

# MOSAIC

MAY – AUGUST 2026

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## INTRODUCTION

**W**elcome to the latest MOSAIC. The Rural Ministries network is truly an inspiration. I've loved reading the stories and emails that fill the pages of this edition. There's a rich diversity in church expressions and a contextual uniqueness in how people are engaging with their local communities. We encourage you all to keep going in your endeavours, in your discernment, in joining in with God's work in our beautiful rural places. There's real creativity in mission here, in using what God has already put in your hands. Like Matt at the Pippins Community Centre in Axminster, using his love of music and playing the guitar not only for worship, but as a way of loving those in the margins of his community, to come alongside them in their journey through addiction.

However, there is one theme that I noticed running through most of these stories when reading them. This is the centrality and importance of prayer. All of the initiatives that are happening, and all the breakthroughs that people witnessed - from building projects and church multiplication, to opening church doors to host soup and warm spaces, to taking the relationships that are being cultivated and the trust that is built in wider communities - all this happens after first offering up our prayers. Oswald Chambers once said, 'Prayer does not fit us for the greater work, prayer IS the greater work.'

For every community, church, pioneer, and minister, prayer must underpin all we do. It's encouraging to read about the good folks at The Point in Hexham for example, as they cultivate a rhythm of prayer that is accessible for all in their community.

At Rural Ministries, we've long been advocates for the practice of missional listening, discerning the

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. - Philippians 4:6

activity and movements of God in a particular place, and then actively seeking to join him in the missional listening of restoration and renewal. Listening is equally as important as talking to God and presenting our requests. Jesus called himself the Good Shepherd, and we (the sheep) can expect to know his voice, to hear him, listen, and be willing to follow.

It has been said that prayer does not change God, it changes the nature of the one who prays. As we clasp our hands in prayer, perhaps we can also be aware of this. Perhaps the most important thing to God is who we are becoming in the process. Cultivating a life of prayer is the first step in becoming like Jesus, the one who often left his companions to be with his Father, who made time for his own soul as well as the lives of his friends and those he came to serve; who cried out to God to be glorified through him; and who, before he went to the cross, fell to his knees in prayer, heart bleeding as he gave up his will.

This is the one in whom we commune through the powerful, mystical act of prayer; this is how we are transformed, and how we begin the most magnificent undertaking of transforming our towns and villages and serving the lives of those who reside there.

May you truly know him through your own life of prayer.....and I hope you like this edition of MOSAIC.

*Jon*

**Jon Timms**  
Joint CEO, Rural Ministries

## Broadgrace, Norfolk

Since we multiplied from one church to two, there has been a huge amount to do over the past few months. As elders, we have spent time with members of our church family as people try to discern which church to be part of. We have worked on how we stay in close partnership once we are two churches. There has been a need to work through our theology of church to a degree.

Then we have had meetings in Buxton (the Norfolk one! We are not attempting to plant in the Peak District) with folk from the village hall where we will be meeting, Lord willing, and others in the community. So much of all this has been encouraging and exciting. We sense that the Lord is leading us into good works that He has prepared in advance for us. But it is too much.

And we haven't even got to the most important and humanly impossible work yet - that of saving people from their sins to the life and love of Jesus. That is a work only the Holy Spirit can do as we seek to hold out the word of life.

We are very aware that we cannot do any of this. It is too much, but not for our Lord. So please pray that we would pray. We desperately need to depend on our Father who can do more than we can ask or imagine. The theme of our Big Day Out this year, on 4th July, is prayer. Please ask our Father for it to change us and make us happier as His dependent children than we could ever be by ourselves.



## Fenlands Tydd Gote, Cambridgeshire

January was a time of rest for the community. Each January, we have the principle of the community resting, after the busyness of December. During that time there is the freedom to fellowship and enjoy time with others that may not be possible in busy periods of fellowship life. The rest ended with a wonderful day of prayer to seek the Lord and His plans and grace for the future. The result was a great encouragement from the Lord that He has equipped the saints for every area of service. The community were also inspired to develop more ways and means of reaching out to spread the Gospel, especially through our churches in the home. This greater awareness of a very dark and needy world that needs the light of the Christ Jesus has become abiding theme for the rest of the year. There was also a strong emphasis that Christian communities, including our own, must work to maintain the unity of the brethren. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Psalm 133:1.

In February, we ran a four week course on Christians and money management. We also put on a Gospel Supper alongside Easter activities that involved adults, youth and children. It is an exciting time with expectation of seeing God at work amongst us and in our wider community.

## Derbyshire Rural Chaplaincy

Shortly after the beginning of the new year, Derbyshire Rural Chaplaincy (DRC) welcomed Rev Phil Michell to the role of lead chaplain. This came about following the departure in October last year of our former lead chaplain, Rev Alan Griggs, who, after ten years of service to DRC, decided it was time for a change. We would like to thank Alan who has done so much for the chaplaincy over the years and wish him the very best in his return to parish ministry.

Phil, who is ordained in the Church of England, originally hails from the south west where his paternal grandfather was a farmer in Cornwall, as were countless generations before him. More recently, Phil was the vicar of a group of five rural churches not far from Ashbourne in Derbyshire, which allowed him to gain a greater understanding of the joys and challenges of rural and farming life.

Phil's very much aware that it will take time to build relationships and trust within the farming community of Derbyshire but he is keen to get stuck in and has already been getting to know farmers whilst helping out at the same time with milking!

Can we please ask for your prayers for the summer season in the farming calendar as we have the incredible experience and privilege of working with the young animals born in spring.



## Cromhall Chapel, Gloucestershire

At the end of January, eighteen women from the church attended our fourth annual Women's Retreat in Sidmouth. It was a very blessed time with deep sharing together. We studied the life of Joseph and saw him as a type of Jesus in so many ways. Our Bible studies were held at Emmanuel Baptist Church as usual and our thanks go to their pastor, Bes, for the use of their lovely warm and welcoming space. We stayed at the Premier Inn in nearby Seaton and enjoyed having meals together and being able to get to know each other better. On the Friday afternoon, we had free time and most of us enjoyed

a very windy walk along the sea front seeing the power of the waves which were crashing over the road!

At the end of last year, the chapel ran a Christianity Explored course attended by several ladies. One of these is now attending church and Bible study each week. These sessions always started with a meal and again, the times of eating together and getting to know one another made it a very rich time. All of us involved have moved forward in our walk of faith.



