

MOSAIC

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Welcome to this latest edition of MOSAIC from Rural Ministries' new Joint CEOs, Jon Timms and Jo Allen.

What a privilege to have a job where you get to meet some incredible people and hear about the amazing, creative things they are pioneering in our nation's rural communities. This edition has wonderful stories from churches and ministries connected with the network, who are following the guidance of the Holy Spirit and making a difference for the Kingdom of God in their own contexts. They are diverse expressions of the message of Jesus, and yet they all speak of love, peace and hope; of seeking the flourishing of individuals, churches and communities; and of stepping out with a resounding YES to the invitations of God.

One great way to discern and follow the way of the Holy Spirit is to develop a posture before God that says something like this: "The answer is always 'Yes, Lord! What's the question?'" Where might the breath of God, the Ruach, be leading you as you read these Kingdom stories? Perhaps the invitation is to step out in mission, to strengthen the body of Christ you are currently part of or leading or to retreat, to go away with Jesus and rest a while. Is your answer, "Yes Lord, of course I will go!"?

The Derbyshire Rural Chaplaincy reflects on how we can better involve farmers and the wider farming community in village life, while the Bardney Community reminds us of the beautiful simplicity of discipleship - watching The Chosen with a glass of wine in hand. A standout line comes from Great Moulton: *"We can work harder and smarter, but without prayer, it won't amount to anything. No great work has ever been accomplished for God without spending time in prayer."* Amen!

We love these words from our friends in Alnwick:

Doors are gently being opened to knowing a little more about the love of God.

As I often say, 'the kingdom of God is about one person at a time'. We invest in people not projects. We build relationships not religion.

We tear down walls, not build barriers.

They remind us that we're here for the long haul, for investing our time and ministry efforts but also our love into those we journey with and those we minister to. Doors are indeed gently opening. Inquisitive, curious folks are responding to Jesus all across the country, quietly, humbly and authentically. In the RM Network, may we all be found to be tearing down walls and barriers, and curating spaces of the hope, freedom and belonging that is to be found in Christ.

Wherever the invitations lead you, as you go may you know the peace, loving embrace, and deep friendship of Jesus.

With love,

Jon Jo

Jon Timms and Jo Allen
Joint CEOs, Rural Ministries

Albert Road Evangelical, Oswestry, Shropshire

In November of last year our new Pastor, Benjamin, and his wife Heather, took over the leadership of our church which has been a great blessing.

This summer, for the first time in three years, we ran a Holiday Bible Club over four Thursday afternoons, starting on the last week of July and carrying on through the first three Thursdays in August.



Bawtry Community Church, Bawtry, South Yorkshire

“Making your way in the world today takes everything you’ve got... wouldn’t you like to get away?”

If that line sounds familiar, you might recall the beloved theme song from the classic American TV show “Cheers” – a show centred on community, where “everybody knows your name.” It portrayed a place where people felt welcome, connected, and part of something bigger. In many ways, that’s exactly what Brew & Co. hopes to be.

Brew & Co. is a warm and informal outreach gathering where people from all walks of life come together over coffee, conversation, and a short devotional thought. It

In the past, we have had an encouraging number of children attend our holiday club, many of whom used to come to our Little Gems mother and babies/toddlers’ group when they themselves were small.

We are grateful to the Lord for this opportunity of reaching out into our community; though we are small in number, we have enough volunteers to run the club. We look to the Lord for His help and pray many of the children will be touched through the Christian message we deliver.

happens every Thursday at 2:00 p.m. in our hall just off the high street. You might spot our sandwich boards or see announcements in local magazines as we do our best to spread the word – and we’ve even captured a few joyful moments on camera along the way.

We’re incredibly thankful for everyone who attends and helps make Brew & Co. such a welcoming space. Our hope is that the sense of belonging found here reflects the deeper community we share in Christ – a place where you’re known, welcomed, and loved. Why not stop by one Thursday? We’d be so glad you did.





Bardney Community, Bardney, Lincolnshire

Alnwick Baptist Church, Alnwick, Northumberland

On the last Sunday of the month at ABC, we encourage our church family to engage just where they are in being the hands and feet of Jesus rather than gathering for worship in a central place. In June, I took the opportunity to do a missional Q and A with our fab pioneer minister Karen about the work she's doing in her rural home town of Widdrington Station, affectionately known as "Widdy".

It was brilliant to hear Karen's heart for her community and also about the simple but effective ways she's reaching out to people with the Good News of Jesus. One prime example of this is the monthly Supper Club. Because who doesn't love food? The Supper Club's latest outing saw sausages in a bun on a sun soaked day being served in Karen's back garden. Karen was keen to point out that everyone contributes and that embeds ownership.

Nothing complicated but the presence of food and a cuppa in hand created an environment for conversation, some of it on a superficial level but she talked about the real-life changing questions that people were prepared to ask about life, faith, hurt and hope.

Doors are gently being opened to knowing a little more about the love of God. As I often say, 'the kingdom of God is about one person at a time'. We invest in people not projects. We build relationships not religion. We tear down walls, not build barriers.

Karen is listening to God's heart cry and seeking to respond with authenticity.

Here in the middle of rural Lincolnshire, we continue to develop what we believe the Holy Spirit has called us to do. We meet daily for prayer when we read scripture and pray for guidance for our community and its individuals and families.

We are also involved in providing a welcoming space by means of our Coffee Shop, the 'Open Door'. This has been open for about eight years now and besides the comforts of delicious coffee & home crafted cakes, offers a safe, warm space for the weary traveller and many of our friends & neighbours. It also hosts Bardney Babies (accompanied) and Toddlers Tales (also accompanied).

Two years ago we began to pilot a community grocery, believing that we were being called to offer some relief, as many were struggling with the so-called 'cost of living' crisis. We are a village of approximately two thousand five hundred inhabitants and ten miles from any town. We were offered a disused brick storage building and pursued the objective of providing good, nutritious low cost food, much of it saved from landfill, to benefit our community and surrounding villages.

We are no longer a 'pilot' scheme as we have four hundred and ninety eight households registered with the grocery! This is enabling us to develop relationships of varying depths with over half the village. Somewhere between twenty to twenty five volunteers have joined us on this journey.

Every Friday evening, we gather with a number of mainly younger couples as we explore faith by watching an episode of 'The Chosen' accompanied by cheese & wine. It's proving very popular! It is a great atmosphere in which to ask questions and discuss faith topics around the episode just viewed.

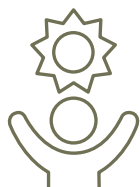
Hello & Welcome



Jo



Jon



Witnessing God
at work in our
beautiful rural
and coastal
areas is a true
honour and joy.

Regular readers will remember that in the last edition, Rural Ministries' much-loved CEO Simon Mattholie said goodbye. He has served us well and faithfully for 14 years and is now pastoring the congregation at Clare Baptist Church. But with every farewell comes a new opportunity, and as Editor of MOSAIC, it gives me great pleasure to introduce you to our new Joint CEOs, Jo Allen and Jon Timms. Rather than writing yet another article, I decided to fire some questions at them, and this is the result.

Ruth: First things first. Name, location and job title please.

Jon: Jon Timms. I currently live in Dunbar, East Lothian, Scotland. I hold the position of Joint CEO of Rural Ministries.

Jo: Joanna Allen, from a little village south of Oxford called Long Wittenham and I'm Joint CEO of Rural Ministries.

Ruth: How long have you worked with Rural Ministries?

Jon: I started in December 2023.

Jo: Since June 2023, I think!

Ruth: What do you love about your job?

Jon: Witnessing God at work in our beautiful rural and coastal areas is a true honour and joy. There are some incredible, humble people in the RM network doing creative things for the Kingdom.

Jo: Working with Jon is so much fun, so that's got to be a first, and the freedom to create and follow the wind of the Spirit within our roles at Rural Ministries is a gift. I love hearing

stories of God at work in rural spaces and sharing them with others. It's wonderful to meet people who are wholeheartedly following Jesus, chatting with those shaping the future of rural mission, and the freedom to be myself. I absolutely love writing and speaking into this beautiful context that God has called us all to.

Ruth: What's your passion in life?

Jon: I have many passions in life. I love Jesus and hope every living person knows deep union and friendship with him. I also have a passion for our created world to be flourishing and living and breathing as it's supposed to do. I love all beauty, particularly nature, travel/culture, music and words.

Jo: Ultimately, to see people draw closer to Jesus and come alive in the Spirit – and to see the inequality gap reduced. I'm passionate about theology, politics, and social justice, as well as creative expression. Personally, I love to dance, sing, and dabble in some very amateur painting.

Ruth: If you're not at work, where would I be likely to find you?

Jon: You'd find me hanging out with my family and friends, somewhere near the ocean, preferably with a surfboard under my feet. You might also find me hiking up a mountain, playing my guitar, or drifting off into a good book!

Jo: Hmm, that's a tough one... either binge-watching something with Luke or the family, playing a computer game, reading a book, on the football pitch, swimming in the river, shopping, or driving the kids somewhere.

Ruth: Favourite food?

