansaints.org/scotland



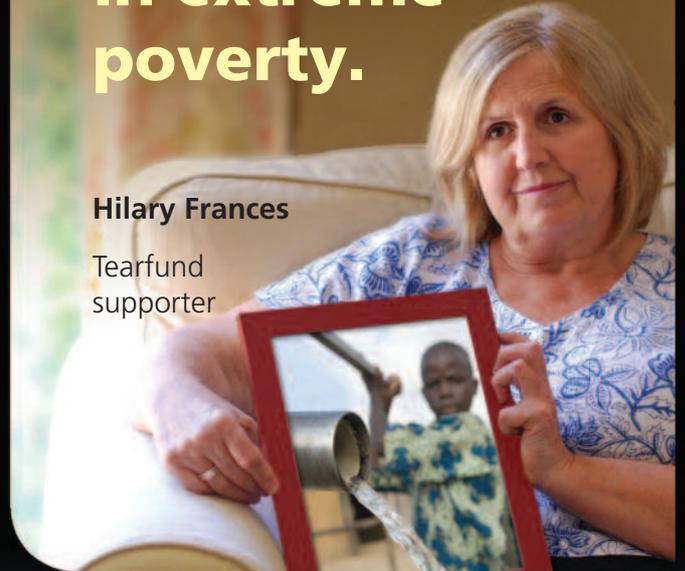
Patrick Moore

CHURCHES PREPARE FOR DEMENTIA. In response to research showing that the number of people with dementia will double between now and 2050, churches are preparing for the challenge of ministering to ageing congregations. Even as memory and concentration go, the feelings remain intact, so Scripture Union has published *Being With God*, a series of three daily devotionals. Designed to reach this growing segment of the Church, the books use familiar Bible readings, simple prayers and "cues and clues" with picture suggestions to help unlock memories and engage with the day's theme. Each book also comes with an audio CD. scriptureunion.org.uk/beingwithgod

“ When I’m called home, my family will benefit, but so will people in extreme poverty.”

Hilary Frances

Tearfund supporter



Hilary Frances knows that life is fragile: she went to bed healthy and woke up seriously ill.

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www.christianlegacy.org.uk

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Compassion at Christmas

Taking advantage of the way charity Christmas cards have caught the imagination of customers, Alliance members BRF and Compassion UK are teaming up this Christmas. For every book purchased from this year's Barnabas Christmas range, BRF will donate 10 per cent of the cover price to support Compassion's Child Survival Programme, which aims to protect the thousands of children who are dying each day from easily preventable causes such as malnutrition, malaria and pneumonia.

Working through local partners in places like Bangla Basti in Pathri, India (pictured), Compassion is working to care for children even before they are born by educating mothers, providing nutrition, medical assistance and social support.

"Compassion is delighted to be working with Barnabas on this unique and exciting campaign," said Steve Bunn of Compassion UK. "It is our prayer that booksellers across the UK will capture the vision of the *Encourage Compassion This Christmas* campaign and that together we can help improve the lives of children in need." brf.org.uk



Give youth a Fighting Chance

A Christian-based website launched in June by Alliance member XLP aims to help young people to get out of violent and criminal gangs in the UK. *Fighting Chance* is the brainchild of author and social activist Patrick Regan.

It spells out some of the consequences of getting involved in gangs, as well as providing reasons for getting out. The site allows anonymous contact with a mentor who can advise on the best steps out of gang membership.

Spokesman Wizdom Patrick, a 31-year-old former gang member, said, "Gang membership is a growing problem. Younger and younger people are getting involved. Our aim is to give young people alternatives so that they don't end up in

gangs or find ways out of gangs."

It is hard to find an accurate figure for Britain's gang membership. However, according to the Centre for Social Justice, over the last five years there has been an 89 per cent increase in the number of under-16s being stabbed. London alone has 170 territorial gangs with an estimated 5,000 members, according to the Metropolitan Police.

"We don't yet have the problem that there is in LA or Jamaica, but all the signs are there," said Patrick. "If we don't do something, it could be as bad as LA in the future. We want to stop the situation getting worse and we're trying to work pre-emptively to make sure this happens." fightingchance.me HS



media matters

by Charis Gibson, Senior Press Officer

Is religion being sidelined by the media? This is certainly a concern we hear from our members, and it was raised at this year's Church and Media Conference. Roger Bolton, presenter of Radio 4's *Feedback*, lamented to the attendees that the amount of religious programming has declined, although he did add that he thinks the quality is improving. He said it is time for the BBC to recruit a specialist religion editor who can speak authoritatively on religion and explain its relevance to other issues.

The Alliance media team is certainly working to improve religious broadcasting. We meet with senior broadcasters and journalists and

speaking regularly to producers. While there are times we need to be critical, our overall mission is not to build a chasm but instead to proactively offer good story ideas that will appeal to them as programmes worth showing.

One of the most exciting ways we've been able to get involved is by giving broadcasters access to Christians who aren't celebrities but have fascinating stories to tell. Recently, I was approached by a producer working on a new Channel 4 project, *4thought.tv*, a short religion and ethics slot that airs every night after the news. She asked me for ideas for future programmes and has been delighted with the interviewees we have provided her.

So are we really being sidelined? If the media reflect our increasingly secular society, perhaps it's no surprise that there is less religious programming. But the fact that *4thought.tv* has been commissioned shows there is clearly still a hunger for stories about how faith impacts people's lives. And while the appetite is there, those stories will continue to be told.

EQUIPPING YOUNG PEOPLE. Christians aged 18 to 30 are gathering in Whitby, North Yorkshire, 3-5 September for the annual September Bible School. Held at Whitby Evangelical Church, the course is designed to equip young people for service and leadership. "To have 50 or so young people, all listening with rapt attention to the ministry of God's word, is a preacher's delight," said previous guest speaker Ian Hamilton of Cambridge Presbyterian Church. "One of my most enjoyable memories was of the young people plying me with serious questions about the Christian life, eager to know how they might better live to God's praise." septemberbibleschool.org.uk

WORLDWIDE CHRISTIAN TV. Alliance member United Christian Broadcasters (UCB) has launched the world's first live Christian mobile TV channel, available to almost any mobile phone in the world using a 3G or wi-fi connection. Viewers will be able to tune in and watch popular shows such as *Adventures in Odyssey*, *Living Truth*, *Hillsong*, *Abundant Life*, plus Christian concerts, international conferences, documentaries and movies. The exclusive service from Yamgo, the global mobile TV network, potentially provides free live TV to millions of mobile phone users with iPhone, iPad, HTC, Nokia, Blackberry, Samsung, Sony Ericsson, Motorola or Android devices. ucbmedia.co.uk



IT'S A HIT. Six months after the launch of Church Army's *Now a Christian* website, a survey shows that the free internet-based course is having a positive impact on those who use it. The site was praised for its down-to-earth style, practicality and convenience, and 76 per cent of those surveyed said they would recommend it to their minister. Now a Christian was designed to help people take their first step in the faith, recognising that people want to explore Christianity on their own before signing up for something like the Alpha Course. nowachristian.org.uk



Making community connections

The Alliance member agency Affordable Christian Housing claims that Christian workers have far greater impact when they have a safe home from which to carry out their ministry and live in the same communities in which they serve. Workers in London are especially vulnerable, as the city lacks affordable housing and council accommodation is in very short supply. So schools, hospitals, charities, churches and other employers struggle to find staff that can afford to live nearby.

For example, church congregations can change rapidly as people can't afford to stay. "Christian workers who have a strong calling to share their faith and live in the community to embody God's love can be frustrated simply because they are unable to find an affordable home," said CEO Tim Fallon. "That's where we try to help."

Affordable Christian Housing works in partnership with key Christian workers in London. The focus is on those called to be in areas of real social deprivation where need is greater and resources are few.

"Working in the community helps people to begin to see an ongoing identity and presence," said Efrem Buckle (pictured with his family), a pastor at Calvary Chapel South London. "It makes it easy for people to make connections with what we do out there and what we talk about in church."

The church is pioneering multi-media outreach programmes in schools, prisons and on the streets, which are seeing real success. But finding accommodation in this part of London was hard work, and after several years in difficult and sometimes hostile environments, the Buckles are thankful for the provision of a peaceful home. "Affordable Christian Housing fully appreciated and understood our situation and were committed to helping us," said Judith Buckle. "When we first moved in it was like learning to live again ... it felt like being able to breathe after holding our breath for years." achal.org.uk

ADVENT COMES EARLY. Magnet Resources has produced a pack containing posters, a booklet and worship material for the four weeks of Advent based on the United Nations' eight Millennium Development Goals, the focus of Christian activism through the Micah Challenge movement. The material was written by author and worship leader Stella Bristow, with poster images by the Chinese artist He Qi. These depict four Advent scenes beginning with the visit of Mary to Elizabeth and ending with the birth of the baby Jesus. In addition to printed versions, the images are also available as downloads for projection. ourmagnet.co.uk/shop



“ Mission is my passion. That's why I'm leaving a legacy to CMS.”