# Rural Mission Hubs

Rural Mission Hubs aim to support and encourage pioneers, practitioners, and permission givers, as well as those looking to explore pioneering rural ministry and mission. They are an opportunity to share stories and encouragements, pray together, explore ideas, and listen to God together. It is a gathering of like-minded explorers with an open door to anyone seeking a safe place to be, and as such, invites you to join us on the journey.

## Future Rural Mission Hub dates:

**14<sup>th</sup> May: North East & Borders Rural Mission Hub**  
St Cuthbert's Centre, Holy Island, Northumbria

**21<sup>st</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup> May: (Residential)**

**East Midlands Rural Mission Hub:**  
Launde Abbey, Leicestershire

**9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> June: (Residential)**

**Northern England Rural Mission Hub**  
Scargill House, Nr Skipton, North Yorkshire

**18<sup>th</sup> June: East Anglia Rural Mission Hub**  
Clare Priory, Clare, Suffolk

**19<sup>th</sup> June: Thames Valley Rural Mission Hub**  
St Mary's Convent, Wantage, Oxfordshire

**24<sup>th</sup> June: East Devon Rural Mission Hub**  
Pippins Community Centre, Axminster, Devon



For the latest details  
on all Rural Mission Hubs go to  
[www.ruralministries.org.uk/rural-mission-hubs](http://www.ruralministries.org.uk/rural-mission-hubs)

## NETWORK NEWS

### Life Centre (Wychwood Baptist), Oxfordshire

Jesus said: 'I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.' (John 10:10)

#### Food Glorious Food

Lots of what we do involves food, whether that's our regular Larder (foodbank) supporting those struggling with the cost of living, our weekly café, or monthly 'Puddings & Praise' event held at the local extra care housing complex. Through these, we seek to develop relationships and share the gospel. Over the last year, food has played an even bigger part in our café, through quarterly lunches. These have proved very popular and bring in a good many people to a ministry where, for various reasons, numbers have gone down. As the frequency is increasing to every two months this year, please pray for relationships to deepen, and for more opportunities to point people to Jesus.

#### Developing Ministries

As well as our café, we're seeking to develop and introduce other ventures too. A recent 'Pancake Party' (more food) and 'Easter Unwrapped' provided more events for our less frequent primary age children's ministry. An additional youth 'study' group (school year 10+) is also about to start. We're also currently considering a new men's ministry. Please pray for the planning of these, and for the Holy Spirit to be at work through them.

#### Administration and Finance

By the time you read this, we should have a new Administrator (starting in April). Please give thanks for this much-needed support to our ministry. Please also continue to pray for wisdom and guidance as we seek ways and means to financially support our work.

Please pray that all we do may bring glory to God.

### Millom Baptist Church, Cumbria

As spring gives way to summer, Millom Baptist Church has concluded another season of warm spaces, soup and good company. The building has been buzzing, the soup has been tasty and warming, and relationships have flourished. Please pray that we can build on these connections and conversations, as our Mondays revert to a shorter coffee morning. Sometimes these more 'social' times can seem detached from the rest of church life, yet we know there is value in the welcome and the encouragement we offer. We are always grateful to have a busy building with community events, a choir and a dancing school using our premises, and rejoiced with one of the local schools at their carol service which took place in our building. The next big project will be the construction of an internal porch, in the church itself, which is due to begin any time soon. This should keep us warmer, which is exciting! We continue to seek the Lord's leading as we follow our faithful God.



# Three Tips for Missional Discernment

by Jo Allen

I have read many books on the subject of discerning the Spirit, and, like you, I am continually trying to listen and respond to God in the midst of ordinary life and ministry. There are countless discernment tools available. What follows are three that I, and others in the RM network, have found especially helpful. They are practices that help us pay attention to the Spirit's guidance.

## 1. Scripture

A church community noticed that several local families were struggling with food costs. They had seen community groceries thrive in urban areas and began to wonder whether something similar might work in their village. As they prayed and talked it through, some worried it would stretch them too far. Yet someone gently reminded the group that Scripture repeatedly calls God's people to feed the hungry and practise generosity. That did not settle every practical question, but it framed the conversation differently. Someone was able to take the lead and with help from others in the village, the community grocery was set up.

What is evident is that knowing our Bibles helps us to understand God's character and how we can respond with God's love in our communities. I see the Bible as a way to draw

close to Jesus, and to discover more of God's heart for us and the world. It's about intimacy, and from this place of intimacy we can learn to recognise the voice of God.

We also need humility as we all read the Bible through our own lenses. Inviting voices from the wider church, both locally and globally, is a good way to keep our interpretation and discernment balanced

Some useful questions might be:

- What does Scripture reveal about the situation I am facing?
- How does Jesus respond to similar needs?
- What assumptions am I bringing?
- What would someone from a different background or context have to say?

## 2. Consolation and desolation

In one location I would feel something like a breath of fresh air. There was a sense of peace and quiet joy settling in me. In another location, my heart would grow heavy and my thoughts would begin to spiral. The contrast was consistent. I brought this to God, asking if this was spiritual attack that I needed to pray into or if God was saying something else. Over time, the same pattern repeated itself each time I approached either place. For me, this became part of the discernment process. It was not that one place was good and the other bad, but that in that particular season the Spirit seemed to be drawing me more deeply into one context than the other. Paying attention to consolation and desolation helped me recognise where I sensed life and where I needed to spend my time for that season. Discernment here was less about dramatic revelation and more about faithfully noticing the emotions that accompanied different callings.

Even with Scripture shaping us, decisions are not always straightforward. Sometimes one path clearly aligns with God's purposes, more often, however, the boundaries are blurred.

Here the Ignatian language of consolation and desolation can be immensely helpful. Consolation describes the deep sense of peace, aliveness or settled joy that arises as we sit with a decision. Desolation describes the heaviness, unrest or quiet draining of hope that can accompany another.

This is not about chasing comfort, as we are sometimes called to demanding or costly places. Yet even in difficulty, when we are truly called, there is often a steady sense that God is present with us. That quiet assurance is consolation. When we persist somewhere we are not called to remain, desolation tends to deepen over time.

Paying attention to where we experience life is often revealing. Try asking these questions:

- Where does something within me come alive?
- When do I feel unsettled and not at peace?
- Is this a challenging situation in which I can still sense God, or am I being called in another unwelcome direction?