Jon: Now this is a tough one.....Mexican, Indian, Italian, all Asian, seafood? It's all good.

I couldn't possibly nail it down. I love food!!

Jo: A really good tomato sauce on pasta, or an incredible veggie curry – unless chocolate is an option, which wins every time!

Ruth: If you were Prime Minister for one day, what three things would you do?

Jon: Rid the cabinet of anyone who is not working for good and the benefit of every person in our land; introduce equity and fairness as a foundational value and practice; Taco Tuesday each and every week!

Jo: I can't limit myself to three. I would create a culture of honesty and trust, where those with less and the marginalised are heard and lifted up; surround myself with people who challenge me to shape policies that reflect the diversity of our country and work cross-party; begin to reform systems so that those currently overlooked or left behind are no longer forgotten; ask my husband to assemble a crack team to overhaul the health system and foreign aid, turning back the clock to care more for our global neighbours and protect healthcare for all; do something to curb the spread of misinformation from some politicians and journalists – though I believe in free speech, so I'm not sure how; lock in environmental policies that genuinely care for our planet; repeal the new anti-protest laws; encourage leaders with similar values to stand in the democratic election the next day.

Ruth: Tea or coffee?

Jon: Coffee before noon, tea after that!

Jo: I'm a decaf coffee girl, all day.

Ruth: If we met up again in three years, what would you love to see happening with RM?

Jon: RM's tagline is Rethinking Mission, Reimagining Church. In three years, I'd love

to see RM witnessing the reality of a glorious, reimagined church; our rural communities come alive in the experiential love of Jesus; and I'd love to see pioneers released and free to live out what God has placed on their hearts.

Jo: I'd love to see creative rural mission continuing to be encouraged and supported. A greater communication of the stories of God at work in rural places to inspire the wider church. I hope we'll have a larger staff team, be actively involved in research, and use that research to positively impact rural communities. I'd love to see us learning from global perspectives and greater collaboration nationally with other mission-minded organisations – together encouraging denominations and individual Christians to go on bold, missional adventures with God.

Ruth: And if you had a superpower – what would it be?

Jon: Well, that's tough. I want to say something holy like a bat-phone to the heavenly realms, but as I'm always drawn to the 'life aquatic' perhaps breathing underwater would be a fun one! Looking forward to seeing you all this wonderful pilgrimage we all walk.....but for now, the ocean is calling and I must go!

Jo: I'm a big Marvel and Iron Man fan, so I'd love to say flight! But right now, I think it would be amazing to give others the gift of producing food and clean water wherever it's needed – or to have the perfect diplomatic skills.



I love hearing stories of God at work in rural spaces and sharing them with others.

Thanks Jon and Jo! I feel that I know a lot more about you now and I hope the readers do too. Watch this space ...

Bont Elim Community Church, Pontarddulais, Swansea

Happy New Year! Before you reach for your calendar, or wonder if you have gone into hibernation for three months, September brings with it the start of a new academic year. For so many children, this is more of a new year than January. This brings a massive prayer need for all of us, to be praying for our children and youth through this time of change.

With three schools so close by, this is a big time for us. We are hoping to have the Pontarddulais Primary School Choir down to celebrate harvest with us. Whenever they visit, they bring a group of supporting family, which certainly adds to the morning. We also welcome the Stardance choir, led by the amazing Thom Whyte (also known as the dancing dinosaur). It also gives me the challenge of how I get a message from some of their chosen songs.

The month also brings our new start of a youth group called the 316s. I have had a football kit designed around this idea. We are intentionally going younger to attract years 4, 5 and 6, in the hope of setting up a journey to Christmas that rotates around lots of stage presence and opportunities to sing and dance. For those who would rather learn something different, they will be given the chance to work with the soundboard, computer and cameras.

The intention will be to prepare for some big celebrations in this period. 31st October will be our Christmas light switch on and hallelujah party.

And Friday 28th November will see our Santa Stop Evening with every group linked to us taking part on the stage, while we also have the official opening of our new solar panel system.

Your prayers through this time would be very much appreciated.

BroadGrace, Coltishall, Norfolk

We have seen some wonderful answers to prayer over the last few weeks. This is no surprise for we know that our Father loves us to ask Him for what we need and to do immeasurably more than we can ask, or even imagine (Ephesians 3:20). These revolve around our hopes to plant another church here in Norfolk.

The first answer to prayer came when we first spoke to Rural Ministries back in 2013. It is due to them that we were able to buy and redevelop The River Rooms. We give thanks for our relationship. They have been enormously generous and supportive.

This giving attitude encouraged us greatly and began a season of generosity in our community. Praise be for the Lord's generosity shown through his people!

We have also experienced the Lord's guiding as our Growth Planning Team have worked on options for a church plant. We are going to be discussing these as a church over the autumn and seeking unity over the best way to plant a new church or expand the reach of the gospel in our part of Norfolk in some other way. Money has been freed up every month to give us the opportunity of covering the costs of a new venture, including possibly employing a part-time staff member to lead this. We are so grateful at the way the Lord is bringing things together in his love for those who are lost from him in these villages.



James & Ruth Neve, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Derbyshire

“Shy and retiring” is not something I have really ever been described as! I am generally interested in people, enjoy being part of a group and contributing enthusiastically in whatever way I can. I have sometimes been called a “Tigger”! That said, it could now be suggested that I should at least own the second half of that description. Since we last wrote an article for MOSAIC, we have “retired” – at least in the sense that we are no longer operating as accredited Baptist ministers – we have formally moved to the list of retired ministers.

For some, that might feel as though one has permission to step back, become a passenger, take a back seat, coast for a while. But as a follower of Jesus, I’m not sure that is an option. If we are to experience fullness of life, even in “retirement” then we still need to be seeking to discern where God might be already and offering ourselves as participants in his kingdom work. So having stepped back from Baptist ministry, we have embarked on the somewhat surprising journey of stepping into Anglican ministry as we train to become Readers in our local church. It feels

quite “institutional” for us, especially as we have enjoyed being less constrained by institutions. But we take this step, sensing it to be of God and with the encouragement of the newly appointed pioneer priest. We look forward to supporting her in her ministry. We do so with the hopes that alongside this formal role, we will continue to dwell where we are and discern and explore how God might want to use us in this next season of life, both locally and perhaps more widely. Your prayers for us would be much appreciated.



Charlie and Abby Clayton, Missional Listeners, Mevagissey, Cornwall

God is beginning to answer the prayers we have been praying as a community, by opening up opportunities to love and care for those who live in Mevagissey. One of our prayer groups is setting up a men’s mental health support group; I have been developing a befriending project with Linking Lives, which involves a partnership between the local parish church and the local primary school; the football club has completed its first season, the youth work continues to thrive, and the community centre that was

about to close, has recently been awarded £70,000 funding for refurbishment and development.

A year ago, I felt God speak to me through Jeremiah 29:7 – to seek the welfare of the place we have been sent, because in the community’s welfare, we will find our (the church’s) welfare. We’re beginning to see this fulfilled. As we seek the shalom and generous expression of God’s kingdom being established here, the church is encouraged, growing in unity, and non-believers are beginning to ask questions. We continue to keep prayer front and centre of all that we do, listening, watching, and trying to respond faithfully to the nudges of the Holy Spirit. Please pray for the Holy Spirit to stir the hearts of those we live alongside here, that many would find saving faith in Jesus. And please pray for strength, protection and guidance for our family. Thank you!

Autumn **Book Review**

Surf Church

by Richard Ellerington

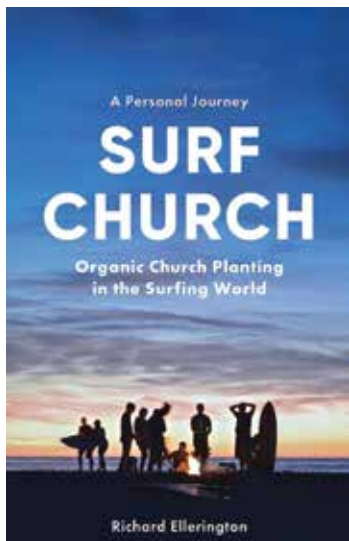
Reviewed by Jon Timms

Back in 2012, Richard Ellerington, along with his wife Regi and three kids, moved from the southwest of the UK to Hossegor in southwest France. Their mission was to follow the call of God to this exciting surf town, to relocate and minister there, to live out their faith in a true and authentic way; to share their faith and invite others

to explore Jesus and what it means to be loved by God and to follow him. What resulted from this was the birth of a church community by the beach, one that reached out to the surf culture around them, offering a space to encounter Christ in the embrace of community and in the wildness of the sea!

We must always prayerfully discern the movements of God in a place, work out how God is inviting us to join Him, and where might we be bringing something new, fresh and organic to the table.