Eve Vause
CMS supporter



Eve Vause believes in mission - and she believes in sharing the Gospel and helping people in poverty discover life in all its fullness.

"The work CMS does with mothers and children in Africa so often means the difference between life and death. I am dividing my assets between my family and two Christian charities, including CMS."

Eve considers herself quite ordinary, but by remembering a Christian charity like CMS in her will, she will be able to help people in need for many years to come.

Why not follow her example, and leave a legacy to a Christian charity? Find out more at www.christianlegacy.org.uk

Christian Legacy

Christian Legacy members are:

**Bible Society • Care for the Family • CMS
The Leprosy Mission • Livability • Tearfund**

Keep the Bible fresh

Dr Dallas Willard is a professor in the School of Philosophy at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles. He has written several books, including *Renovation of the Heart* (2002) and *The Divine Conspiracy* (1998) and served on the board of the CS Lewis Foundation. We talked to him about the Bible...

idea: What's your earliest memory of reading the Bible?

Willard: That would be in Sunday school as a very small child. I guess you would say it was even before I could read. I loved flannel-graph, which the teachers used to present the Bible stories. So I can't really remember a time when I wasn't immersed in those stories. Of course that's not the same as reading the Bible, but it lays a foundation for approaching the Bible when you come to the age where you can think about what you're reading and have a better grasp than just the stories will give you. This is something that's been lifelong for me.

How do you keep Bible-reading fresh each day?

I read the Bible in the light of what I'm dealing with. That relationship between the Bible and what I am doing not only keeps the Bible fresh but it keeps prayer fresh. It keeps listening to God throughout the day fresh. If you isolate just reading the Bible from these other aspects it will die on you. You have to put it into life. When you do that, you bring something extremely influential in framing everything. It's keeping the Bible close to life that keeps it fresh. You don't take it like medicine; you sort of live with it.



I read the Bible in the light of what I'm dealing with. You have to put it into life.

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

I memorise long passages of Scripture. I memorise a lot of it – I always have. In relating to people, talking with them, working with committees and with classes, and just being with others, it's simply always there. It wallpapers my mind. It's not out of my horizon, no matter what I'm doing. It's a wonderful thing that I never have to run over and think about something in the Bible. It's always there.

How can we all do this?

Saturate yourself in it. I wouldn't know how to separate the two. I wouldn't know how to think of ministry as something that did not involve seeing, acting, listening, always with the Bible right there in my mind. It speaks to everything that comes by – of course different parts in different ways. That is how I've come to understand abiding in the Word. So you don't wind up with a job and then trying to get things to help with it. It all comes together. When I hear someone, or someone comes with a need for counselling or prayer, the Word of the Scripture is right there for me.

biblefresh.com

AM



Social Media Boot Camp

4 Sep, London

Social media are everywhere now, as people share photos, videos, words and audio. It's no longer a question of whether to get involved, but how. This event will explore what social media is, why it's here and why it's so important. eauk.org/slipstream

360 Degree Preaching

20 Sep, Oxford

This is an opportunity to improve preaching as well-known author Michael Quicke makes a rare visit to the UK. Attendees will enjoy a day in an Oxford University college and a chance to sharpen skills with other preachers. eauk.org/slipstream/events

Day of Prayer for Zimbabwe

26 Sep, worldwide

Christians of all nations are encouraged to pray, fast and give the money they would usually spend on a day's food supply towards Trumpet Call, which hopes to help deliver five million Zimbabweans from poverty within the next five years. lovezim.org

Enabling Church

7 Oct, London

This event, sponsored by Churches for All, will broaden and deepen thinking about disability and the engagement of disabled people with church life. It will also equip attendees to make a difference in their own church situation. premier.org.uk

Festival of Life

15 Oct, Cardiff

This will be the first Festival of Life gathering of Christians in Wales, held at the Cardiff International Arena. The event is a night of fellowship, praise and prayer for revival in the UK, hosted by Pastor Enoch A Adeboye. festivaloflife.org.uk

Access to Life

16 Oct, Cardiff

Disabled people are often marginalised or excluded in our society and our churches. This conference is for church and ministry leaders, parents, carers, professionals and for people with learning disabilities themselves. prospects.org.uk

Lausanne 2010

16-25 Oct, Cape Town

The Alliance, along with churches on every continent, has been preparing for the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, the widest-ever gathering of evangelicals, with the aim of setting effective strategy for the next 10 years. capetown2010.com

TACKLING A PANDEMIC. At a special gathering in Vienna in July, global faith leaders were urged to work together to fight HIV and Aids. Speaking to some 200 Christian, Jewish and Islamic representatives from Africa, Asia and Europe, Jan Beagle of UNAIDS said, "There is sometimes a disconnect between the scientific world and the world of culture, religion and communities. But faith communities, having been involved in HIV prevention, treatment, care and support from the earliest days, can help to bridge this gap very effectively. And we need your help more today than ever before. The global AIDS response is at a tipping point. For every two people starting treatment, another five become infected with the virus." tearfund.org

FACT-FINDING IN BOLIVIA. Alliance member charity Toybox has launched a national competition to find two young global education ambassadors. The positions are open to UK children aged 14-15 who can apply through their school for the Steve Sinnott Award. Winners will visit street children in Bolivia next February with Toybox and the Global Campaign for Education. (James and Beth, the 2009 ambassadors, are pictured.) The competition aims to raise awareness of the need to provide every child with a full primary education by the year 2015. This is one of the eight Millennium Development Goals. toyboxcharity.org.uk/campaigning



COUNSELLING AND CARE. As part of its autumn conference, Association of Christian Counsellors is running a training workshop on 16 October in Weston-Super-Mare to explore hurt and loss, and how people can be safely offered psychological and emotional support. The one-day event is designed to address the stresses and challenges of day-to-day life, including health issues, separation and divorce or premature death, or indeed criminal actions such as rape and domestic violence. The workshop is suitable for pastoral carers and anyone involved in caring for people who are hurting. acc-uk.org

Biblefresh gains momentum

Churches throughout the UK will be holding special services this autumn to celebrate the Bible, so they will be ready to engage in the year-long focus on Biblefresh starting in January. More than 86 agencies, festivals, colleges and denominations are working together on the project, and a free pack of resources has been compiled for use in special Biblefresh services that churches can hold any time during next three months.

Worship leader Vicky Beeching has provided a song list, Abbey Guinness from Lacey Theatre Company has written a creative reading, Sam Hargreaves from Engage worship has put together some new liturgy, and the Alliance's Krish Kandiah has come up with an easily accessible set of PowerPoint slides and sermon notes.

"This pack, which is free to download from our website, will really help churches to launch Biblefresh effectively in the autumn, so that they can hit the ground running in January," said Biblefresh Co-ordinator Alexandra Lilley. biblefresh.com



All-night prayer launches Hope

Hope Together is the national continuation of Hope08, encouraging unified mission in word and action. The movement was launched on 23 July as part of the Festival of Life, an all-night session of prayer hosted by Pastor Agu Irukwu at the ExCel Centre in London. The 40,000-strong congregation stood in prayer for unity in mission.

"There is a feeling that God is in this and that it is actually larger than we all think," said Irukwu. "There is a real desire to do something - working together, black and white majority churches, urban-based missions and missions that are out in the country."

Roy Crowne (pictured with Irukwu), executive director of Hope Together, said, "Jesus doesn't see the difference in tradition or styles of worship. He sees His Church, the body of Christ. His prayer is that we would unite in the purpose and mission of God to express acts of kindness and communicate His love. Let us do even more together and bring hope to each village, town and city."

Hope together aims to help the Church become more outward-looking over the next four years, leading toward an all-out year of mission in 2014. hopetogether.org.uk



A SENSE OF CALLING. Anglican evangelical mission agency CPAS has produced *Exploring Call*, a free guide to help local church leaders encourage people to explore whether God is calling them to ordained ministry. "Clergy have the real privilege of being the gatekeeper for those considering their vocation," said author Rev Mark Norris. "There are incredible opportunities in helping them discover where God is leading them, as well as great dangers in discouraging someone from exploring their call. Today, when only 1 per cent of full-time clergy in the Church of England are under 30, vicars have a great opportunity to help more young people realise their potential." cpas.org.uk/fosteringvocations

► For updated news from Alliance members, click on Your Stories at eauk.org/idea

“ I want my legacy to bring the Bible to people across the world. ”

”

Alan Gait
Bible Society supporter

Alan Gait faced a life-threatening illness in his 40s, but says "Reading the Bible helped me to depend on God. His Word upheld me and gave me comfort."