### 3. Prophecy and revelation

While praying for missional direction at Launde Abbey, I paused before an artwork of a walled garden. I sensed a quiet nudge: look after the garden. As I prayed further, the image unfolded. Different areas of ministry were like plants. At different times, different parts required care. The call was to nurture the church itself so that it could flourish in discipleship and mission.

The Spirit still speaks, sometimes through scripture, through circumstance and sometimes through a friend's comment or a moment in nature, through dreams and visions. In many communities I have encountered, prophetic insight forms a significant strand of the discernment journey. The question is not simply whether God speaks, but how do we discern what we hear?

Prophetic words are rarely meant to stand alone. An individual may receive a sense or image, but it is often confirmed, clarified or gently corrected within the wider church. Mature discernment involves submitting revelation to community. The church listens together, tests together, and seeks the Spirit's guidance together. Creating cultures where this is possible is part of our missional responsibility.

It is also important to hold these experiences in conversation with Scripture and to attend to our own emotions as we receive them.

Asking questions like:

- Do they resonate with the character of God revealed in Christ?
- Do they lead towards life, marked by consolation, or towards unrest and desolation?
- Am I open enough for God to surprise me?
- Am I humble enough to let others help interpret what I think I have heard?

**Scripture shapes our understanding of who God is, consolation and desolation help us notice how the Spirit may be moving within us and prophetic insight reminds us that God is not silent and may interrupt our carefully laid plans.**

**These practices slow us down and draw us into deeper intimacy with Christ and deeper dependence on one another. Alongside other discernment tools, these practices can help to guard us from launching projects of our own invention and help us join in with what God is already doing. Let's keep discerning together.**

### Taw Valley Community Church, Devon

Our church is in a very rural and scattered community in North Devon. Places for people to gather are in short supply and there are pockets of hidden poverty, isolation and loneliness. We have two congregations of around eighteen people who meet at 11 am and 4 pm on Sundays. On the third Sunday of the month, we meet for lunch and to open the Bible together. The 11 am service is traditional, the 4 pm one loosely structured around worship and discussion with children running around. The new community gathering can sometimes feel a bit chaotic, but also welcoming and informal. We are building a missional community, constructing relational bridges with a handful of people and scarce resources. One of the challenges of doing church in our rural context is finding the people! Many of them live in tiny, relatively inaccessible hamlets or down narrow tracks.

When I came into the role of pastor last year, I didn't want simply to establish a congregation and grow it, but to look at doing church differently, gathering new people to sit alongside the original congregation. That sat well with me. We built a new website which points people to the church and started doing monthly outdoor church with another congregation in a neighbouring village.



We feel that God is calling us to be lights in the valley, beacons being lit across the rural landscape going from field to field. A new way of doing church, being built on loving, connected communities, not all about platforms and preachers speaking to spectators. There is a lot of talk about cities and the urban church, but we rarely hear about fields and villages where so many of us find ourselves. We want to be a worshipping community centred on Jesus. Your prayers for us as we build a missional place of faith are appreciated.

## Community Church Forest and Wye, Gloucestershire

The last six months have been a whirlwind for us as we have completed our purchase and moved the church location to an old snooker hall and sports bar in Cinderford. This property is six times the size of our previous one and gives us so many more options for connecting with the community around us. We have now embarked upon a journey of refurbishing this tired old building and transforming it into a modern church and community hub.

A significant number of volunteer hours have been dedicated to painting, clearing, cleaning, and preparing the building for operational use. We still have a major undertaking ahead of us to fully refurbish the building costing hundreds of thousands of pounds, but we are now able to use it every day of the week. We are hosting a whole range of community events from archery and line dancing to Foodbank, as well as a full church programme of activities.

The really exciting part of this project has been to see how our visibility in the community has grown. As a result, our Sunday attendance has increased encouragingly along with our children, youth and toddler groups. This week we have been able to start our fourth Christianity Explored course in the last couple of months as new people, who in some cases have never been to a church before, have joined us to learn about the Christian faith and Bible.



On Sunday 22nd March we had a special evening to celebrate twenty years since the church was launched. Our wonderful new building was full of guests who came to see our speaker, Rob Scott-Cook from Woodlands Church, Bristol and to marvel at our beautiful new space.

## Pinchbeck Baptist Church, Lincolnshire

*'Be strong and courageous and do the work. Do not be afraid'*

In an uncertain world, with an ageing congregation, we here at Pinchbeck Baptist Church have been surprised that God is prompting us to reorganise and extend our current building. We had prayed for growth, and rather than an increase in numbers in the way we would like, growing the building has been highlighted as an essential stage of the journey. Last year we were guided to look at Nehemiah, which led to recognising our building was not 'fit for purpose.'

Just as a sinner is cleansed in repentance and the renewing of the mind, we then presented our building to God. The very heart of the premises needs reorganising to aid a better flow and keep the life blood of our Lord Jesus flowing into our community activities. This means moving toilets and the kitchen, creating a corridor and storage, before adding a suitable area for smaller meetings etc. We are replacing the tired floor in the sanctuary area and creating a private church office space - the existing office is currently also used as a walkway from the church to the hall. It is a bold step forward, but we do it in faith and the assurance that God is faithful if we follow His leading.

## Parkview Chapel, Botesdale, Suffolk

On more than one occasion in Scripture, God tells his people not to be afraid or discouraged, but to be strong and courageous. To keep on going because He, the Lord, is with us. As a pastor, I can sometimes look at certain elements of church and worry. However we must focus on the positive because we keep on trying, keep on going, and God has blessed us so.

In recent weeks we have had a new couple and a new family join the church. We are so thankful for that, because half a dozen new folks have made such a difference. We are also encouraged for more reasons than new people coming along. In February, we had a baptism service for an elderly lady called Sheila who joined our church about four years ago. It was a wonderful time. Not least because Sheila had invited lots of family and friends, many of which are not

Christians. What a great opportunity it was to tell them about Jesus. We are praying for fruit from that.

Also, for our annual Quiz Night, we were absolutely packed. Over one hundred people, many of whom were members of our community who do not know Jesus, came for what was a wonderful opportunity to build relationships and have a great time together.

We are so encouraged. The Lord is with us, and with His help, we will keep on doing what he has called us to do.