The early stages of the story can be seen in an awesome short edit on YouTube: Search for Forgotten Shores Hossegor on the Surf Church Collective page. www.youtube.com/@surf_church_collective

After planting the church and serving there for many years, Richard and Regi have handed the formal leadership of Surf Church Hossegor over and have concentrated on Surf Church

Collective. SCC is “made up of church leaders, musicians, filmmakers, entrepreneurs, students, teachers, artists.....” who are “committed to empowering people and seeing surf friendly churches planted across the world.” More info can be found on www.surfchurchcollective.com

Richard has now written about his journey in the imaginatively titled book, Surf Church (with the more creative sub-heading, Organic Church Planting in the Surfing World). He writes an honest account of falling in love with surfing, and then, after years in a conventional charismatic church setting and culture, he felt inspired to break out of all that he knew, to step outside the box and go on a missional adventure, beginning in France but taking him and his family all over the world. I think a few of us would relate to those feeling of spiritual claustrophobia. It happens when those tried and tested methods fail to light a spark anymore.

Richard’s intention for the book is to provide practical, clear support for anyone who feels God is calling them to plant a church or a fresh expression of church. Whilst you may not be coastal or even have any interest in surfing, much of what is talked about

here can be translated into other contexts. Which brings me back to the point that many people begin with, and that is about contextual mission. We must always prayerfully discern the movements of God in a place, work out how God is inviting us to join Him, and where might we be bringing something new, fresh and organic to the table.

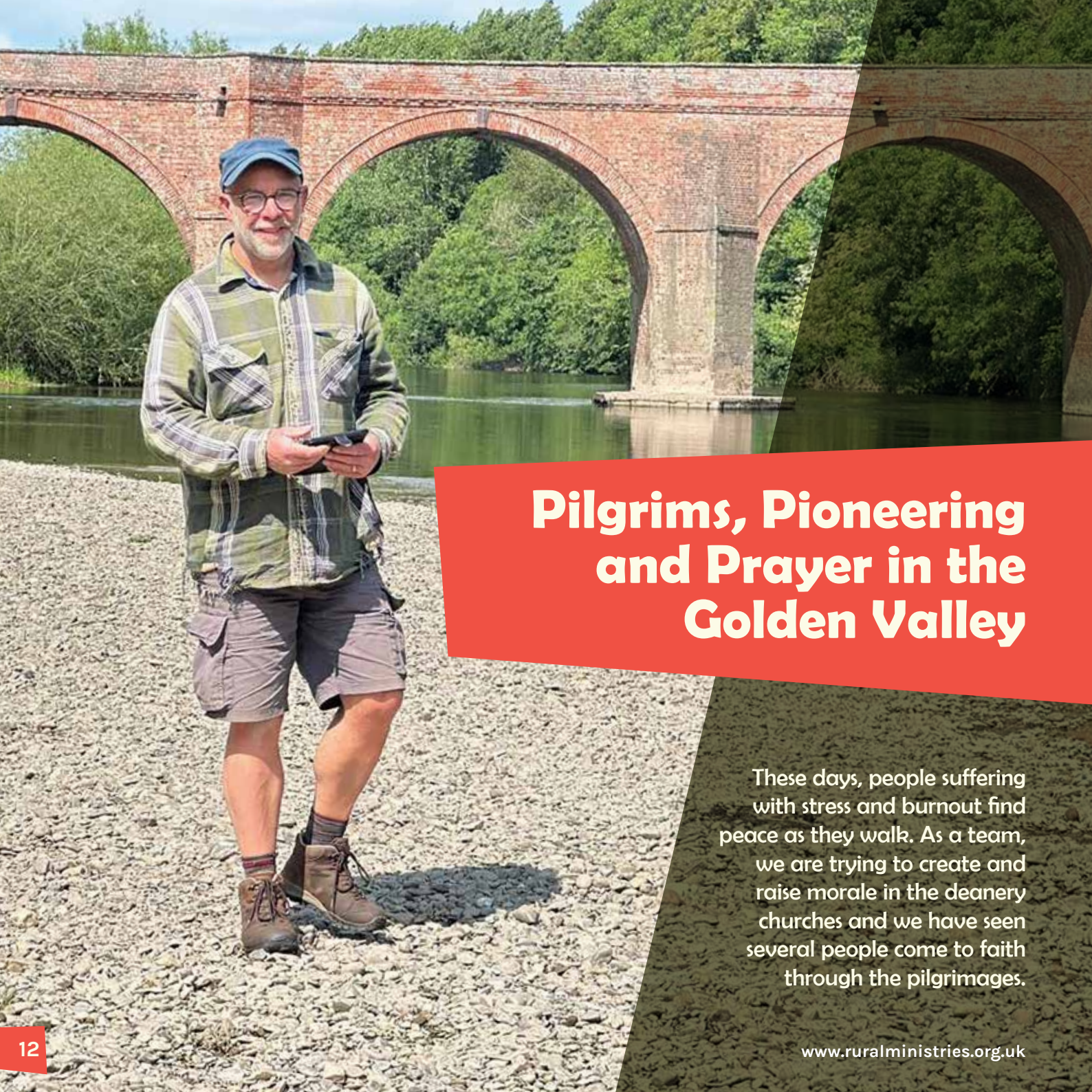
Richard encourages the reader to not forsake the time it takes to listen and get to know and generally immerse yourselves in your community. This is hugely important if we’re to be a trusted, authentic presence in our communities and effective in our endeavours. There is a cautionary tale included here, where this didn’t take place. The fallout often involves hurt, confusion, and doubt, and all too often relationship breakdown and offence.

Other practical little nuggets are around developing strategy, building a team, sustainability. These are all woven together with Richard’s often humorous anecdotes and true-life experiences. He’s honest and authentic and not afraid to talk about where mistakes were made.

While the book may prove to be a little formulaic for some of the ‘fringier’ pioneers out there, it will prove to be a valuable resource for those in the early stages of church planting or currently discerning a call to do so. And if you’re the salty air and sandy toes type, you’ll love how Richard’s story and that of the Surf Church Collective are establishing and cultivating new spaces for surfers, ocean folks and general coastal bohemians to encounter and explore the love that Jesus has for them.

Surf Church Collective is now a global network of ‘surfer-friendly’ churches with communities in USA, Hawaii, Central and South America, Australia, South Africa, UK, France, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden.

To the ocean we go...



Pilgrims, Pioneering and Prayer in the Golden Valley

These days, people suffering with stress and burnout find peace as they walk. As a team, we are trying to create and raise morale in the deanery churches and we have seen several people come to faith through the pilgrimages.

The Golden Valley, the Black Mountains and the Wye Valley form an idyllic swathe of unspoiled countryside in Herefordshire and Wales. The River Dore winds through western Herefordshire in the lee of the Black Mountains, travelling through wild and untamed landscapes in this quiet corner of the UK. C.S. Lewis loved it and once wrote that the idea for the Narnia books came to him in this beautiful place. It is soaked in the tradition of the saints, healings, holy wells and pilgrimage and today, one group of missional people are borrowing a tradition from the past to express faith in the future.

Simon Lockett is the Director of The Hub@ St Peters, in the little village of Peterchurch in the Abbeydore Deanery. He acts as one of three pioneer priests in the community and alongside the rest of the Hub team is working with their rural community to address twenty-first century issues in a way which borrows from older traditions.

“Our area has all the usual challenges of hidden poverty, isolation and loneliness, dwindling congregations and poor transport links, but despite that, there are many things going on which encourage us. Here at the Hub, we run a café, baby clinic, a centering prayer group, host the local authority library, link up with people who struggle with rural isolation and lack of access to services, and hire out our spaces for community events. We run a regular Celtic Communion and keep having to replace our service booklets. They’re so beautifully illustrated that people keep walking off with them!”

These volunteers have been honoured by winning not one but two prestigious awards in the last year. The King’s Award for Voluntary Service is the equivalent of an MBE for an organisation and was one of two hundred and eighty four given out on King Charles’ birthday last year. The Hub was the only organisation in Herefordshire to receive one. In addition, they won in the Unsung Hero category of the Visit Herefordshire awards for the Golden Valley Pilgrims’ Way, and therein hangs a tale.

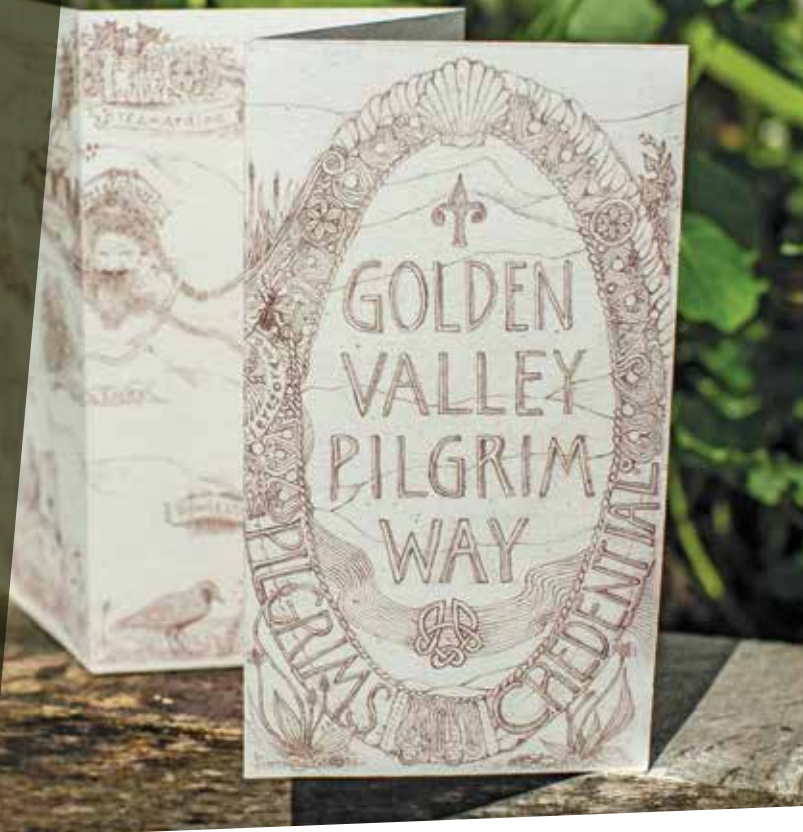
“I went on a pilgrimage in Italy a few years ago, staying in monasteries, little rooms at the back of churches and in priests’ houses. Then four years ago I took a few friends on a pilgrimage to St David’s and when I came back, I began to think about running pilgrimages here.”