Alan's will benefits family, friends and his local church - but also the work of Bible Society.

"It's really important for people to have the Bible in their own language, so they can know God's love for the world."

Alan wouldn't claim he's doing anything extraordinary, but his Christian legacy will make a real difference to the causes he holds dear.

Please leave a legacy to a Christian charity in your will. Find out more at

www.christianlegacy.org.uk

Christian Legacy

Christian Legacy members are:

**Bible Society • Care for the Family • CMS
The Leprosy Mission • Livability • Tearfund**

Banking on virtue



Philip Davis, senior research fellow at the National Institute for Economic and Social Research and pastor of Penge Baptist Church, takes a broader view of the economic crisis...

The financial crisis is leaving deep scars on the nation's economy. There has been a good deal of attention paid to the origins of the crisis, but this has mostly measured the cause and effect of various events in economic terms. But this is a limited perspective on the situation. A broader view can be gained by looking at economics with a biblical understanding of humankind. This enables us to see not just how the immediate events preceding the crisis had such a damaging impact but why these events occurred at a deeper level and where responsibility lies.

Taking risks

The crisis was preceded by an expansion of credit, financial innovation and widespread risk-taking. Since these were common features in past crises, why wasn't this one better forecast? The size and global integration of the US financial markets made it inevitable the crisis would become global, while the UK was particularly vulnerable because of its house-price boom.

An economic analysis of recent events would focus on the role of rational self-interest. This view of humanity can help us analyse policy issues and economic development, but is less useful for answering why the crisis occurred if everyone was supposedly behaving rationally. But focussing on efficiency ignores ethical judgements: in economic terms, irresponsibility and immoral behaviour can only be condemned if they irrationally conflict with individual self-interest.

Theology, like economics, looks at both how things are and how they ought to be. While made in the image of God, humanity is fallen. Choices and actions are often determined by self-interest, relationships can be spoiled by power and fear, humanity may exploit nature, and work can become toil. Wealth may be celebrated as indicating God's blessing, but it is the relationship with God that is central to a Christian understanding of well-being. Community life is a crucial aspect of humanity beyond the narrow ambition of individual fulfilment.

As beings created in the image of God, we have free choice but we also carry responsibility for our actions. The Bible has justice at its core, so taking a stand on economic issues should encourage godly stewardship, useful work, protecting the vulnerable and preserving family life. And while the state is ordained by God, its decisions should be scrutinised.

Integrity required

The continued functioning of the banking system requires integrity and prudence on the part of bankers, and this was evidently lacking in recent years. A biblical view of human character shows a level of realism about our frequent irrationality that seems absent from much economic analysis.

The Bible speaks of irrationally idolatrous behaviour such as the Israelites worshipping handcrafted gods. And Jesus went further: "You cannot serve both God and money" (Matthew 6.24). The implication is that if our attitude to money is to see it as a goal in life – an end in itself – then it is ultimately an idol. Wealth can entice us into pride, selfishness and greed, leading society to wrongly value financial-sector employment above other forms of work.

Financial regulation tends to promote values that are essentially

Theology, like economics, looks at both how things are and how they ought to be

pious lists that can be ignored or circumvented. By contrast, theology highlights that values must be complemented with virtues such as honesty, diligence and putting others' interests first. These depend on character, which is only learned by example.

It is in this context that Christians are called to be salt and light in the banking system and throughout society. Conventional bank regulation is only part of the answer; it is not enough. It is essential that relationships are re-established as critical to generating a stable and socially beneficial financial system.

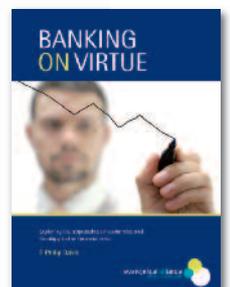
An alternative

In the run up to the crisis, consumer lenders actively encouraged the build-up of household debt, and the Church has a clear responsibility to offer a culture that offers an alternative to mere consumption. We must show our neighbours that the desire for more should be tempered by long-term individual interests, wider social needs, environmental concerns and a focus on saving rather than borrowing. As Christians, we must consider whether we have become absorbed by a consumer-oriented culture. And the Church must show mercy by offering support to those who are weak, vulnerable and in financial need.

Blame for the current situation should not solely be laid at the door of bankers; governments and households also showed greed, selfishness and impatience. Governments led the population into believing that economic growth was sustainable and gave the impression that risk had been abolished. And households were by no means obliged to take on so much debt, which for many led to catastrophe.

Banks and governments are often hailed as holding the answers to all our problems. But a biblical analysis of the current situation implies that all of us have a responsibility. We must recognise the idolatry in our economic system and condemn the structural injustices it generates. The aims of economics – wealth, consumption, power – stand in stark contrast to Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God: the law of love for God and neighbour and responsible stewardship. The Church should proclaim this vigorously.

► Philip Davis' report *Banking on Virtue* is available for download or purchase at: eauk.org/lifebeyonddebt





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Cost: £25 per person (£20 if booked by 1 August)

Speakers:

Nicky Gumbel–HTB

David Westlake–Tearfund

Krish Kandiah–EA

and Jenny and Andy Flannagan leading worship



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Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Galatians 6:9

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OLD AGE ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

LONDON

10th November, 2010,
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Euston Road, London NW1

DONCASTER

17th November, 2010,
Bawtry Hall, Bawtry,
Doncaster

Book online at

www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk

**PILGRIMS'
FRIEND
SOCIETY**

The Alliance's year in numbers

12

months for Steve Clifford as the Alliance's general director...

This impact report covers April 2009 to March 2010, my first year as general director. It's been a privilege and a challenge to be here during this pivotal time for the Alliance to unite the Church to see change in our society.

Many highlights are listed here, but for me the overriding aspect has been the faithful financial and prayer support of Alliance members. The whole team and I are thankful for everyone who partners with God on His vision of unity. It's been an amazing year.

For example, last autumn Ann and I tested the Simplify challenge to live as if on benefits and to give what was saved to charity. In September, I was encouraged when the Alliance Council met with a dynamic group of more than 100 leaders to grapple with key issues of the 18-30s generation.



And I will never forget being seated in the tiny historical Chapel of St Mary Undercroft in March for the launch of Biblefresh alongside leaders from across church communities. We prayed for the leaders of our nation as they met in the Houses of Parliament just above our heads. For me, this initiative provides a snapshot of the Alliance's core ministry: bringing nearly 100 agencies together to serve in co-operation rather than competition to help the Church be more effective in mission.

As general director, I am privileged to visit churches and hear firsthand stories about what God is doing all over the county. I am reminded that the local church truly is God's vehicle of hope, and I believe we have a great future together. So read on and be encouraged.

3,078

hours donated by our volunteers...

"I'd always thought giving was just financial," says Marina Pattenden, a volunteer with the Alliance's membership team. "I wasn't cash rich, but could set aside some hours each week to help. I've particularly enjoyed interaction with members, seeing how the Alliance equips them on a local and national level." eauk.org/getinvolved

278

appearances for the Alliance in the media...

"From debating divine judgement on *Newsnight* after the release of the Lockerbie bomber to advising *Coronation Street* about the baptism of one of its characters, the Alliance has been at the forefront of Christian media engagement," reports Head of Media and Marketing Charis Gibson. "We have also supported members with training, one-on-one support and local media hubs." eauk.org/media



4000

people who attended Kingdom Come...

"Seeing all in church leadership flourish and be supported in their roles was the aim of Kingdom Come in February," says Stephen Cave, National Director for Northern Ireland. "Another highlight for us was the *Not Just a One Night Stand* conference, helping 16-30s discuss sex and relationships." eauk.org/northern-ireland

30

days people live as if on benefits for Simplify...

The idea is to examine the spiritual hold money has on our lives, totting up how much money we would receive in a month on benefits and giving the rest to charity. "It is a shock how little I had left over when I was so hard on myself," says Andy Reed, then MP for Loughborough. "It has made me take action, not just think about it. I am now healthier, happier, live a more sustainable lifestyle and enjoyed the experience." simplify.org.uk



75,000

South Asian Christians estimated to be living in the UK...

"As a minority within a minority, we need a voice to respond quickly and with unity to pertinent issues, such as persecution of Christians in Pakistan and Afghanistan or the intense suffering caused by the divisions in Sri Lanka," says Ram Gidoomal, chair of the Alliance's South Asian Forum, which was launched this year. eauk.org/saf

450

people attending the launch of the Cymru Institute for Contemporary Christianity...