*'To love God, love people, and make disciples.'*



An invitation to gather, for those who encourage others to encounter God outdoors in creation

## Faith in Nature

LEARNING COMMUNITIES



In partnership with Rural Ministries

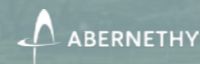
14-17 SEPTEMBER

Youth Workers Outdoors: meeting God outdoors and how we enable young people to do the same

6-9 NOVEMBER

Faith in Nature: Outdoor Church Learning Community

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# Summer Book Review

## The Greatest Story Ever Told

By Bear Grylls

Reviewed by Ruth Leigh

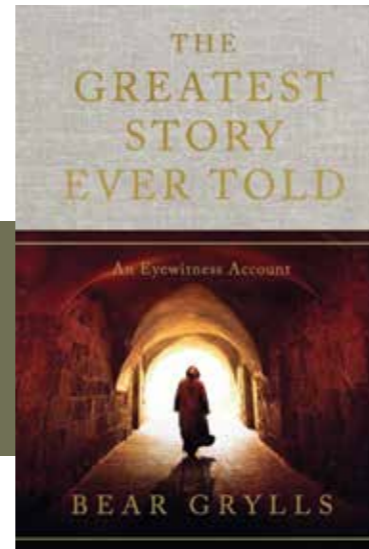


Bear Grylls

Bear Grylls, adventurer, soldier, youngest ever Chief Scout and the main Ambassador for the Alpha Course in 2017, has published a new book of five eyewitness accounts of the story told in the Gospels. It's a fresh and engaging take and he's clearly done his research. The introduction parachutes the reader on to the dusty road where two dispirited followers of Jesus are trudging along three days after his crucifixion. Then we go back in time to Nazareth, thirty-three years earlier, where a young girl betrothed to a local carpenter is having an angelic encounter.

The story of Jesus' conception, birth and ministry is so familiar that it's difficult to find a new way to recount it. The author has succeeded, using a mix of Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew spellings, so that Mary is Myriam, Joseph is Yosef, Bethlehem is Beit Lechem and so forth. It gives the story an immediacy, an authentic sense of place which draws the reader in. Nazareth (Nazaret) is described as a small village in the wild hill country of Galilee, populated by around five

It's a fresh and engaging take and he's clearly done his research.



hundred subsistence farmers and construction workers. We all know places like this, and they are not generally sympathetic to teenage girls who find themselves pregnant out of wedlock.

Myriam's courage and faith shine through.

'I'm bursting with good news!  
I'm the most fortunate woman on earth ...'

As she ages, has more children and is widowed, her narrative is that of a loving mother always waiting for that prophesied sword to pierce her heart.

The second eyewitness is Ta'om, a guest at the wedding at Cana, a cool-headed observer.

'I don't do spontaneous. I like well thought-out plans that have solid foundations.'

This doubting man becomes one of the disciples. Still a cynic, he follows Yeshua and gradually begins to see something different about him. I loved the way he was written - we

all know a Ta'om. When he meets a woman at a Samaritan well, he comes over all judgy. She is: 'rough and on the make.' But two days spent with the villagers changes his mind. Inbuilt prejudice can be reversed. It's a timely message for our society.

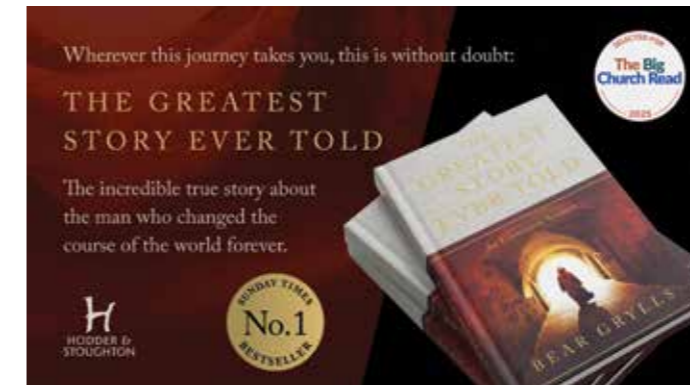
Ta'om's recollection of the times spent with the Twelve and Yeshua are extremely moving, all the more so because we know this will end in cruel death.

'The crowds wouldn't always be so full of love, and the teachers of the law wouldn't be silenced so easily.'

The stories continue with Shimon (Simon Peter), Yohanah (John) and Myriam of Magdala. Jesus is seen through the eyes of his mother, Galilean fishermen who become the fathers of the early church and a faithful female follower who goes to watch and mourn by the tomb when none of the other disciples will.

This is that rare thing, a book which can be given to friends and family who don't have a faith. The chapters are short, narrated in easy-to-read colloquial language. The narrative voices are distinct and engaging. Regular readers will remember that in the last edition of MOSAIC, we reported on Mount Zion Church in Cliviger who have started a book club to discuss it. This is the perfect medium to share such a well-written, powerful and engaging series of eyewitness accounts of the greatest story ever told.

If your church decides to do the same, please let us know. And enjoy the read. I certainly did.



[www.ruralministries.org.uk](http://www.ruralministries.org.uk)



### 30 minutes to connect and pray with others in rural ministry

Monthly: 1st Tuesday  
10am

Diary Dates:

- 5<sup>th</sup> May
- 2<sup>nd</sup> June
- 7<sup>th</sup> July
- 4<sup>th</sup> August



Scan to join, or go to the link on the home page of our website.

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## NETWORK SPOTLIGHT

Our inspiring feature shines a light on selected missional partners in each edition.

### Sally Gaze, Archdeacon for Rural Mission, Lightwave Community

The Archdeacon for Rural Mission, Sally Gaze, said an emotional farewell at a special service in January celebrating Plough Sunday at St Edmundsbury Cathedral in Suffolk. She spearheaded the “Growing in God in the Countryside” project, which was initiated by Rural Ministries.

The project set up the Lightwave Community which facilitates creative initiatives with the aim of helping people find faith in God and meeting the needs of rural communities. Initiatives include pop-up cafés, food banks, walking groups, choirs, cooking clubs, and pub meetings.



It has particularly drawn children and young people into faith. In her final service at the cathedral in Bury St Edmunds, Sally interviewed the agricultural chaplain Graham Miles who has been supporting farmers in a difficult year. She also spoke with people who had been impacted by the project, including a man whose faith had helped him tackle alcohol addiction and a woman she met as a teenager, whom she later baptised.

The Archdeacon for Rural Mission, Sally Gaze, said an emotional farewell at a special service in January celebrating Plough Sunday at St Edmundsbury Cathedral in Suffolk.