Simon shared his idea with the team. From the start, they envisioned the pilgrimages as part of the green tourism movement with no need for driving. A circular route was laid out with plenty of pubs along the way for evening



C.S. Lewis loved it and once wrote that the idea for the Narnia books came to him in this beautiful place. It is soaked in the tradition of the saints, healings, holy wells and pilgrimage and today, one group of missional people are borrowing a tradition from the past to express faith in the future.





being award-winning, are reconnecting people to nature and the outdoors. There is a strong spiritual aspect to them, as Simon explains.

“God’s creation and His love for us are all around in the landscape. The Golden Valley was known for its pilgrimages and holy wells in medieval times. St Peter’s Well was believed to have healing properties for diseases of the eye. These days, people suffering with stress and burnout find peace as they walk. As a team, we are trying to create and raise morale

meals. Pilgrims are able to stay overnight in churches throughout the deanery for a very reasonable fee.

“A pilgrim can easily catch the train to Hereford, walk up the Wye and Golden Valleys, over the Black Mountains and back to Hereford. It’s an intimate trail with dense woodlands and tiny footpaths. Modern walkers are following in the footsteps of the old pilgrims, quite literally. We have designed three routes, a four day one, six to seven day and a cycling route. The National Geographic featured it recently, which we took as a good sign.”

The Hub has created a central booking point for easy access, and the pilgrimages, as well as

in the deanery churches and we have seen several people come to faith through the pilgrimages. C.S. Lewis used Arthur’s Stone, a local landmark, as the model for Aslan’s Table and on the other side of the valley, the Black Mountains inspired David Jones’ final poem “The Sleeping Lord.” It’s extraordinary that two of the greatest retellings of the Christian story in the twentieth century were inspired by the Golden Valley.”

The Hub team are recruiting a fourth rural pioneer priest as they work to engage intergenerationally with different mission streams, including youth, community housing and those who struggle with isolation and loneliness.



It’s important to us that people are loved and that we are sustainable.

“We don’t want to get too big, even with a new team member. It’s important to us that people are loved and that we are sustainable. We are looking for someone who can come alongside people and talk about faith in an authentic and relatable way. As we work relationally with our community, reading the articles in MOSAIC is incredibly helpful and we are so thankful for the funding from Rural Ministries which helped us to create the role of Mission Co-ordinator. Without that, we couldn’t achieve much of what we do in our deanery.”

Pilgrimagimg is bringing the most unlikely people together.

“A lovely gentleman called Stanley comes to our Chatty Café on Wednesdays. He is a hundred years old and was the navigator of a Lancaster bomber in World War Two. A Dutch couple who I had just guided on the pilgrimage visited the Hub and I told them about him. The woman recollected that her grandfather had told her that near the end of the war, people in Rotterdam were starving. He left the city to find food and the Lancaster bombers carried out a food drop which saved them. They went and met Stanley and thanked him personally which was incredibly touching for everyone concerned.”

As the team at The Hub@St Peters continue to minister to their community, a faith practice from the past is illuminating the paths and byways trodden by modern pilgrims in this beautiful part of the country.

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:

11th September: East Midlands Rural Mission Hub
Launde Abbey, Leicestershire

15th September: Northern England Rural Mission Hub
Scargill House, Nr Skipton, North Yorkshire

3rd October: North East & Borders Rural Mission Hub
St Cuthbert's Centre, Holy Island, Northumbria

3rd October: Thames Valley Rural Mission Hub
St Mary's Convent, Wantage, Oxfordshire

8th October: East Devon Rural Mission Hub
Pippins Community Centre, Axminster, Devon

23rd October: East Anglia Rural Mission Hub
Clare Priory, Suffolk

17th November: Northern England Rural Mission Hub
Scargill House, Skipton,
N Yorkshire



For the latest details
on all Rural Mission Hubs go to
www.ruralministries.org.uk/rural-mission-hubs



Derbyshire Rural Chaplaincy

Over the past few years, the Derbyshire Rural Chaplaincy has been invited to take more and more services in our rural churches. Whilst the majority are life event services – baptisms, weddings and funerals for our farming families, and most often taken by the lead chaplain Revd Alan Griggs – there are increasing opportunities to take other services, and all three chaplains have been involved in a variety over recent months.

We aim to conduct those services where we can promote a farming theme and importantly invite local farmers who wouldn't otherwise attend church. We have found this encourages the often smaller rural church congregations and at the same time it keeps the farming issues front and centre.

Cromhall Chapel, Cromhall, Gloucestershire

We recently ran a Christianity Explored course which was attended by four interested people alongside seven members of the chapel. We started with a meal which built relationships and meant people were very open and asked questions during the evening. Everyone thought the course was very good and helpful. We then all attended an Away Day. One of those who attended then read through the Gospels as a result.

A group of ladies, Mums who Pray, meet regularly and have seen several answers to prayer. One grandson has asked for a Bible.

Sunday School is going well with six children attending regularly. Recently, several of them joined Kensington Chapel for a weekend away which was much enjoyed and very beneficial.

We have designed invitations to hand out to farmers, inviting them to Plough Sunday services in January, Rogation Sunday in May and of course Harvest services. We have been thrilled with the turnout and on each occasion local farmers have taken part in the service.

Our role is to meet farmers, be available for them and spend time with them, whether that be at the weekly livestock market in Bakewell, on the farms, or at agricultural shows. The contacts we build week by week allow relationships of trust to develop and we firmly believe that has resulted in these positive responses to our invitations to join us at church services.

We ask for prayers for those farmers who attend and for the chaplains that there would be opportunities to follow up the church attendance and that seed sown would fall on good soil.

Durrington Community Church, Durrington, Wiltshire

We would love to ask for your prayers for the following:

- Seasoning our words with salt – ensuring unity in our church family in a world where cancel culture is rife.
- Donning the armour of God – protecting us from the enemy in an area known for darkness with Stonehenge just down the road.
- Children in the church – they are not just the future of the church, they are the present as well. We held several events during the summer holidays, our SonShine Holiday Club and annual Teddy Bears' Picnic.
- For the adults we ran a table tennis evening.

By the time you read this, we will be about to take part in the 24/7 Prayer Week in the first week of September, and an Alpha Course later in the autumn, launched with a Harvest Supper and quiz.

Charlie Hart, Dales Faith, Bedale and the North Yorkshire Dales

At the end of last year, the Dales Faith Community started meeting at our home in Bedale. Nine months on, we continue to meet but how and when we do this is changing. When God promises something new, it is easy to see the challenge and reach for the things we know, and the places we have come from. We like to think of ourselves as open to change, but actually we rarely enter something new with open minds and empty hands. We all carry past experiences and bring unmet expectations with us. Few of us, are truly open to “the new things” of God.

Zacchaeus climbed a tree to see Jesus. He wanted to see past the crowd, his circumstances and the limitations of his life choices. Jesus saw him and Zacchaeus was transformed. Jesus is meeting people in small groups, in the depth of people’s relationships with each other, and in movements that seek to make disciples. He’s in the business of transforming the lives of the people he meets.

We are exploring how these movements of God might move us. We are seeking His way of calling others to follow him, bringing each other on as disciples who disciple others and His way of gathering his followers together, to encourage each other.

We are exploring what God is doing in other places, through Simple Church, Missional Communities, and Small Boats and Harbours. But more specifically we are discovering how these ways of being church, being faithful disciples of Jesus, might form us into the people God wants us to be. Where exactly he is leading us, and what will grow as a result of our following him we are not sure, but we do know and trust that if we are obedient, he will do it.



Mount Zion, Cliviger, Lancashire

We are hosting a monthly event called Musical Memories to help people with dementia. Our friends Martyn and Kathleen Smith launched it and welcome many regulars who love singing along to popular songs from their youth to bring back happy memories.

The group has proved to be a great success and there are lots of regular attendees. Martyn and Kathleen sometimes put out a display of items from the past, including wartime newspapers and other WWII artefacts at the recent VE meeting. This helps to jog memories and encourage joining in.