"In three venues on three consecutive nights in March, hundreds of people gathered in Swansea, Cardiff and Colwyn Bay to listen to some of the UK's most prominent Christian leaders," reports Elfed Godding, national director for Wales. "CICC aims to help Christians apply the Bible to contemporary issues." eauk.org/wales



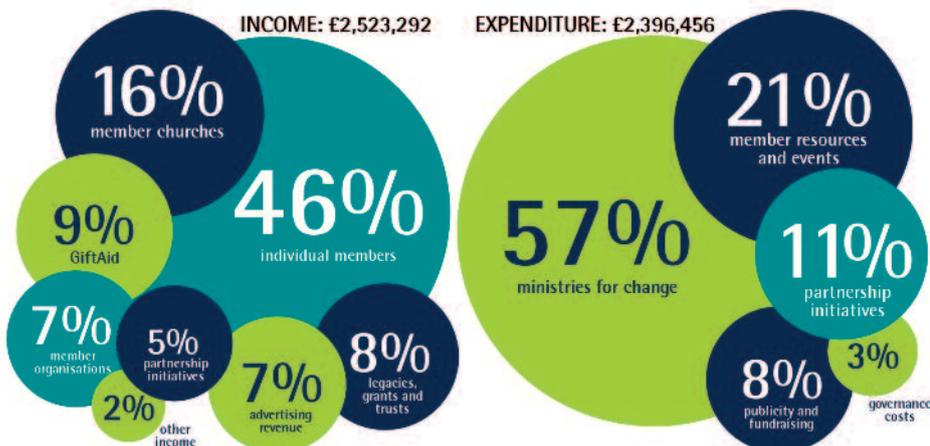
86

organisations working together with Biblefresh...

"Biblefresh unites a diverse group of organisations, festivals, colleges and publishers that are involved with the Bible," says Krish Kandiah, executive director for Churches in Mission. "The goal is to equip the UK Church with confidence in and appetite for the Scriptures. The movement provides churches with practical and inspiring ways to engage afresh with God's Word, and churches are already planning art exhibitions, school assemblies, fashion shows, photography competitions and Bible-reading marathons for the year-long celebration in 2011." biblefresh.com

92 per cent of the Alliance's expenditure spent on charitable activities...

"The Alliance – both the staff and the members – is thankful to God for His faithfulness, particularly this past year in light of the economic downturn," says Helen Calder, Finance & Operations director. "The staff has particularly been thankful for prayers as they undertake their work in a variety of areas."



This is a summary of the financial activities for the year ended 31 March 2010. Figures include unrestricted and restricted funds of the charity and the trading activities of EA Developments Ltd. They are taken from the full audited Annual Report & Financial Statements, which are available from the Evangelical Alliance, 186 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BT.

341 Lords lobbied regarding the Equality Act...

"This is just one in a number of issues on which the Alliance was able to have a positive impact on Parliament," says Parliamentary Officer Daniel Webster. "And at the end of 2009, the Alliance and Stewardship produced Life Beyond Debt, a resource that helps churches respond to the recession." eauk.org/public-affairs

1 person needed to effect change...

"The dynamic of one person envisioned by the Spirit to bring wellbeing to our world is an unstoppable force," says Forum for Change co-ordinator Marijke Hoek. "We are weaving a network of similarly orientated people for strategic action in education, business, sport, politics, media and the arts." eauk.org/f4c

365 days of prayer for Scotland...

"This has been our vision: that people would be praying for Scotland every hour of every day over the year," says Fred Drummond, National Director for Scotland. "We believe that prayer is the magnet for mission, and there is a sense that God is beginning to stir His people in Scotland." eauk.org/scotland



20

organisations working together for the 18-30s generation...

"Research shows that only a third of Christians under 30 consider themselves to be leaders in their church," says Alistair Stevenson, public policy officer for the Alliance in Scotland. "This is a challenge the Alliance has taken seriously, and an 18-30 leadership team is consulting young adults to frame a strategy to build a more stable future for the Church." eauk.org/slipstream

12 months before the next impact report...

Over the last six months, the directorate has developed its strategy to see the Alliance in a better position to fulfil its purpose of uniting to change society. Implementation of this programme and structure will begin in September, continuing to recognise unity (working together) and advocacy (voice) as the two key areas of activity where the Alliance is uniquely positioned to benefit both Church and society.

► The Alliance is also continuing to tell stories of unity and how members are impacting communities for Christ. Please send your story to: stories@eauk.org



Cover and main photos: Christians speak up against poverty at The Wave in Westminster.

ORDINARY SUPERHEROES

Christians are making a difference on important issues that affect society. *Hazel Southam* speaks with four campaigners who explain why they take action...

On 10 October, some 100 million Christians are expected to pray a global prayer for the end of world poverty. Around 10 million of them will be making promises to stand with the poor – anything from buying Fair Trade food to banking ethically. Micah Challenge, the event's organiser, hopes that a thousand politicians around the world will be impacted by the campaign.

This is the face of modern-day campaigning: bringing together action, lifestyle and prayer.

The old face of campaigning simply as a tub-thumping rally has changed. Today, you don't have to take to the streets and march if you don't want to. You can email your MP during lunchtime, run an event in your village or town, or simply decide to alter your shopping habits.

But along with making a difference to your cause, taking action can affect your life. Four campaigners tell me their stories.

Practical action

Zoe Uffindell, age 18, is studying geography at Oxford University. She chose the course as a direct result of a school trip to Botswana and Zambia two years ago, where the students helped build two homes for women whose families had been ravaged by Aids.

"It felt really amazing," she recalls. "At the beginning there were two twigs and a piece of string. And at the end there was a house. It was very moving because this woman had her own house to live in and didn't have to depend on anyone else."

For Zoe, it was a vivid demonstration of how practical actions can help change a life. "That made me want to pursue international



'At the beginning there were two twigs and a piece of string, and at the end there was a house'

development and study geography, which I am doing," she says. And she has also continued to campaign. First, she demonstrated at the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference in December 2009 with Christian development agency Tearfund. More recently, she gave a talk on poverty to her Christian Union, after which the members clubbed together to sponsor a child.

Attending the Copenhagen summit was an eye-opener for Zoe. "It was the first march I'd ever been on," she says. "It was amazing to see all the flags and see where everyone was from. Afterwards we felt despondent, but we met up with the 24/7 prayer team and sat around and prayed about the decisions that were being made. That was the best thing that we could have done.

"I have never seen abject poverty, but I've heard about it. In a world where some people have so much, it seems wrong that others can have so little and nothing seems to be done about it."

Raising awareness

On the other side of the world, Katie Ahmad has been holding birthday parties at her church in Melbourne to raise awareness of child mortality. Katie wanted to let her congregation know that some 8.8 million children will die before their 5th birthday this year, so she held several parties complete with birthday cakes.

"As a representation of the many children in the world who will not enjoy birthday number 5, two 5-year-olds came onto the stage to blow out the candles as we sang Happy Birthday to them," she says.

"Currently, within the Australian government's overseas aid budget, one in every six dollars goes to healthcare. Our congregation wrote messages in around 600 birthday cards requesting that the government increase this figure to one in every four dollars in the 2011-2012 budget. The following week a delegation of us met with Mark Dreyfus, our local MP. We delivered the cards to him personally, so that he could then pass them on to Stephen Smith, our current Minister for Foreign Affairs."

Katie had been nervous about even emailing Dreyfus, but in person found him sympathetic to the cause. "Another encouraging thing for me



cover story

was to witness the pleasure of those who came along in the group who had not met an MP in this manner before," she says. "One young person commented on how encouraging and empowering she found the whole experience."

Seeking justice

Retired university lecturer Dr Tony McCaffry, age 68, has helped run a trade justice group in his home village of Ashtead since the 1990s, with around a dozen people meeting each month. But the group has a wider impact through lobbying local MP Chris Grayling on issues of concern.

Conscious that others have little time to campaign but want to be involved, the Ashtead group is set to launch an email update for hundreds of local people in September. It will highlight three campaigns each month, enabling people who are busy with families and work to get involved.

Recently, they took up the issue of illegal logging, which was then passing through the European Parliament and had been highlighted in a campaign by Christian development agency Progressio. As a result, the European Parliament passed a law banning the sale of illegally logged timber, going some way to protecting the world's remaining forests – people, flora and fauna.

"I bump into Chris Grayling regularly in the village," Tony says. "It's



'We believe that God's view is loving, so we should have a loving view of the world'

about building up relationships and thanking people [MPs and MEPs] for their response." Over the years, the group has grown in confidence and is definitely "more persistent now" according to Tony.

"With a Christian-faith understanding, campaigning doesn't feel like an optional extra," he says. "Campaigning isn't a minority interest; it's a real mainstream thing now. I'm learning who my neighbour is all the time – that's an important aspect for me. People shouldn't be dying of starvation and little kids dying of malaria. As a Christian, we believe that God's view is loving, so we should have a loving view of the world."

A risky campaign

Sending emails, writing letters, even going on a march can be enjoyable for many of us. But some campaigners find themselves faced with prison sentences because they stood up for a cause that was dear to their heart.