Sally said: ‘Plough Sunday is about praying for the agricultural community. It also reminds us that God prepares the soil of our lives for a seed of the gospel, so hearing people’s stories was lovely as well as very emotional.’

## NETWORK SPOTLIGHT

It was great to be reminded that the ministry started by the project continues to make such a big, practical difference to people’s lives. Meeting people in person and hearing their stories really brings it home.’

In the 2024 count, 657 new people had regularly joined a Christian community in a rural area because of the project’s work, often through the Lightwave Community.

The Lightwave Community is made up of small groups throughout the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich and is among the factors that led to nationally reported increases in church attendance across the county last year. In September, 170 ministers from all denominations descended on St Edmundsbury Cathedral for

“LoveRural” a conference sharing national learning about rural mission including from the “Growing in God in the Countryside Project”.

Since being ordained in 1995, Sally has spent most of her ministry in rural areas.

‘It has been a great privilege to serve God in the countryside,’ she said. ‘The best thing for me has been seeing and hearing how many people’s lives and circumstances have been transformed through prayer as they discover faith for the first time.’



‘It has been a great privilege to serve God in the countryside’





## Mount Zion Church, Cliviger, Lancashire

One of Mount Zion's outreach community activities is "Lego Café" on regular Saturday afternoons, attracting dozens of children and adults who love sitting around tables with boxes of mixed Lego bricks seeing what they can create. 'It is a really successful way of getting all ages into the church,' said Kathy Rhodes who runs the sessions with a group of helpers.

LEGO founder Ole Kirk Christiansen was a devout Christian, praying daily with his workers. He taught Sunday school, and was active with the YMCA and YWCA. He and his family also funded the building of a church.

Today's Lego empire is still family owned. Like many organisations that began with a more public religious fervour, the current company hasn't retained its original Christian vision.

Kathy said: 'It is a shame that the company doesn't produce religious items but we find people are very creative and often there will be a model of a church or something associated with faith. We love seeing families and groups in the church and the regular attenders of our group thoroughly enjoy the time together.'

Every child who attends Lego Café, Little Stars mid-week meeting, and Sunday Club was given a copy of "The Easter Story" produced by The Good Book Company which used the Christian company Go Chatter to produce pictures created in Lego and QR code references to bring up video pictures in Lego.

## The Point in Hexham, Northumberland

Here at The Point in Hexham, we have started a half hour online WhatsApp prayer meeting on Monday mornings.

People are invited to the prayer group on WhatsApp where they can share prayers, thoughts and readings - we usually begin with the Psalm of the day.

The rules are similar to an in-person prayer group: respect confidentiality, keep to the subject, and don't give unnecessary detail. Just like a regular prayer meeting, people can be active and bring their praise, thanksgiving and requests, or they can be passive and pray quietly for what others bring. The messages disappear after seven days, but anyone can add urgent prayers at any time during the week, and members will be notified immediately.

This has been a useful addition to our prayer lives. People can pray at home, on the bus, at the office - wherever they happen to find themselves at 8 o'clock on a Monday morning, or if they have other responsibilities at that time, they can join in later.

All people need to take part is a laptop or a smartphone with WhatsApp installed, and to have been invited to the group. WhatsApp is free, but is only available to those over eighteen. We are interested to see where this new initiative will lead us.

[www.ruralministries.org.uk](http://www.ruralministries.org.uk)



## Passionate about Rural Mission? **loverural**

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# Across Britain in Prayer



**The American evangelist DL Moody once said, “Those who have left the deepest impression on this sin-cursed earth have been men and women of prayer.”**

As Jon pointed out in the introduction, prayer must underpin all our endeavours as we seek to build the Kingdom. Whether that prayer is silent, spoken out loud, private or corporate, it has great power as we come before Jesus intentionally and listen out for His voice. When we declare and truly believe that God is in charge, dedicate our land to Him and call upon the Spirit, mountains can move.

One organisation that really puts this into practice is Across Britain. They co-ordinate and encourage, connecting faithful men and women of prayer to cover Britain with walks across boundaries and divides. They say: “Whoever you are, wherever you live, it’s time to get up and declare this land is God’s land – ask your church and the church next door to join in, ask your neighbours, friends – and let’s ask for God’s blessing right across Britain.”

Tim Hall is the vicar of Highcross and Thundridge in rural Hertfordshire and a big fan of both praying and walking.

‘It’s a vital part of missional community work. Often, we drive to our church and worship there, then drive back home again, forgetting that where we live is just as important as where we worship and that God is in both places. Getting out of the house and prayer walking your area helps to build relational bridges.’

Prayer walking requires the minimum of equipment (a hi-vis, stout shoes and a waterproof coat cover most bases) and is the perfect way to partner with God in active intercession. Blending physical presence with spiritual engagement, it is an accessible way to build relationships with your community and call on the Lord’s spiritual authority.

‘We often walk through a village, waiting on God, and He will put someone in our path. One day, my prayer partner and I drove past a village pub and felt called to go in. Lunch wasn’t available as there was

a wake going on, but we struck up conversation with the barman and asked him what he believed. He said, “I’m an atheist now,” and we asked why. It turned out that several tragic things had happened in his life, he had asked why and no one could tell him. So he decided that the solution was to become an atheist. We spoke to him about relationships and Jesus, and how it’s not about answers but about trust and a real relationship. It was a great conversation that led back to the Bible. We prayed with him and said goodbye, feeling confident that God



**Tim has had some remarkable experiences when out prayer walking.**

led us into that conversation and that we could leave it with Him.’

Tim sometimes goes out prayer walking with others, sometimes alone.

‘You see things completely differently when you walk than when you drive. I know our village well, and yet when I went out to prayer walk on foot, I saw a whole group of houses down a narrow driveway that I didn’t know were there. God drew my attention to a noticeboard half-hidden in the hedge advertising a spiritualists’ meeting at the village hall. I thought, “That’s interesting.” I took it back to the congregation and we talked and prayed about it, because it was important how we worked out how to engage with their presence in our village. All of that came out of prayer walking and seeing things in a new way.’

There is a real need for prayer walking in rural areas. As transport links dwindle, pubs and shops shut and communities’ needs increase, God’s incredible power and strength is more vital than ever before. Tim is encouraging about making a start.