Around 982,000 people suffer from dementia in the UK (a figure which is projected to be 1.4 million by 2040). These singalongs are one way to offer support to dementia sufferers and their carers. Kathleen and Martyn are 79 and 81 themselves, but have a huge heart for the outreach program for Cliviger and surrounding areas.

“We originally set up the group at our former church, Burnley URC at the suggestion of the minister Liz Jewit. Much to our surprise, church members who didn’t have dementia also wanted to come. We kept going until Covid struck. We’d had musical connections with Mount Zion and it seemed a natural progression for us to start worshipping there and to belong to a caring, friendly, church. Our group is growing. We meet on the first Wednesday of the month at 1pm.”

Autumn Book Review

Don't Forget We're Here Forever: A Generation's Search for Religion

by Lamorna Ash

Reviewed by Jo Allen



Lamorna Ash

A generous and courageous invitation to see UK Christianity afresh, through the eyes of someone at the edges of faith.

This book has been my companion for a few months now. I've loved dipping in and out of it – bingeing a few chapters when I can, putting it down when life gets busy, and returning to it with ease. Lamorna Ash's writing is so engaging and reflective that it's easy to get lost in, yet gentle enough to re-enter without losing your place. Her style is easy-going, thoughtful, and quietly compelling.

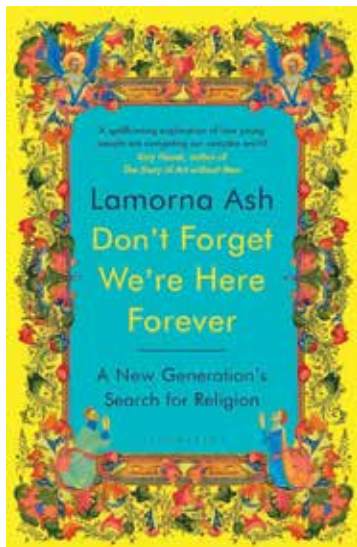
“Don't Forget We're Here Forever” shares the stories of people navigating Christian faith in their twenties and thirties, stories of churches, retreat centres, communities, and poetry that have shaped their spiritual journeys. Through these accounts, Ash reflects on how her generation is discovering and reimagining Christianity. Coming from a non-believing background, her insights are honest and deeply resonant. At times, she expresses perspectives different from my own; at others, she names truths I've felt but never fully articulated.

Early on, she clarifies her intentions: *“In this book I want to show you some of what is going on here: the very landscape of contemporary Christianity in Britain. I want to*

introduce you to some of the sixty or so people I've met to discuss and witness their faith. I have not covered every branch of Christianity, nor have I visited every British Christian site. What follows is a necessarily unfinished and particular story of the Christian faith.”

The book is divided into three parts. Part 1 explores conservative Christianity, particularly charismatic and evangelical expressions. Part 2 shifts into a more contemplative mode: Ash visits retreat centres, walks labyrinths, spends Holy Week with Catholic nuns, and explores quieter forms of prayer. The pace slows, the mood deepens – these chapters are tender and spiritually searching. Part 3 turns to stories of adults who have experienced profound shifts in their faith – deconstruction and reconstruction, burnout and renewal. These are not tales of easy answers but of complex, lived faith.

Ash threads her own story through the book – her doubts, discoveries, and reflections on some of life's most difficult questions, including sexuality, mental health, and the experience of parental illness. The result is a raw, honest, and deeply human exploration of contemporary Christian faith.



Of particular note to me were Ash's early chapters on the charismatic and evangelical wing of the Church. Her descriptions feel close to home – full of familiar names and even friends of friends.

As an outsider, she cuts through the noise with clarity and care, naming what she sees with a striking honesty. At one point, she reflects on her first encounter with charismatic

Christianity, observing

that it felt as though “harm [was] stitched into the other side of its welcome.” That kind of insight – disarming and unflinching – is exactly what makes her perspective so valuable and worth reflecting upon.

Her account of a charismatic discipleship year with YWAM is particularly compelling. She honours people's experiences and treats them with deep respect, creating space for genuine conversation. Yet her reaction to a charismatic worship service reminds me that my place of comfort and spiritual expression is not everyone's.

Chapter 5 stands out as a careful and honest reflection on the abuses of power that can emerge in charismatic spaces. Through the story of Jon – once a charismatic leader, now working with the Newbigin Community Trust charity – Ash explores both the fruit and the failings of charismatic ministry. Jon acknowledges the miracles he witnessed, while also naming the shift he's undergone once believing he was “bringing God”, he now sees his role as simply noticing where God is already at work. That feels like a critical turning point for the charismatic and missional Church – away from control, toward trust and surrender.

Ash also engages with the internal tensions that shape contemporary Christianity – denominational divides, popularity contests, and the deep rift between liberal and conservative biblical interpretations. She critiques the tendency to treat Christianity as a competitive marketplace, rather than as diverse responses to a mystery “as strange and unimaginable as a lightning bolt.” Her language is evocative, and her theological observations are often piercing.

Reflecting on the story of the paralysed man lowered through the roof in Mark's Gospel, she offers a moving insight: before the Gospels were written, these men had no book to guide them – only a friend who could make them whole. That kind of spiritual intuition – simple, yet profound – runs throughout the book.

“Don't Forget We're Here Forever” is a generous and courageous invitation to see UK Christianity afresh, through the eyes of someone at the edges of faith. Ash does not flinch from exposing power imbalances, theological tribalism, or cultural eccentricities, and this book is fruitful if we readers have an open, reflexive heart and mind. Yet she also bears witness to something sacred, surprising, and enduring, which is deeply encouraging.

The book is a reminder that the Church is not a brand to market or a project to manage – it is a mystery we're called to participate in. And more than anything, it points us back to the beating heart of those searching for faith: real people, still searching for wholeness. Be encouraged as you read it that those in their twenties and thirties (like me) have faith, and are still here.

At one point, she reflects on her first encounter with charismatic Christianity, observing that it felt as though “harm [was] stitched into the other side of its welcome.”

NETWORK SPOTLIGHT

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

A Time of Blessing at Fenlands Church Tydd Gote, Lincolnshire

We celebrated our twentieth anniversary in September with a weekend of celebration and thanksgiving. There has been a Chapel and fellowship in Tydd Gote since 1841. In 2004, the congregation had dwindled to less than ten and we wondered if the work at Tydd Gote had come to an end. But the Lord had other ideas. In 2005 with the support of Rural Ministries a team of eight people from Nene Family Church began supporting Tydd.



“Lift up your heads, you gates; lift them up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.” Psalm 24:9 (NIV)



In 2010 the Chapel's name changed from Nene Family Church Tydd Gote to Fenlands Church and over time a sister church was planted. Like all churches there have been times of struggle and times of blessing. We have seen many adults and children reached for the Lord, through café style and family services, homegroups, groups for parents/carers and pre-school children, Sunday School, children's clubs, youth clubs and events, Alpha and family fun days.

Much cake has been consumed, many meals have been enjoyed together. We have celebrated birth and marriage, significant birthdays and events, we have rejoiced in those who have accepted Jesus and who have been baptised and we have shared the grief of loss of loved ones who have gone to be with the Lord. We have grown from a team of eight to a congregation that averages between fifty and sixty committed members.

As we look to the future, we are thankful that there are always new people coming along to share and bring active faith into the fellowship. It might be an old building but the message of salvation and life through faith in Jesus remains relevant and vital.

On the Beach with Coastal Roots, Perranporth, Cornwall

We've had some wonderful moments in our missional community together recently, including celebrating four of our awesome young people who decided to get baptised in the sea at the beginning of June! It's a privilege and a joy to hear their stories and to be a part of their faith journey as they work out what it means to be friends with Jesus and how this can change and transform their lives... we're excited at what God is doing in the next generation and for all that is ahead in the future for these beautiful souls.

Please pray for our youth leaders and that God would continue to raise up a team around the key leaders involved at present.

As the sun came out we had some blessed, creative beach church gatherings over the summer, prayer walking, praying for the men in our community and thinking about the fruit of the Holy Spirit in our lives to name a few. We've loved pressing into discipleship and learning together as we've studied the Prayer Course together during the week and we continue to do life together often alongside those on the edge of our community, building relationships and sharing stories.

Your prayers for our local toddler group would be appreciated. The team who run it have had to step back and we pray for others to come forward if this is a way we are meant to continue to serve Perranporth. Over the summer, we served our community with hospitality at a massive triathlon event. Please pray for relationships to be made and to be nurtured from that event. We partnered with the Scripture Union team at their annual beach mission in August and continued to work on relationships built up over the years.



Thank you for standing with us in prayer for all that God is up to in this beautiful little slice of space on the South West coast of England!

EFC, Sutton On Sea, Lincolnshire

Here in Lincolnshire, our fellowship very much enjoyed our wonderful summer programme. Our Community Groups organised a whole selection of lovely events including Craft Group, Games Group, Beetle Drive and our Christian film night. We are planning an Alpha Course in September and we very much enjoyed supporting the Scripture Union again in August, as they held their community barbecue on our lawn.