This was the situation confronting



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Patricia Pulham, now 72. Back in the early 1980s, this mother of seven, who was also a foster parent, was deeply concerned about the world in which her children were growing up. The threat of nuclear war worried her and so she joined Christian CND.

"I tried so hard to give the children a good life," she recalls, "but at that time people really felt that they were in danger of obliteration. There was a real, real anxiety. That took me to protest. It was as if I was protecting my children."

Her first experience was protesting at Greenham Common, an American air base in Berkshire where cruise missiles were stored. It was the centre of anti-nuclear protests for many years.

A committed Christian, Patricia says that this felt like a calling. "My faith was very important to me. I really felt called at that time to do something very definite for what I believed the Gospel said about peace," she says. "My motives were very religious. I was convinced it was right."

With the backing of her husband and family, she chose direct action – in this case, sitting in the road – and was arrested by the police. A series of arrests led to fines that Patricia refused to pay. This led to prison, and she served a total of seven or eight months over many short sentences.

"I was praying as I took action," she says, "but the sentences also felt sacramental. I was very, very frightened the first time. I was frightened of the other prisoners. But I met people who had had a raw deal and I found kindness and support in the other women." But there was violence too, resulting in Patricia being attacked for trying to protect another inmate from a beating.

Today, Patricia is still active but restricts her campaigning to meetings with MPs, bishops and embassies. "It's still important to my faith," she says. "It's the way that I respond to the Gospel. When you think of God's creation and anything that damages that creation, well, that must be an act of blasphemy."

10/10/10

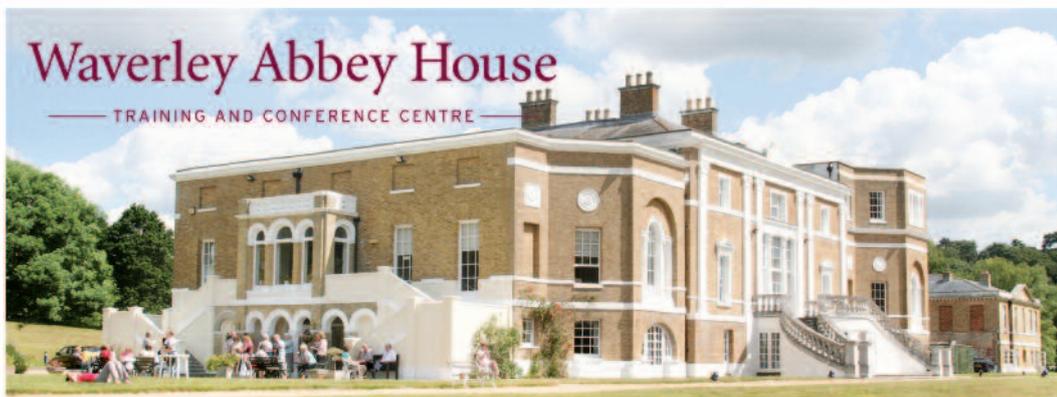
"This year Micah Challenge wants to change the world through millions of tiny promises," says Micah's Andy Clasper. "We believe that the poor of our world are being forgotten, so we are asking people to commit to remember them." And with the big day on 10 October fast approaching, people are already signing up, pledging their support in different ways.

"I promise to consider more what the impact of every purchase I make will be on those most in need," says John Robertson from Biggleswade.

"I promise to live with more an awareness to the issues surrounding poverty, to pray with more passion and empathy for those suffering in poverty and to believe that, no matter what, we can make a difference," says Rebecca Walton from Christchurch.

"I promise to care for the poor by acting justly, showing mercy, walking humbly before God and encouraging others to do the same," says Trevor Miles of St Albans, echoing the core theme of Micah 6.8.

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Help people along their faith journey

The Christian faith is a process that everyone experiences differently, as shown in a recent Christian Research study exploring faith journeys. *Benita Hewitt and Phil Green* find four ways in which the findings can equip churches...

1. Let people know it takes time to become a Christian

Of those surveyed, nearly two thirds said that becoming a Christian was a gradual process. People need to be prepared for it to take time to become a Christian; for most Christians it takes between one and four years, although for some it's much longer – a lifetime even. We must reassure them that this is normal and that it is unusual to have a Damascus Road-type experience like the Apostle Paul did. People should not expect to come to faith suddenly or to feel they are less of a Christian for not having had a remarkable experience.

To paraphrase one person's journey: "There have been gaps, but I've always been part of the Church. I've been part of the Christian family as long as I can remember, but really began to explore what this meant through the promises I made in Scouts. After getting married and leaving home the attachment to church was loosened. I still had faith,

but God played a smaller part in my life. So my faith journey began gradually, but at the age of 25 there was a sudden call to discipleship."

It's probably wise for us to move away from the terms "sudden" or even "gradual" and instead acknowledge a mix of ongoing background activities sometimes punctuated by more dramatic moments.

2. Focus on the building blocks for children and young people

Christian faith is usually firmly established when young: a third of people claim they knew they were Christian before the age of 12; 40 per cent knew somewhere between 12 and 19; 16 per cent in their 20s; and just 9 per cent aged 30 and above. The Faith Journeys project has revealed that the foundation built during childhood and adolescence is highly significant.

"I started attending church at the age of 8 after being invited to a



Alfieri

How can we offer support and nurture growth?

holiday Bible club," said another person. "Subsequently, I started attending Sunday school and Boys' Brigade – I enjoyed both. When I was 11 I went on a Christian camp and was introduced to reading the Bible on my own. Although I didn't read the Bible regularly, I did sporadically and began to grow in my understanding of God. Going to youth weekends away, which included intense times of learning and prayer, introduced me to the idea of spending time with God. I'd say that I actually became a Christian when I was 14, but I see these six

years preparing me for that moment of conviction and commitment."

Investing in children and young people is essential. Building blocks include attending festivals, regular youth activities and equipping young people to engage with the Bible and prayer. The research has also highlighted that it's important for young people to feel part of the main body of the church and that parents and grandchildren play an influential role. Are we training parents and grandparents for the vital role they have in the faith journeys of their children and grandchildren?

3. Focus on transition times

Significant faith journey milestones can include starting a new school or new job, getting married, having children, moving house, getting involved with a new church, losing a loved one or falling ill. As one person said, "I was seriously ill and in hospital – not far from death. I cried out to God to save me. What occurred then was the most wonderful experience of my life. I gave my life to the Lord as I came round."

Another said, "I moved from a big mega-church to a much smaller one. I remember how refreshing and reassuring it was that the Spirit moved us as powerfully with 10 people and a broken piano as he had with a famous worship band and the latest technology. It felt like being part of the early Church as this small group met together and watched God unfold His plans for us. It was a really exciting time."

It is during times of transition that people need extra support; we should be looking at how we can provide this. However, transition times are also opportunities for growth. What are our churches doing to identify points of transition in the lives of our congregations and local communities? How can we offer support and nurture growth?

4. Be aware of negative family influences

While many are supported and encouraged in a Christian family, be aware that the immediate family can also be a source of strong discouragement. Of those surveyed, 16 per cent claimed to have been discouraged by parents when they were growing up, and 15 per cent were also discouraged by parents even though they were adults. Young people can be put off by siblings and adults by their spouse or partner. It is not just in far off lands that Christians are being persecuted.

Jesus said, "They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law" (Luke 12.53). The stories people recounted reveal something of why family members might discourage Christians. It is often to do with Christian relationships intruding into family relationships, but also to do with ignorance and fear.

"My mother had found her own religious upbringing very damaging and wanted us to avoid that," said one person. "She seemed uncomfortable at times with my own strong inclination to explore religion and spirituality."

Another said, "When I decided to start going to church, my wife was dead against the idea and fought hard to make me 'normal' again. I resisted, because I didn't want to lose what God has given me, but this caused a lot of tension."

And a third noted that "the tension my faith causes in my family relationships is one of the hardest thing about being a Christian".

We need to support and encourage those in our churches who may be living day-to-day with opposition to their faith from the people closest to them. Are our churches trying to sensitively build relationships with these families?

► **Whether you had a Damascus Road experience or came to faith slowly, your story can encourage others and add to a comprehensive collection of faith journeys. Recount your experience at: faith-journeys.com**

Destination known

Andrew Schwartz/Universal

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

It's the age-old question of free will. Our culture is increasingly sceptical of the idea that our lives are planned out by God or some abstract force of fate, but it is still troubled by this question. We are surrounded by the message that complete freedom to control our own destiny is the highest possible good.

"Your future is whatever you make it," proclaims Doc Brown

triumphantly at the conclusion of the classic *Back to the Future* trilogy, articulating in its simplest form one of the most dearly held convictions of the Western world. Freedom to live my own life in the way that I choose is the goal; imposition, whether by outside forces or my own limitations, is an obstacle to be overcome.