‘You can’t really get prayer walking wrong. It’s so simple. All you’re doing is going out for a walk and asking God to bless the area. Anyone can do that. Sometimes people feel nervous about talking to strangers and being

lost for words. If you have taken the time to go out and bless an area, that’s good news and anyone you meet will be delighted to hear it. Try saying something like, “I’m from the local church and I’m asking God to bless the area. Can I ask Him to bless you?” Don’t think about it too much – just do it. If you go out in pairs, one of you can talk while the other prays. Remember that God is in charge.’

For anyone who has limited mobility, a prayer walk down the street and back again can have a remarkable outcome. Listening for what the Holy Spirit wants to reveal and praying spontaneously is kingdom building activity. Whether someone is walking alone or with others, prayer walking is a way to saturate one’s community with God’s love and to align one’s heart with His purposes for the place you live.



**There is a real need for prayer walking in rural areas. As transport links dwindle, pubs and shops shut and communities’ needs increase.**

**Across Britain have an interactive map on their website. Simply visit: [across-britain.org.uk](http://across-britain.org.uk) and log your prayer walk on the map to see how much of the country is being covered with this kind of missional prayer.**



# Changing Church, Changing Context



Moving across the country and from an urban into a rural setting took some getting used to for the Halls.

**Eighty-six year old David Hall has enjoyed a successful career as a journalist, writing for newspapers in the Midlands and South London, serving five years as the Features Editor on the Baptist Times and another five as the Press Officer at The Bible Society, during which time the Good News Bible was launched. David's wife, Janet, worked in the Home Mission department at the Baptist Union HQ in Didcot. Twenty-two years ago, they moved from Oxfordshire to Cliviger in rural Lancashire to be nearer family as retirement got closer. They decided to give their local church a try and have been members of Mount Zion Independent Methodist Church ever since.**

Moving across the country and from an urban into a rural setting took some getting used to for the Halls.

'They did not need a minister and so we had a different speaker every week, but the warm welcome we received made up

for all that. It was our first time in a rural church, and as former Baptists, we were delighted when the church eventually became affiliated with the Baptist Union. Their connection with Rural Ministries was our first introduction to them and we are keen readers of MOSAIC magazine and so happy to be part of the network.

Over a long life and career as the son and grandson of Methodist lay preachers, I was converted in an Elim Pentecostal church, had an audience with one Pope, shook hands with another, went to Bible College in London and pastored a small South London church. Janet and I now find ourselves as former Baptists in an independent Methodist church in the countryside and we couldn't be happier here.'

Mount Zion has a congregation of around fifty and is certainly punching above its weight, with God's help. The Sunday school is vibrant, there is a weekly toddler group, Monday Club, occasional Lego Café and the Musical

Memories meeting for dementia sufferers and those who care for them. The traditional instrument of sunny Hawaii, the ukulele, has been enthusiastically adopted by Mount Zion, and their ukulele group performs all around the district. The church has a small congregation, but its big heart and inspired missional relationships are really spreading the good news around the area.

'I spent seven years as the Press Officer for the Christian Resources Exhibition and one of the particular joys of that job was building a super relationship with Rural Ministries as I watched how busy their stand always was. It's been great to carry that on up at Mount Zion.'

David "retired" from his role at CRE this year when it changed hands. Those quotation marks are there for a reason. As followers of Jesus, we never really retire from working to further the kingdom, and in rural Lancashire, the Halls and their caring, outgoing fellowship are doing just that.



## NETWORK NEWS

### Pippins Community Centre, Devon



One of the volunteers at Pippins, Matt, started a weekly music recovery project in September, supporting the local drug and alcohol recovery service. He's passionate about community work and pioneer mission. For the last two and a half years, he's been bringing his guitar along to sessions and playing it in the background. At once, it was noticeable how the music helped to foster a sense of homeliness. As time went by, Matt realised that music had a role in supporting mental health.

The project has evolved, with clients building their confidence through playing together, whether that looks like suggesting a song, tapping on a drum, learning a few basic chords or singing along. 'So many clients say, "I've always wanted to learn guitar or piano," explains Matt. 'The vision is that there will be space created in order for them to do that, as it will have an enormously positive effect on their recovery journey and their mental health. One of the most beautiful things that has come out of this is the performing music collective which we call The Hubcaps. We've put on a couple of music and food nights at Pippins, and have also taken part in a local busking festival and a number of events and gigs in the community.'

This has had a huge effect in breaking down the stigma around addiction, and people in the local community are getting to know Pippins clients for their incredible musical talents rather than via the addictions which used to define them.

Matt grew up thinking that the place to best use his musical skills as a Christian was in the Sunday morning worship band, but his eyes have been opened to the deeply transformational ways God uses music within the community to bring restoration. Watch this space!

# Thinking About Theology

Here at MOSAIC, we thought what's the point of having a CEO doing a doctorate if she cannot encourage the RM network with it?

So, here's a little something different for this issue. We will take a look at a theological topic and explore current thinking alongside our everyday reality. It's impossible to cover everything, but opening a door on to current theological conversations encourages us all to ask deep questions and keep on exploring. Sources quoted will be varied, but a citation does not mean that everything the person quoted has said is endorsed by us. It's over to Jo Allen.

## The Quiet Revival: what's really going on?

The Quiet Revival is a report conducted by the Bible Society, conducted by a team of researchers (McAleer and Barward-Symmons, 2025). In summary, the report suggests there has been an increase in the number of 18 to 44 year olds and 65+ attending church between 2018 and 2024, with the largest increase amongst 18-24 year olds. I recognise that much of the data comes from urban contexts, but I have heard stories from our rural communities, and young people turning to Jesus is encouraging to us all. Two main discussions have emerged: first, the validity of the data in relation to other church attendance statistics; and second, the possible reasons for this reported increase.

## The data question

The Bible Society worked with YouGov. The sample size, 19,101 adults in 2018 and 13,146 in 2024, is large enough to identify trends, and YouGov is a respected research agency (McAleer and Barward-Symmons, 2025, p.11). However, research from national surveys over a similar time period shows the opposite trend (Hackett, 2026). Although attendance has risen slightly since Covid, the longer trajectory still appears to be one of overall decline.

## So what is happening?

The report highlights that Pentecostal and Catholic churches are seeing the largest increases (McAleer and Barward-Symmons, 2025, p.18). Pentecostalism is widely recognised as the fastest growing expression of Christianity globally, and is a home to ethnic minorities in the UK. The report shows a large proportion of this growth is amongst ethnic minorities, so that finding is unsurprising (McAleer and Barward-Symmons, 2025, p. 6). Growth among

Catholic churches is more unexpected, particularly when Catholic internal records show overall decline (Dr Tim Hutchings on Bowring, 2025, 18:27).