We are still praying for more support within our leadership but we are encouraged by those who want to commit themselves to serve within the church. Our Holidays At Home project where we lay activities on for the elderly for three days in the church under Churches Together is very well supported. We continue to hold regular Services in two care homes for the elderly in our area and we continue to partake in Open The Book in our local school.

Please continue to pray for us as we seek support in leadership and as we pray for all our brothers and sisters in our Rural Ministries Churches.

Gosberton Baptist Church, Gosberton, Lincolnshire

My husband Steve recently preached on 'The Widow of Nain.' (Luke 7). It touched me very deeply due to the difficult time we are having at our little rural chapel.

Our congregation was growing, heartwarming after years of praying. Folk coming in were lovely and worked hard to help us reach out to our community. Then jealousy reared its ugly head, trouble erupted and a wonderful couple left, resulting in others feeling very uneasy. I was heartbroken and could not stop crying and feeling so hurt for them all. They are my family, and I love them all so dearly, but this was hard and painful.

It's so encouraging to read everyone's stories in MOSAIC. But when things go wrong, we question ourselves endlessly, become restless, upset, angry and even depressed. However, we are never alone and I am comforted in the knowledge that many have felt the same and that our infinitely caring and compassionate Father hears us.

Keep praying, stand firm, be brave and courageous. The clouds will blow over and the sun will shine again. We may not get the answers we want but our loving God hears us and miracles happen as our tears of sadness turn to tears of joy. I continue to pray for those in pain, knowing that God holds them in his arms of love as He holds us all. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you." Isaiah 43:2.

Your prayers for us would be much appreciated.

Sam and Suzie Abramian, Missional Listeners, Hunstanton, Norfolk

It's amazing how God works through conversations and stirs people's hearts long after we've spent time with them. We've had the pleasure of walking alongside people who have started asking

questions about faith, and then others at a point when they decide to follow Jesus. It's been very rare when we have enjoyed the whole journey with someone. But, in the past two years, we have been blessed

Parkview Chapel, Botesdale, Suffolk

The sign at the front of our church building states that we are a “Church For The Community.” One of the ways we try to achieve this is by offering our building for people to use.

On a regular basis we host groups specialising in art, fitness, amateur theatre and model electronics railways, two art groups as well as an alternative educational provider who work with young people experiencing barriers to accessing education, employment and society generally. Then, less regularly, people use Parkview for family gatherings, parties etc.

Some of these groups have church regulars who attend them, but the majority of all of those group members do not yet know Jesus. As a result of allowing people and groups from our community to use the church, we now see many at the special events and services that we run. We see our policy of opening our hall to the community as part of our outreach.

We do not want to just be a village hall. This is not something we do to make money, although the groups all offer donations. This is something

we want to do to be a part of our community. And the truth is that we open our building in the hope that through relationships being built it is a small step towards people meeting Jesus.

Yes, just allowing people to see the church as theirs, knowing they are welcome may seem as though we are only planting small seeds. But we hope and we pray that these small seeds will one day grow into something amazing, both for our community, and ultimately in God’s kingdom.



to do just that. A local parent asked about what we do, and our answer was met with the response ‘That’s great but I’m not religious.’ Fast forward nearly twenty months and that person now has a personal relationship with Jesus. It’s been a wonderful journey and reflects the parable of the mustard seed where just a few words in a conversation which looks like nothing, grows over time in their hearts

to the point where there is the new life of the Kingdom. It encourages us to be patient and expectant because God is at work through the Spirit in ways we cannot see, and between our initial conversation with this person and the next were fifteen months! It also reminds us that God is the one doing the work, we have the pleasure to join in and walk alongside others in the journey.

Taking Ground in the Axe Valley



Something remarkable is happening in the market town of Axminster in East Devon. Crime rates are down and there is a drop in anti-social behaviour. The police are working with the church, helping people on the margins of society to feel seen and loved.

Kay d'Albertanson was ordained in 2015 and spent a year with a research team looking at the town's needs. At the end of the research year, the team had seven strong outcomes, including working with the local police to set up a drug and alcohol recovery project and moving into Pippins Community Centre, a beautiful Grade II listed building. The last outcome was to undertake Fresh Expressions' Mission Shaped Ministry training to birth a Baptist community of prayer.

"We soon became a faithful prayer presence dwelling at Pippins," Kay explains. "Nine years on, we have thirty-five groups gathering here including a community fridge drop-in, a community garden, three alternative education providers, a breastfeeding support group, memory café, a young people's mental health charity, a national adult literacy charity and a guitar group. Those are just a few of the things that happen here. Pippins is a safe place where people are known by name, a place to flourish, blossom and grow. Everything we do flows from welcoming the most vulnerable in our society, not judging them."

Like many other UK communities, Axminster had a drug and alcohol dependency problem. The difference was that the Neighbourhood Police team didn't sweep it under the carpet. God's timing was perfect.



"As we were praying as a research team, the local police were carrying out their own research. They felt it was time to treat the root cause of crime, not the symptoms. When we met halfway through the research year, they were blown away. They didn't know that churches did research or anything about pioneer ministers. We've worked together closely and they refer people who'd like to recover from addiction to us because they know they will be supported with dignity."

Pippins has a few dedicated expressions of prayer including a group which meets regularly to intercede for the drug and alcohol recovery project. The answers to those prayers have been quite remarkable.

"We have many flourishing stories and one is about a lovely guy who used heroin for twenty years. Now he's completely clean as a result of being safe and known and belonging here. He quickly volunteered as part of his recovery journey and now has a paid role and leads recovery groups for others. We love to celebrate his recovery journey. God is raising up indigenous people like him, from Pippins. Another person who is in recovery from addiction had his vision opened up miraculously to see other people's needs and vulnerabilities. He told us, 'I feel so bad when I go to the foodbank and they give me two huge bags of food. I don't need it all. If we had a cupboard for essential items then people could choose what they need and then the foodbank would have more to give those who really need.' We cried when he said that to us and with some funding, the Pippins Pantry was birthed."

Pippins works closely with young adults with additional needs and those who feel on the margins. There is no “one size fits all” policy. “Gentle Wednesdays” runs from 9.30am to 1.30pm every week, overseen by another person who has a flourishing story and has been creatively working with Pippins for a few years now.

“They came to me and said, ‘Can we have a session for gentle people like me to bake and garden and potter, not for noisy people?’ It’s a lovely group and so welcomed by the community.”

The neighbourhood police team trust Pippins completely and meet with them regularly to talk through the next batch of problem solving. At one meeting, the police expressed concern about a group of boys at the high school who didn’t fit naturally into mainstream education. The school family support worker emailed Kay to ask if she could send the boys to the gardening and maintenance day. Kay was clear not to send them but to bring them! So they joined in and started baking, crafting and gardening and designed the Pippins community garden. One person in particular really struggled, but the loving, gentle, non-judgemental atmosphere of the centre began to affect them. Now they work at a local farm and have won a place at agricultural college. And so Project Flourish was birthed.



“It’s a beautiful story. This person has found his vocation and is passionate about it. His mum spent years battling the educational system on his behalf. She’s now volunteering on the gardening team three days a week!”

None of this would be happening without a faithful prayer team, including two lovely women in their seventies and eighties respectively who are never afraid to wield the sword of the spirit. They prayer walk around the building, anoint it with oil and listen to God’s voice.

Kay met Simon Mattholie, Rural Ministries’ former CEO, on her last day at Bristol Baptist College. Some years later, she signed up for the RM reflections, read about rural hubs and got in touch with Jo Allen (our new Joint CEO).

“We met on Zoom, got on really well and now we’ve run a couple of events at Pippins. Jo led a retreat at the centre and I know I can chat to her any time. I love RM’s supportive and nourishing reflections too.”

Two centuries ago, there was a local prophecy that the Axe Valley would no longer be a place of dry bones but filled with the Holy Spirit. Kay believes this is coming true.

**“God is on the move in a quiet and gentle way.
Little by little, He is taking ground in Axminster.”**

St. Andrews Community Church, Craven Arms, Shropshire

It has been almost six years since we last had a pastor. When our last pastor left, our whole church family prayed for God's guidance. He answered our prayers by confirming with some of our members that He himself would pastor us.

Soon after, He sent us a retired gentleman with a wealth of experience of preaching God's word for many years to join us here in St. Andrews. He is a wonderful man, who continues to inspire all of us in his teaching and wisdom.

However, God has spoken to some of our congregation. We feel that now is the time to move forward and seek a pastor to continue the progress we have made in the past five years. After much prayer and seeking the Lord's will, we have decided to employ a part-time pastor, three days a week.

As I write this, we are discussing the possibility of approaching a person who is known to many of us, to see if he might be interested in the position. We continue to pray that with God's help, (He already knows our future), we can move St. Andrews on to its next chapter of serving God.

We hope to be able to let you know our progress in the next edition of MOSAIC.

Life Centre, Wychwood, Oxfordshire

"Actually, it's a run, not a race." At least, that's what we told them at our 'Fun Run' on 14th June.