A sense that all-seeing divine power imposes upon this freedom

Films



Artificial Eye

WINTER'S BONE (opens 17 Sep)

An award-winner at several festivals, this darkly riveting drama explores issues of responsibility, loyalty and betrayal in its story of 17-year-old Ree (the astounding Jennifer Lawrence), whose father disappears, leaving her to care for her nearly catatonic mother and two much-younger siblings. Set in the wintry Missouri Ozarks, the close-knit community is her only salvation, but it's also a source of real danger as everyone knows everybody's business, people understand their place and help is offered but never requested. Every scene in this remarkably soulful film is packed with subtle detail that keeps us thinking.

RC

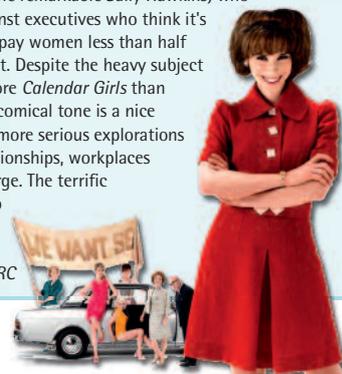
THE KID (17 Sep)

Based on the memoir by Kevin Lewis, this film recounts his horrific journey through the care system, during which he was violently abused by his mother (an unrecognisable Natascha McElhone) and went through a series of foster homes before a care worker (Bernard Hill), alert teacher (Ioan Gruffudd) and foster father (James Fox) finally show him love and concern. The three actors who play Kevin (William Finn Miller, Augustus Prew and Rupert Friend) are excellent, and the real power of the film is in the way it so clearly portrays how a simple act of kindness can change a life.

RC

MADE IN DAGENHAM (1 Oct)

A chronicle of the events leading to the law requiring equal pay for women, this film follows a feisty group of factory workers (led by the remarkable Sally Hawkins) who go on strike against executives who think it's perfectly fine to pay women less than half what the men get. Despite the heavy subject matter, this is more *Calendar Girls* than *Norma Rae*. The comical tone is a nice counterpoint to more serious explorations of sexism in relationships, workplaces and society at large. The terrific cast includes Bob Hoskins, Miranda Richardson and Rosamund Pike. RC



Paramount

Tempting fate: *David and Elise (Matt Damon and Emily Blunt)* try to take control of their lives in *The Adjustment Bureau* (left), while the god-like Christof (Ed Harris) watches over his subject (Jim Carrey) in *The Truman Show* (right)

was expressed in 1998 film *The Truman Show* and more recently, though rather less eloquently, in the blockbuster *Clash of the Titans*. In both cases, human characters unite to make a stand against gods who are portrayed as manipulative and meddling. Their selfishness stands in contrast to the heroism of the resistance, and by the end of both films we see men and women rise from the grip of the powers that would rule their lives.

Lives planned out

In the upcoming film *The Adjustment Bureau* adds a fantastical twist that provides a fascinating slant on this theme. Based on a short story by Philip K Dick, the film imagines a world where lives are planned out and stringently monitored by a team of sinister, sharp-suited men. Charismatic politician David Morris (Matt Damon) is on the brink of a dazzling career when he meets and falls for the dancer Elise (Emily Blunt). His heart causes him to stray from the path laid out for him by the Adjustment Bureau, and he faces a battle to gain control of his own fate. "If you believe in free will," proclaims the film's trailer, "if you believe in chance, if you believe in choice, fight for it."

"All I have are the choices I make," says David, so his fight against the Bureau for a life with Elise is a struggle to remain human. Our sense of identity is centred on the assumption that we can make real choices that shape our future and our present, complete with risks and consequences. No wonder people react with such distaste against the idea of a God who, like some kind of divine adjuster, impinges on our every move.

But this is far from the picture that the Bible paints, asking us to accept the incomprehensible paradox that, while God is completely sovereign over every detail of human history, He also gives us the dignity of freedom. We are simultaneously completely free and completely determined.

The men and women of the Bible are not automatons slavishly reading from a pre-ordained script, but people whose choices matter. God may work in all things to bring about His purposes, but this doesn't mean that we don't bear responsibility for our decisions – including the choice to accept or reject Him.

Reclaiming freedom

Conversely, a worldview that tries to push God out in order to reclaim freedom ends up doing the very opposite. And as the idea of genetic determinism gains a stronger hold on the public imagination, perhaps



Paramount

No wonder people react with such distaste against the idea of a God who impinges on our every move

it is the threat of being dictated to by our biology that now haunts our culture, more than the fear of a divine puppeteer.

To be nothing but molecules in a void, our actions merely the inevitable result of blind processes, is to be truly enslaved. The logical consequences of this kind of determinism – for morality, for sense of purpose – would be devastating. Far from releasing us to determine our own destinies, such a reality would reduce freedom to an empty delusion.

In the shadow of this worldview, *The Adjustment Bureau* and similar stories now issue their cry for free will, chance and choice. Perhaps cinemagoers this autumn will have cause to stop and question whether we really are able to make our futures "whatever we want to make them", and whether true freedom might amount to something far deeper than this.

► *The Adjustment Bureau* opens in cinemas on 10 September. Further discussions of Christian themes in pop culture can be found at: damaris.org



Sophie Lister writes for Culturewatch.org

Books

THE MILLENNIUM TRILOGY by Stieg Larsson (Quercus)

These best-sellers – *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*, *The Girl Who Played With Fire*, *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest* – are a cut above the average crime thriller. Sometimes uncomfortably graphic, always page-turningly tense, the unconventional heroine is abused and vengeful computer hacker Lisbeth Salander. She aids disgraced journalist Mikael Blomkvist as he attempts to solve the mystery of a young girl's disappearance, and

together they uncover a respectable family's gruesome secrets. Urging us to take notice of violence against women, a subject so often considered taboo, this is an unflinching journey into the dark corners of the human psyche. *SL*

THE ANATOMY OF PEACE

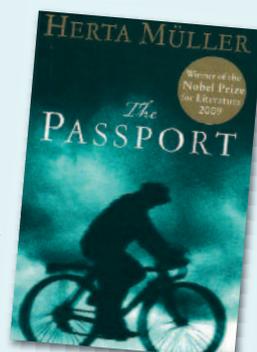
by the Arbing Institute (Penguin)

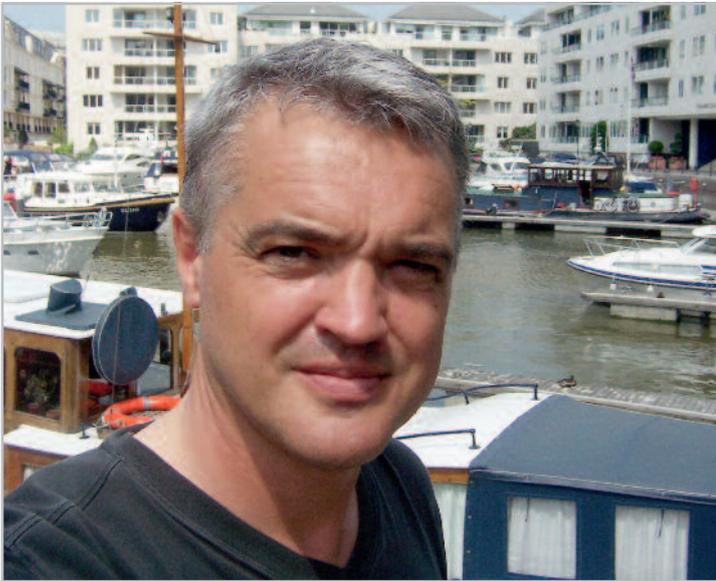
"Most conflicts are perpetuated by self-deception," claims the Arbing Institute, an international organisation that deals in conflict resolution. This is a fictional account of a group of troubled parents who must come to terms with this idea. Taking their problem children to the intriguingly named Camp Moriah, the parents are about to find out that the conflicts in their lives are not as simple or as one-sided as they thought. A fascinating examination of the deep-rooted causes behind wars and domestic disputes, this book crucially recognises that we must examine ourselves before blaming others. *SL*

THE PASSPORT

by Herta Müller (Serpent's Tail)

The 2009 Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to Müller, "who, with the concentration of poetry and the frankness of prose, depicts the language of the dispossessed". Her 90-page novel of clipped sentences and surreal imagery embodies the claustrophobic, wretched reality of the people it describes. It traces the meandering thoughts of an ethnic German, desperate to migrate from Ceausescu's Romania to West Germany. As he struggles to meet the demands of corrupt officials, he must decide how much he will sacrifice in pursuit of his utopia. Will the destination be tainted by the route he chooses? *HP*





still be a very beautiful place, even in the most difficult of times. Modern media can be that powerful.