Part of the explanation lies in how attendance is measured. The Bible Society focuses on attendance on average over a year, which differs from counting Sunday attendance (Dr Rhiannon McAleer on Bowring, 2025,15:57). These datasets can be compared, but they are not measuring precisely the same thing. It raises further questions: does "attendance" include online services? House churches without formal records? Occasional participation?

There are other methodological considerations. YouGov gathered responses from people who opted in to complete an online survey. Self-selecting samples can introduce bias because people who choose to answer online surveys aren't necessarily reflective of the general population. Whereas, as the Pew Research Centre states, in British Social Attitudes survey data, they use random sampling and their data shows the decline of church attendance, which is more representative of the population (Hackett, 2026). There are also the usual concerns about the potential use of bots in online surveys. The lead researcher, however, maintains that the responses appear genuine.

In summary, the report suggests there has been an increase in the number of 18 to 44 year olds and 65+ attending church between 2018 and 2024, with the largest increase amongst 18-24 year olds.



Our identity is not rooted in cultural anxiety or political reaction, but in belonging to Christ and one another.

The discussions around the data are suggesting that we must therefore ask careful questions about the research, especially when it is mismatched with other data. Yet one clear point remains. As the report notes, young people are willing to say that they go to church and there is spiritual curiosity (McAleer and Barward-Symmons, 2025, p. 8).

So what are we to make of it?

### Beyond the numbers

Whether we fully trust the data or remain cautious, there are increasing testimonies of young people attending church and coming to faith. Apart from the most obvious explanation – that the Holy Spirit is at work – what else might be happening?

Dr Andrew Root is one of the theologians reflecting on the cultural moment in which this so-called Quiet Revival is emerging. In a recent podcast discussion with Derek

Tronsgard, he suggests two dynamics at play across Europe, something I have also witnessed in Romania, though it is perhaps less quiet there.

### Young men searching for a bigger story

Root points to significant cultural shifts around feminism and gender equality, and the resulting sense of disorientation some young men experience (*Podcast – Dr. Andrew Root, 2025*). With an increase in misogynistic and anti-feminist views, I find this deeply troubling. It is possible that some young men are drawn to church because they are searching for a larger narrative within which to locate their identity. Negatively, this could manifest as right wing ideologies finding a home in Christian spaces, just as left wing ones can too. Positively, it presents an opportunity. The church can model how Jesus treats both women and men, and can offer a community in which identity is shaped not by power over one another, but by love and respect for one another.

### Pseudo or direct nationalism

A BBC article quoted Gareth Talbot, someone who has recently returned to church for something other than God: ‘It’s not that I’ve found God. I’ve never felt you need to go to church to be a Christian, but it’s always been the Christian religion that’s kept our values and freedoms, and that’s why I need to support it now.’ (*Why Tommy Robinson supporters are turning to Christianity, 2025, para. 7*)

Alongside genuine stories of encounter with God, there is also a strand of renewed interest in Christianity linked to debates about

British identity and the perceived erosion of liberalism. From a historical perspective, historian Tom Holland has written about the deep Christian roots of Western values and the cultural cost of forgetting them (Holland, 2020). However, when Christianity becomes entangled with racism, misogyny, nationalism or the suppression of dissent, it begins to resemble something very different from the kingdom of Christ. Rowan Williams articulates this with characteristic clarity:

“Christianity stood out against sacralising the political order from the very beginning... Something about the gospel has always pushed us away from that and said, don’t put all your eggs in the political basket and don’t imagine that you can identify the kingdom of God with the kingdoms of this world.... The community that exists because of the Word of God is not any nation, it is the body of Christ.’ (*Frontiers, 2025, 20:57 & 32:12*)

What stands out here is not only the call to be defined by Jesus, but the call to step beyond selfishness and self-protection. Our identity is not rooted in cultural anxiety or political reaction, but in belonging to Christ and one another. Lucy Peppiatt, in her early reflections on the Quiet Revival, reminds us that revivals are not only about individuals coming to faith but about societies being reshaped by the light and love of Christ (*WTC Theology, 2025, 3:50*). The transformation of someone’s life will inevitably spill over into our communities, and the goodness of God’s kingdom will increase. God encounters and moments of revivals are not marked by political or national identity but by the fruits of the Spirit. Whether this moment becomes such a revival will only be seen with time.

As people with very different views from our own begin to join us in church, Derek Tronsgard asks: “Are we willing to welcome them? Are we open to the possibility that the Spirit may be at work in unexpected ways?” (*Podcast – Dr. Andrew Root, 2025, 11:16*). Roots’ response is clear that welcome does not mean capitulation. We do not need to “co-opt” every ideology that walks through the door, rather, as he puts it, “...we have to proclaim the gospel all the more and be really clear on what the gospel is.” (Root, 2025, 12:37). Are we?

### Summary Conclusion

The Quiet Revival raises both hope and hard questions. There are many genuine encounters with Jesus, which are to be taken seriously and to be celebrated. However, the data are debated and the cultural currents are complex, with passionate people on every side. Yet beyond statistics and sociology lies a deeper theological challenge. If young people are indeed turning towards the Church, we must ask what they find when they arrive. Christianity will thrive, not because our churches uphold up a fragile identity, but because the Church leans into God and embodies the self-giving love of Christ. The task before us is therefore simple and demanding: to trust the Spirit and to be the body of Christ so clearly that those seeking a bigger story discover that it is, in fact, the story of Jesus.

Full bibliography is available on our website: [www.ruralministries.org.uk/post/quiet-revolution](http://www.ruralministries.org.uk/post/quiet-revolution)

Note: Since writing this article, YouGov have withdrawn the survey due to concerns around the data.



He identifies:

1. Young men searching for a bigger story (Root, 2025, 8:57)
2. A form of pseudo or direct nationalism (Root, 2025, 11:10)

## Bob and Mary Bain, Shilbottle Village Chaplains, Northumberland

We went round the village delivering an Easter Prayer card and Good News newspaper to each household in our community. We would appreciate prayer that these will have been read and touched people's lives with the power and love of God.

On 10th May, we will be hosting an annual prayer walk around the village with local Christians from the area. It is an opportunity to pray together for our community in a joined-up Kingdom way. Please pray for good participation and insights from the Lord as to what to pray for in the detail. During the Pentecost weekend later in June, we will be joining with others in Christians Together in Alnwick as we organise and host prayer for the town and our village. Last year, different ones signed up to pray over the twenty four one-hour slots.