At the Life Centre, we want to share and invest in the life of our community, with the hope and prayer this leads to pointing them to 'life in all its fullness' (John 10:10), found in Christ. So, we put on events like these.

Not as intentional 'gospel opportunities' but to build relationships. This was our second event, bigger, with more distance options (2.5k, 5k & 8k) on local trails. It was a wonderful morning, and this year, no scarecrows to send people off in the wrong direction! (It's a long story, perhaps for another time).

A hundred and ten people took part, each with their own goal whether to compete or complete. We're already making plans for next year! Please give thanks with us for how well it all went, and the support of others in pulling it all together. Pray too for long term relationships to be developed through events like these, allowing us to share Jesus with them.

By the time you read this, our 'Rumble in the Jungle' Holiday Club (28th-30th July) will have been and gone. Having shared from Ephesians 6, please pray that these young (primary age) lives will be equipped with the full armour of God.

Please continue to pray that we can point people to Jesus through our regular outreach ministries - from Cost of Living Support, to our Cafe and Youth Club.

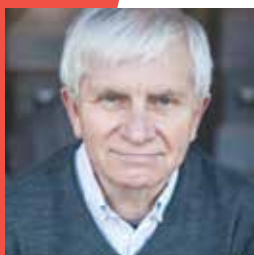
Finally, we give thanks for our church family (Wychwood Baptist) and pray that we would grow in love and faithfulness to the Lord Jesus.



The Joy of Collaboration



Roy



Alan



How do we work with the changing nature of church and society?

One of the many blessings of being an editor working in the Christian charity sector is that I get to read lots of faith-related books and that I am fortunate enough to be part of a huge number of incredibly inspiring conversations. Over the past four years, I've learned how hard it is to write a good book, but when I caught up with two amazing men of God who have written one between them, I was intrigued to know how they had done it.

On the face of it, these co-authors are an unlikely pairing. Roy Searle, the an Apostolic Advisor at Rural Ministries is a Northumbrian and proud Geordie and Alan Roxburgh a card-carrying Scouser. After a varied career in urban and rural pioneering church and missional communities work, teaching in Bible colleges and seminaries and acting as a mentor to younger pioneers and leaders, Roy was instrumental in founding the Northumbria Community. Alan left Liverpool for Canada in his teens, worked in academia before being called to be a pastor, taught in a various theological colleges and wrote fifteen books.

Over the years, both men began asking themselves the same questions.

How do we work with the changing nature of church and society? How do we form missional communities, communities of hope? What does it mean to be God's people in a crumbling and unravelling context?

Roy and Alan met at the Northumbria Community's mother house in the late

Nineties and did some work together on missional practice. However, it wasn't until lockdown that they realised that they had the same concerns and passions for where God's people find themselves in a rapidly changing world. Over the next four years, they worked upon their book, "Forming Communities of Hope in the Great Unraveling."

"We recognised that church leaders were experiencing high levels of anxiety. People wanted to get back to the way things were before Covid, to fix issues they perceived as broken," explains Alan. "Roy and I both felt that we needed a radically different understanding of where we were and to ask a completely new set of questions. It wasn't about going back to pre-Covid times but navigating a new landscape."

Roy and Alan spoke to hundreds of people during the process of writing their book.

"We came across the notion of the Seventy Five Year Story. After the Second World War, a new kind of lifestyle started to settle across the West. Certain characteristics took centre stage in our culture, namely managerialism, individualism and consumerism. These have shaped how we form our families, lives and churches and all of our church visions, programmes and projects are embedded in them. The only trouble is, they aren't working."

In 2025, this story has come apart and isn't giving western culture what it promised. The trouble is, it's the only one many know. Churches find themselves disoriented and paralysed, leaders burnt out and exhausted. Roy and Alan's book has suggestions for a new way.

"We have identified three practices – dwelling, discerning and exploring," says Alan. "It's important to emphasise that they are core practices and not strategies that direct us towards forming communities of hope. What we want to do with the book is to gently invite people to change the direction of their attention. In the traditional church, under the Seventy Five Year Story, the focus is on making the internal systems work with rotas, projects and committees. We want leaders to ask themselves, 'To what extent am I dwelling in my neighbourhood? How much am I attending to my people's stories?' We suggest that they begin to identify a small number of people in their congregation who are questioning if endless hard work is what the Kingdom is really about. Invite them to do some small experiments with their lifestyles. Listen to their stories. It's a culture change and a lifelong journey."

So where does Rural Ministries come in?

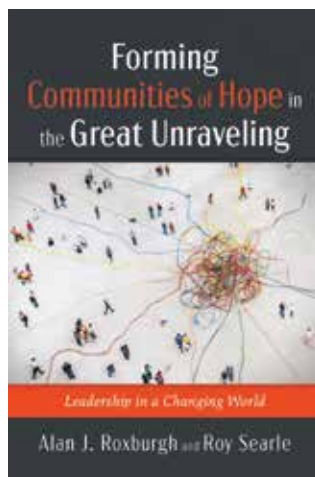
Roy shared how Simon Mattholie has been absolutely fantastic. "His understanding that the tides of Christendom are on the wane and that we can't go on as we always have has been both affirming and very encouraging. Out of the conversations we held with leaders in the writing of our book, with the help of Simon and others, we formed the Commons, an initiative that gets people around 'tables' to share and learn together in a safe and supportive environment. Rural Ministries gave the Commons a grant which was enormously helpful in building companionship and relationship, supporting

leaders and those in the church who are finding themselves in an unfamiliar place, many burnt out and lonely. While Alan and I were writing the book, we were having conversations with leaders across the world, all of whom were finding the Commons a lifeline."

The book is proving to be a wonderful way of giving hope and purpose to people all over the world. By emphasising community and intentionality, it is reaching those who thought there was no other way.

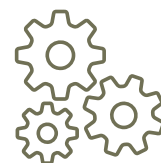
In May this year, Alan and Roy launched an online book club, a great way to collaborate with others. Every week, they took a section of their book and shared it, divided into breakout groups to discuss it, then returned to the group. It has proved to be encouraging, missional and fruitful.

"It isn't just a talking shop. It worked so well that we will be rolling out further 'table' conversations in the autumn."



This book is so very much part of the Rural Ministries' ethos of intentionality, missional listening and community. Written by two men steeped in theology, the Bible and both pastoral and missional experience, it is a publication of vital importance to the health of the western church in the twenty first century.

To buy your copy search online for "Forming Communities of Hope in the Great Unraveling."



"We have identified three practices – dwelling, discerning and exploring,"

Great Moulton Evangelical Chapel, Great Moulton, Norfolk

Great Moulton really wants to grow its chapel congregation. We're now displaying leaflets all around our community. Some of our members attended the local VE Day eightieth celebration and remembrance anniversary at the local village hall. There were a hundred and forty five people of all ages enjoying the day. We had several useful chats which gave us an opportunity to invite people to services or coffee mornings. A couple visiting from Germany came to one of our services and commented how uplifting it was in comparison to their services back home. One recently widowed gentleman decided to join our coffee morning. He's meeting more people, which will help with his loneliness and we will support him and encourage him to come to more activities at the chapel.

Church growth involves sowing seeds, spreading the Gospel, and sharing God's word with others. It also requires reaping what has been sown or taking time to nurture relationships

and help those who have accepted Christ grow in their faith. Here at Great Moulton, we often ponder Mark 4:26-29.

This may seem obvious, but prayer is the cornerstone of our attempt to grow our chapel from our own small villages and those around us. We pray together regularly. By connecting with God through prayer, we open ourselves to His heart for the lost, hear His voice, and become sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading, and most importantly ensures God's agenda is our agenda. Yes, we can work harder and smarter but without prayer, it won't amount to anything. No great work has ever been accomplished for God without spending time in prayer.

We do all we can to make church visitors feel welcome. We really care about newcomers and ask if they have any prayer requests. We will keep you updated on our growth here in Great Moulton.



Bob and Mary Bain, Village Chaplains in Shilbottle, Northumberland

Shilbottle is a former mining village of about three thousand people. It is strung out over nearly a mile, with a top and a bottom end. We live right in the middle next to shops! We feel that God specially placed us here, so we could belong to all of the village. There is a mix of newer folks plus those whose families have lived here for generations.

We have regular engagement with the village community through helping at a weekly meal for the elderly. It has been heartening to see childhood faith reawakened in some of the ladies. Mary leads an Open the Book team, going into the local primary school and also reads Bible stories to a small pre-school group.

A group of Christians prayer walk around the village every year, as well as joining with others for a monthly prayer meeting. In December, we have a big

Pinchbeck Baptist Church, Pinchbeck, Lincolnshire

As mentioned in the last copy of MOSAIC, God has been guiding our Pastor Sue Saunders toward a vision of growth and making our church fit for future purpose. The Leadership Team are now at the stage of taking the architect's quote to the Church Meeting with a view to the necessary drawings being produced for this project as soon as possible. We are excited about getting this underway as we feel we will be able to do more outreach in Pinchbeck and surrounding villages. Please pray for our Pastor's vision of growth for the church and the outreach we believe God is talking to us about.