How can the media help society become healthier?

Marginalised elements of society often find it hard to access or express views in the mainstream media. Broadly speaking there is a trade in sensationalism and death. A tragic killing gets a mass of column inches and airtime, whereas the celebration of a human life gets far less. A birthday of a 100-year-old citizen deserves as much, if not more attention, than the gleeful reporting of yet more doom and gloom. Coverage should always aim to be personal and real. Profiles of people should aim to help readers identify and feel a part of rather than apart from. Ten years of revised media attitudes could have a remarkably beneficial effect upon society.

Can entrepreneurship help?

During this period of time, with the economy as bad as it is, real entrepreneurs are vital to the world economy. This is reflected in the huge interest shown in programmes like *Dragon's Den* (pictured), *American Inventor*, *The Apprentice* and now *The Young Apprentice*. Entrepreneurs have an unshakable faith in the future; they have positive ideas and inspire others.

What do you invest in the next generation?

Training, time and experience. Interns from universities such as Oxford, London and Plymouth have all been integral to bringing in new talent and helping to keep our titles fresh and current. One lucky graduate even got a placement reporting at last May's Cannes Film Festival.

What is your most treasured possession?

My left hand. I nearly lost it following a gory incident some years ago. Fortunately, after a lot of surgery, the fingers were sewn back together and the mangled mitt was saved. They are all now present and just about correct. And appreciated that much more by me.

Making a positive impact

Christian media entrepreneur Duncan Williams is a director on the board of Independent News Ltd. Through buying up formerly loss-making regional newspapers and fast-tracking them into profit, he is working to improve communication within local communities. Williams likes creaky old films, travel, meeting new people and learning about cultures and belief systems. He has a lifelong passion for the sea and if possible would like to run his media empire from a boat – "just like a James Bond villain," jokes his family.

idea: What is the power of a good story?

Williams: A good story does as it says on the tin: it reports a truthful, inspiring message. Maybe it sheds a little light on some gloom or draws attention to somebody or something worthwhile. The story's power lies in the fact that through its reporting it seeks to encourage more of the same.

Do you have a dream for society?

Often whatever society fixates upon it tends to get more of. So by offering more positive media I genuinely believe we get a more positive society. When all the focus is placed relentlessly upon the negative, true vision, faith and hope all get eroded. A new pair of glasses can remind people that the world can



By offering more positive media I genuinely believe we get a more positive society

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

A pirate. Or a Time Lord.

MH

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the basics

In our series relating the Alliance's Practical Resolutions to the task of mission, *Marijke Hoek* looks at the final resolution...

We rejoice in the spread of the Gospel across the world and urge all Christians to commit themselves to this task, avoiding unnecessary competition and co-operating, wherever possible, in the completion of Christ's kingdom of peace, justice and holiness, to the glory of the one God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In 2005, I invited charity leaders who were helping the homeless in Manchester to lunch. It appeared that some of these faithful workers weren't aware of their colleagues, maybe due to the fact that they were out on different nights of the week or working in a different area. At the same time, our

audit of the Christian provision in the city found 11 pregnancy crisis counselling services, while very little was happening in terms of help for drug addicts. All in all, it was a pretty disjointed picture.

One year later, the Shaftesbury Society's *Challenging Church* report critiqued the Church for its culture of

individualism. Though the Church is the largest voluntary organisation, the report identified the lack of cooperation and strategic planning as a key reason why we are failing to make a radical, prophetic and sustainable impact in our communities. Some key consequences of duplication and competition are the inefficient use of resources, the lack of funds to respond to new opportunities or plan strategically, and the erosion of relationships with the wider community. Our disunity dishonours God.

And as the Government launches its "Big Society" initiative, more of us will need to be involved in voluntary work, so a joined-up agenda will be increasingly vital.

Is something wrong?

At a Forum for Change conference in 2006, Michael Hastings poignantly asked whether something is wrong with the way we have organised ourselves: "If you could do it all again... and you took your combined economic resources... would you really do it this way? If I gave you £100m and said, 'Go and shake the nation,' would you spend it this way?" Surely it is fitting to ask big questions that fit the big picture.

There is much to be celebrated as far as a joined-up way of working is concerned in cities, regions and on national and international levels. And yet it bugs me that an urban grassroots organisation cannot find £5,000 to employ someone for a day a week while several suburban churches have multimillion-pound building plans. It bothers me that we put many resources into political engagement while the investment in artistic expression is minimal. It irritates me that ownership has such a stranglehold on innovation and efficiency; unless our name is on it we refuse to be in it.

We need generous, self-effacing leadership. We follow a Lord who emptied Himself. In Philippians 2:5-11, Paul tells



Surely it is fitting to ask big questions that fit the big picture

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Transforming society has everything to do with right relationships

the story of Jesus, who made Himself nothing, taking the nature of a servant. He actively rejected status or reputation, dealt with its temptation and served without aiming for position, privilege or reputational capital. Being the firstborn of the new creation, His path of self-emptying inspires the character of our discipleship and mission.

Paul urges us not to act out of selfish ambition or personal vanity, but in humility to prefer others and look to their interests (2.3ff). We need to be honest about vested interests that hinder us at times to work together or prefer one another. These cause us to be competitive and non-cooperative.

Our influence is not determined by the size of our powerbase or market share, but by our intimacy with the Father and submission to His will and ways.

Seeking harmony

The nature of Jesus' authority is that He poured himself out for others. He is the living embodiment of the new kingdom, the vision of which is summarised by the concept of *shalom*: just and harmonious relationships with each other, our environment and God.

Our dysfunctional practices, be they fragmentation or competition, are incapable of establishing any effective ministry. Taking our cue from Him, the

sacrificial, self-effacing, compassionate investment of ourselves will be the most precious contribution we make.

Do we invest in a long-term view or are we focused on quick wins? Is it about the next project or the next generation? Jeremiah inspires the people to build, plant and invest in view of future generations (Jeremiah 29.4-14). The investment does not require an immediate return for it to be considered fruitful. Working together on a joint project next year is one thing. Knowing how the big picture shapes our current way of working is quite another.

The big picture is long-term and worldwide. It is about justice for the nations, a never-failing stream of righteousness. In *Walking With the Poor*, Bryant Meyers writes, "Poverty is the result of relationships that do not work, that are not just, that are not for life, that are not harmonious or enjoyable. Poverty is the absence of *shalom* in all its meaning. Hence, there is also a poverty in the non-poor."

Significantly, the efficient allocation of our resources flows from the quality of our relationships and character. Transforming society has everything to do with right relationships.

In the mission of building peace, justice and holiness, God has given various gifts that, when working harmoniously, represent Christ faithfully. So if we have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then let's make Christian joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love and being one in spirit and purpose.

► **The Practical Resolutions of the Evangelical Alliance can be found at: eauk.org/resolutions**



Marijke Hoek is the Alliance's Forum for Change co-ordinator

hot topics

The Alliance's Public Theology Research Assistant Phil Green helps us examine theological questions in our daily lives...

How do we share the Gospel with those who hold different beliefs?

Living in an increasingly multi-faith society is both an exciting and daunting prospect for evangelism. Add an obsession with political correctness and the multi-faith maze can seem like a multi-faith minefield. Then to make things even more complicated, it seems that the one thing our increasingly tolerant society can't tolerate is people who think that they're right and other people are wrong. Throw Jesus' words from John 14.6 into the mix and you have an explosion.

But we need to have a more nuanced understanding of our objective: it's not about convincing them that Christianity is the right religion, nor is it primarily about getting them to agree with us. Surely the goal is for people to have a life-transforming, eternity-changing encounter with Jesus.

If that's our destination, the journey should not be primarily about winning arguments but introducing people to Jesus. And that's not such a difficult place to start, as most of the world's faiths have a great respect for Him.

This common ground can help kick-start our conversation, although we need to do this with humility. Don't start with, "I've got Jesus, you need Jesus," but from the position that "we both need Jesus". Invite them to discover more about Jesus along with you, even if you're starting from different places.

This isn't an excuse for ignorance. It's important for us to know what we believe and why we believe it – and this should be a component of our conversations. Yes, we're involved in the process, but ultimately life-transforming, eternity-changing encounters are Jesus' business, not ours.