We continue to have monthly meetings under our Bright River Chapel banner at the Haven, a community hub in the village. We have a Pentecost theme in late May (24th) and a gospel focus in June (14th). Pray for those coming along, expected and unexpected! We both help out regularly at a weekly meal based in the Haven. This is mostly aimed at older members of the village, and gives us great opportunities for friendly chats.

Mary is part of an Open the Book team that goes into the village school on a regular basis with Bible dramas. The children love getting involved and

the staff are very welcoming. She also has been able to read Bible stories from time to time at the local Friendly Frogs toddler pre-school and nursery.



## EFC, Sutton on Sea, Lincolnshire

We are looking forward to our busy springtime programme. We regularly visit two care homes, telling the residents a Bible story and taking along our puppets to cheer them up and illustrate the stories. We are doing more online teaching and prayer times as we seek to spread the Gospel and pray for the persecuted church.

This year, we will be hosting a day of prayer for the churches in the area and we teamed up with Churches Together for our Easter Walk of Witness. Our annual support for forty Ugandan children for their school fees and uniforms is a blessing as so many people, including many from the congregation, are involved and this is so encouraging. We give thanks to God for all the many provisions that he continues to supply so we can bless others in the community and spread the Good News. We pray that God will call others into the ministry to serve in the church and also for other local churches who are struggling to continue.

## Summer Book Review

### Journalling the Psalms

by Paula Gooder

Reviewed by Jon Timms



Paula Gooder

In the middle of your Bible, you will find a most sacred collection of writing. The book of Psalms provides us with a prayer book, hymnal and poetic masterpiece that has accompanied the people of God, both Jewish and Christian, for over two millennia. Within these sacred texts, the reader gets profound insight into the full spectrum of human emotion that one experiences when seeking to walk closely with God. It is indeed a treasure trove for the willing explorer.

In her book *Journalling the Psalms*, theologian and writer Paula Gooder invites the reader into the practice of journalling the Bible, learning to linger in the text, allowing it to speak into your own life and circumstance. She focuses on the psalms, and for good reason. Each psalm is briefly introduced with a broad perspective. But her book is no theological systematic exposition, and rightly so. The psalms don't need that, they are the raw, unedited, fully exposed experiences of poets, worshippers and kings who refused to hold back in polite reverence, as

they poured their hearts out to Yahweh. It's hard to accurately articulate their meaning with black and white conceptual ideas or to nail down the exact meaning the writer intended. To understand them, the reader must relate them to their own experiences, to journey with the psalmist.

This is where Gooder's book is helpful. She uses fifteen psalms which include a series of short journalling prompts to help you read and reflect on the text. Each section has space for you to write on the pages and answer the prompts. It's a very invitational approach that offers an opportunity for spacious exploration of the psalms and one's own feelings towards them.

Personally, I found the prompts so helpful for reading through these psalms. I would encourage you to go slowly through these. This is not a 'tick-box' exercise, a race through to the end. My suggestion would be to linger, allowing a more immersive experience of the Bible. It's a wonderful way to engage with scripture and a worthy accompaniment for your Lent reflections.

It's a wonderful way to engage with scripture and a worthy accompaniment for your Lent reflections.

# From Where I Sit



**Sam Abramian has recently been appointed the part-time Director for the East of England at Rural Ministries. He is a Baptist Pioneer Minister, Hospital Chaplain and Missional Listener who loves the rural context and journeying with others.**

## 1. Where are you in the UK?

I live in West Norfolk, in a small village called Ingoldisthorpe. We enjoy amazing sunsets over the sea across The Wash – the only place on the east coast where you can see the sun set over the water! We're also surrounded by beautiful countryside, with plenty of footpaths and tracks to explore on foot or by mountain bike.



**'I've found myself drawn back to the Gospels again and again.'**

## 2. Who or what has had the biggest impact on your faith?

God has brought many different people alongside me to teach, guide and encourage me. Some were instrumental in me becoming a disciple of Jesus; others have faithfully walked with me ever since.

In terms of a 'what', the youth work at my home church played a huge role in nurturing and strengthening my faith. It gave me space to grow and opportunities to explore my gifts and skills as a teenager. Studying theology at LST was another key moment, equipping me to understand more deeply what I believe and why.

## 3. What do you know now about Jesus that you didn't ten years ago?

Through our pioneering and missional

listening journey, I've found myself drawn back to the Gospels again and again, and I feel I've learned so much more about Jesus.

In particular, I've noticed His attentiveness – both to the Spirit and to the people around him. He held those two together so beautifully, and I still marvel at that balance when I read the Gospels.

I've also grown in my understanding of His self-care. I'm naturally wired towards doing, but over the past six years I've learned a great deal from the way Jesus balanced the demands placed on Him with intentional times of withdrawal and rest.

## 4. Tell me your favourite story about connecting in your community.

I once had a conversation with another local dad who asked what I do. I kept it simple and said I'm a church minister. He replied, "That's great for you, mate, but I'm not into any of that stuff."

Fourteen months later, he was sitting in his car outside the school while I was walking in to collect my son. He asked if we could meet for coffee. When we met, he wanted to talk about prayer – and then he asked to meet again. At our next conversation, he asked how God could change his life.

We continued meeting, and he has since become a follower of Jesus, experiencing God gently transforming him. Since then, God has also used him to speak into my

life, and I feel deeply blessed by our friendship.



## 5. What does pioneering where you are look like to you?

Right now, it looks very relational. We've been through a season of pioneering a new church community and groups, but we're currently in a season of patiently journeying with a small number of local people who have crossed our path.

This means intentionally spending time with a few people and seeking to be good neighbours. We share meals, help one another with childcare, and try to prioritise being present – not just dropping our son off at sports or activities, but staying and building relationships.

We continue to pray for our area and ask God whether He wants us to start something specific. At the moment, He seems quiet on that, so we're embracing and enjoying this slower, relational approach.

## 6. If you're not at work, where am I most likely to find you?

I'm a part-time hospital chaplain, but outside of that you'll usually find me outdoors – walking, cycling, watching my son play sport, or gardening.

In the summer, I'm often near a fire in the form of a BBQ or fire pit. In the winter, I'm likely to be at home beside our log burner – or at a local pub enjoying good company.



# Ember

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