Following our month of prayer, we felt it should continue on a monthly basis as prayer is a very important part of any church and a time to listen to exactly what God is saying to us. This has proved to be a very informative time of contemplation.

nativity light display on our front lawn, which attracts a lot of attention. At Easter and Christmas, we send every household a gospel newspaper and a seasonal card with prayers. Our desire is that everyone gets the opportunity to receive a clear gospel message through this literature, as well as through our presence in the village.

When we first arrived here eight years ago, we felt God's leading to create a prayer garden, and to make our home a place of prayer, for the use of individuals and groups. We would love to see you if you are nearby, but please telephone before you come! (07988 564299)

Please pray for

- The salvation of many in the village through the witness of all God's people.
- Good relationships among Christians in the village.

On 4th May the church celebrated the 80th anniversary of VE day by holding a Bring and Share afternoon to remember not only the end of hostilities but also to remember those who gave their lives for our freedom. The afternoon started with a time of reflection, listening to a recording of Churchill speaking about the end of the war in Europe. We then enjoyed a wonderful bring and share lunch. The afternoon concluded with a most enjoyable VE Day quiz. This was a wonderful opportunity for all the congregation of the church to spend time together.

2 Peter v18 "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to him be glory both now and forever."



Village Church, Oldmeldrum, Aberdeenshire

Village Church continues to be a hub of activity in the town of Oldmeldrum in Aberdeenshire. The Village Hub is on every Tuesday and is a place for belonging, community and fun.

We recently started a weekly “Learn to Sew” group which is run by one of the first members of our church, Freda. Sewing is her passion and gift which she is able to share with others, helping them build confidence, skills and also give back to the community. Items made in this group are sold at a craft sale with proceeds going to the church and wider community.

At Easter we had lots of fun with over seventy family and community members joining Village Church for a Easter celebration. Reaching into the heart of the community is at the heart of what Village is about and Easter was a great chance to celebrate that.

We know how challenging the summer holidays can be for many families, so we ran two initiatives:

- Pack your own school bag – support for local families with young people heading back to school
- Summer picnic – where families can access food for lunches throughout the summer holidays.

We ran our annual Noah’s Ark themed sports day which was a great way for all the community to enjoy the start of summer.

We are also going through a season of transition as our founding Pastor Bridget Sunderland steps back to give her time to setting up the Village Network, a pioneering network to support and resource frontline missionaries, leaders and church planters. Please pray for Village Church as they seek a new pastor for the next exciting chapter ahead and for all who hold the church through this transition time.

Epping Green Chapel Ministries, Epping Green, Essex

We give thanks to God as we share our regular ministry update. Here’s what’s been happening at Epping Green Chapel.

We now offer Holy Communion every Sunday, holding a morning service on the first and third Sundays and an evening service at 5pm on the second and fourth. Our Sunday Evening Services are themed gatherings lasting forty five minutes, including Holy Communion. These are especially designed to speak to sceptics, atheists, seekers, and believers alike – those on the journey of faith, or simply curious.

Our Midweek Gatherings take place on Wednesdays 2pm, except on the third Wednesday of the month. We study the Bible, learning how to interpret the Word of God with depth, clarity and reverence. On Thursdays at 7pm, we join together for a short, welcoming time of prayer and spiritual uplift for all those who need encouragement.

At our chapel, Christ is honoured, the Bible is upheld and all are welcome.

We would like to share a word of encouragement with you.

When your soul feels weary and the road seems long,
Let Christ be your compass and Scripture your song.
For even in silence, His Spirit still speaks –
To the lost and the doubting, the strong and the weak.
So come as you are, for grace never tires,
And the love of the Saviour still kindles new fires.

Waypoint Church, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Northumberland

At Waypoint Church we're into mission for life. One-off events are great, but how can we sustain a lifetime of sharing the good news of Jesus, without getting burnt out? How can we juggle looking after our own kids whilst also prioritising children and young people in our church and community? It can feel as if we are always sowing, but we do not often see the fruit of people being saved. But, when it comes to sharing faith with the next generation, joy goes a long way. Summer has given us wonderful opportunities to have a bit more fun; with Little Lights toddler group meeting outside, and an amazing Immerse service on the beach in June. We are encouraged that God is on the move – even when we can't see it.

On Pentecost Saturday, whilst on a family stroll, we met a sixteen year old young man and got talking about God. He came to church the next day and gave his life to Jesus! Please pray he continues to come to church and be discipled, and that others like him come to faith. Thank you, Rural Ministries for supporting us financially so that Jenny (our 0-5's and Families Leader) is employed to lead Little Lights. Please pray with us that our youth ministry grows and that we can link with our local High School, which for years has not had involvement with local churches. We're praying Amos 9:13; that harvest is coming soon; and with is so much more joy!

"Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the ploughman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it."



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

Monthly: 1st Tuesday: 10am

**2nd September
7th October
4th November
2nd December**



Scan to join, or go to the link
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Autumn **Book Review**

Faith Habits and How To Form Them

by Emma Timms

Reviewed by Ruth Leigh



Emma Timms

If I had to find just one word to describe this book, it would be “reassuring.”

When a writer’s bio informs you that she loves hiking and swimming, has four children and is partial to a ceilidh, the chances are that her writing style will not be prescriptive or didactic as so many “How To” books are. A woman who runs an online community called The Prayer Orchard and who acts as a spiritual director and wellness coach should know her faith onions, as it were, and as I dived into Emma Timms’ book, this proved to be the case.

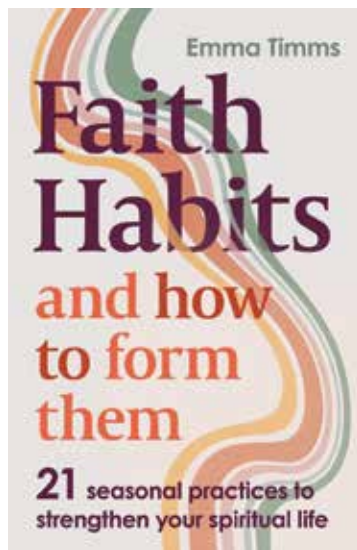
The introduction was reassuringly human. Yes, the author rises early before the children are awake to commune with God. No, she doesn’t immediately fall into a deeply satisfying contemplative state but scrolls through her phone like the rest of us. I like to know where I am with a book and reading that as a relatively new Christian, when she became a mother, her faith habits had to change (too tired to read the Bible, spent most of her time in the church creche, could no longer volunteer), I empathised and remembered that time myself.

Helpfully, she speaks about ‘rules of life’ and gives an illustration. She says

this: “I think the best analogy I have heard is that a rule of life is like a trellis. It is a support system that helps your life to grow and flourish. The rule of life is the trellis, and your life is the flower. The rule helps your life to not fall down and guides your direction.”



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I found her citation of various papers on contemplative practices extremely helpful. Habits are so easily formed and it's not because we are weak. We are programmed to act in a certain way. Changing our habits is hard. And it has to be intentional. The use of case studies was also enormously encouraging. I like to hear how other

people come at the tricky business of looking inside themselves to reassure the sad little girl or boy, and how they work on changing destructive habits into healthy ones. Timms keeps it short and simple with five points from each person. It's easy to read but it really sank in.

This book is so well planned and laid out. By the time I got to "Daily Practices" on page 54, I was feeling that there might, just might, be a chance that I too would be able to find a faith habit that I could actually stick to (apart from my morning prayers and general chats with God over a twenty-four hour period while working and parenting and spinning plates, that is.) The practices are laid out as a choice (very good). Lectio Divina, centering prayer, liturgical prayer, journaling, the examen (developed by St Ignatius) and breath prayers. I read them all thoroughly and one jumped out at me. You may well find the same.

If I had to find just one word to describe this book, it would be 'reassuring.' The author is so honest about her own struggles with managing a daily life, addressing challenges, finding a way through. I loved

Yes, the author rises early before the children are awake to commune with God. No, she doesn't immediately fall into a deeply satisfying contemplative state but scrolls through her phone like the rest of us.

what she has to say in the middle of the section about what she did when her children were young.

"You might notice I'm not mentioning much about specific prayer practices; this is because, for a long time, I've tried to live without a sacred/secular divide. It's all spiritual and prayerful if you lean your heart that way ..."

Yes. Exactly that. Taking a day where you do nothing but focus on the family, however that looks (Ice cream on the beach, anyone? Spontaneous wander down the lane? Muck about in the playpark and leave your phone at home?) My children are late teens/early twenties now, but looking back, the most intentional times of special moments were time spent together minus external stimulus. And so it is with our relationship with God.

Timms talks about seasons and how we change through life, fasting, cleansing and going on retreat. Towards the end, she lays out a workbook for practical help. Her tone throughout is calm, reassuring, measured and honest. There are lots of snapshots of her everyday life. In short, it's just the kind of book I love to read and I know I will be coming back to it again and again. Highly recommended!

Editor's note: for the sake of transparency, it is important to state that Emma Timms is married to the Joint CEO of Rural Ministries, Jon Timms. Ruth Leigh is an independent book reviewer with no vested interest in the sale of the book.



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