► **If you have a practical question about theology, send it to: idea@eauk.org**

TV/DVDs

DOCTOR WHO (BBC)

Those who thought that the beloved series would go into decline with the departure of star David Tennant and lead writer Russell T Davies were proved wrong this year. Matt Smith won hearts immediately with his endearingly ragged Doctor, while Karen Gillan and Arthur Darvill shone as headstrong Amy and her hesitant fiancé Rory. As usual, fast-paced adventure was given greater depth with themes of tolerance, bravery, love and self-sacrifice. Though he may sweep his companions away to adventures on far-flung planets, the Doctor always affirms the significance of ordinary human life. SL

FOUR LIONS (Optimum)

This notorious comedy definitely gets people talking. It starts out as the slapstick account of four hapless northerners who want to become Islamist terrorists. Even after their Afghanistan training trip goes spectacularly wrong, they carry on with their plan to detonate suicide bombs in London. Along the way, the script cleverly touches on important issues, making these men both flawed and tragically sympathetic. The reason it works so well is that filmmaker Chris Morris has grounded the whole movie in real life, reminding us that we shouldn't think of aspiring terrorists as enemies, but rather as flawed human beings. RC

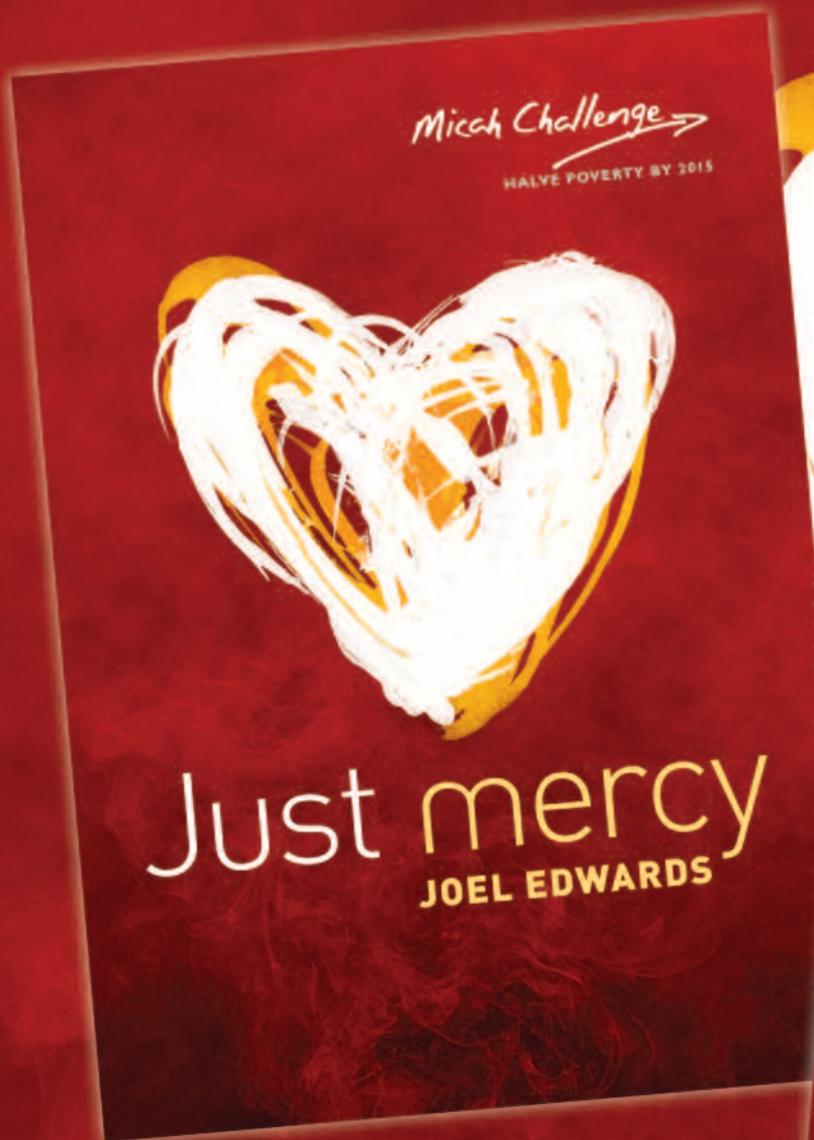
CDs

THE HOUSE by Katie Melua (Dramatico)

Her fourth album marks a shift in direction for easy-listening singer-songwriter Melua. She sheds her old-school writer-producer Mike Batt to work with William Orbit, the producer behind Madonna's resurgent album *Ray of Light*, and Guy Chambers, the lyricist who co-wrote Robbie Williams' first five solo albums. The album showcases promising new diversity and depth. The beguiling love song *Red Balloons* reveals the fallout of tying all one's hopes to relationships, while *The House* exposes our desire to conceal this vulnerability. Lead single *The Flood* begins playfully then develops into a powerful ballad on longing for freedom from blame. HP



Pray and act against global poverty



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(Micah 6:8)

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It's good to celebrate

With the arrival of a key milestone in the Christian faith, General Director *Steve Clifford* urges us to throw a party...

Just a week after England had been humiliated 4-1 by a young, inexperienced German team and had returned home from the World Cup, Ann and I travelled to Bonn to conduct the wedding of a German friend. The service went well, and my words of congratulations for their win (a solemn "well done") were much appreciated by the smiling German members of the congregation.

Following the marriage service came the reception, for which I was completely unprepared. The Germans have a passionate ability to celebrate a wedding, and on this occasion more than 200 guests had come from many parts of the world. There were speeches, PowerPoint presentations, music and dramas, surprise arrivals and lots of food and drink. We left exhilarated but totally exhausted well after midnight, with the cake yet to be cut and dancing just about to begin.

The Bible is full of celebrations, festivals, religious holidays and special meals with opportunities for storytelling and the enactment of dramas. The life and ministry of Jesus picks up this theme to the point that the religious leaders of the day accuse Him of excess and mixing with all the wrong kinds of people.

John's Gospel positions Jesus' very first public appearance and miracle in the context of a wedding party in Cana. If you recall, at terrible embarrassment to the hosts, the wine runs out, but Jesus well and truly rectifies the problem by supplying litres of best-quality wine (a response which has provided not a little embarrassment for some Bible teachers over the years). We can't get away from it: God seems to enjoy a party.

Saying thanks

After the wedding, I reflected on how rarely we have opportunity to look back and express our thanks. It happens in wedding speeches and at funerals and anniversaries. But why do we have to wait for a big event to come along? If you are like me, you look back over your life and you are profoundly thankful for all the people who have influenced who you are today.

One of the most moving parts of the German wedding was when the bride and groom's schoolteacher was introduced. Martina and Uwe had met over 30 years ago when they were both 12 years old. It took them three decades to get together, and both were profoundly thankful for their class teacher, so she was invited to the wedding. They took the opportunity in front of all their guests to say thank you.

I have a suggestion: we should be making contact with some of

these people who have influenced our lives. Send a note, card, phone call, email, text or even make a personal visit – the purpose is simple: to say thank you.

It might be a teacher, friend, colleague, neighbour, family member or someone in church who has had an indelible impact on us. Whoever it is, we are grateful for what they brought into our lives. They might not have been perfect (none of us are) but we want to celebrate by saying thank you.

Thankfulness is one of the fundamental attitudes we, as Christians, should cultivate in our lives. In Luke's Gospel there were 10 lepers who were healed, but only one went back and said "thank you" to Jesus (Luke 17.15-19).

Celebrating the Bible could be a way of saying "thank you" to God for the wonderful and profound gift of the Scripture, which has influenced so many lives. As Martina and Uwe said their generous thanks at their wedding, let us be generous with our thanks to those who have touched our lives and those who continue to do so, however big or small.

Celebrate the Word

So in 2011 we are going to be celebrating big time. Next year is the 400th anniversary of the King James Version of the Bible, a translation that has been printed and distributed in its millions and has shaped our culture in so many ways that it's impossible to list them all.

Biblefresh, as our year of celebration is called, isn't about getting us all back to reading the Authorised Version. Neither is it about trying to make us feel guilty for not reading the Scriptures enough. However, it is an excuse to celebrate with almost 100 organisations and thousands of churches

collaborating together to find fresh ways of engaging with the Bible, learning about it, supporting the translation of it and experiencing it afresh.

I love the strapline on the Biblefresh party invitation: "It could change your world". I do hope as many of us as possible will get involved as either individuals, a small group or as a whole church. My prayer is that wherever we turn next year we will find Biblefresh. Imagine conferences, Easter and summer festivals, Bible-reading notes, magazines, newspapers, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, radio and TV all celebrating the wonderful gift God has given us in the 66 books that make up our Bible. So now is the time to plan.

► **RSVP for the party and get the resource book, which is packed with ideas on how to maximise the opportunity, register online at: biblefresh.com**



Ann Clifford

We can't get away from it: God seems to enjoy a party

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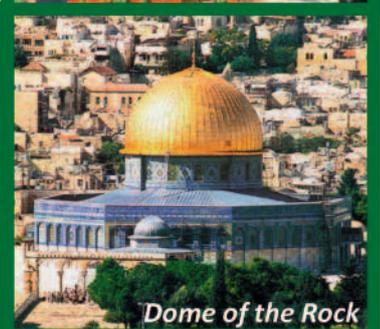
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