

ONE FAMILY

NEWS FROM GREYFRIARS AND NEW HOPE • ISSUE 14 • SPRING/SUMMER 2024

Heaven

IN THIS ISSUE

TRANSFORM READING • CAP • MUSTARD TREE
WORK • SANCTUARY • NEW HOPE

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Welcome to the spring/summer edition of One Family.

We all love to read and tell stories – it is part of what it means to be human. In each issue of the magazine, we bring you stories of what God is doing through the people, the ministries, and the mission of Greyfriars and New Hope.

As a church, we are working our way through the letter to the Romans. It tells the story of God's saving purposes in this world, through Jesus. As part of the letter, the Apostle Paul helps us understand the bigger story of God's faithfulness, God's promises and God's call to us, his people.

The story of God's redemption in this world didn't end two thousand years ago: God continues to work out the story of his salvation through the church worldwide. Most of the stories in this magazine focus on what God is doing in Reading, but we also have some stories of the global mission of which Greyfriars and New Hope are part. As we look to the church across the world, we see God working in miraculous and supernatural ways. God is growing the worldwide church at a faster rate than global population growth itself, most of this happening in the southern hemisphere.

Your life is a key part of God's story, to bring his light and grace to the people you work with, live alongside and encounter each day. I pray that this magazine will encourage you to live for Christ, full of faith, full of purpose, and full of his Spirit.

David Walker

Vicar of Greyfriars and New Hope



One Family Magazine Issue 14 • Spring/Summer 2024

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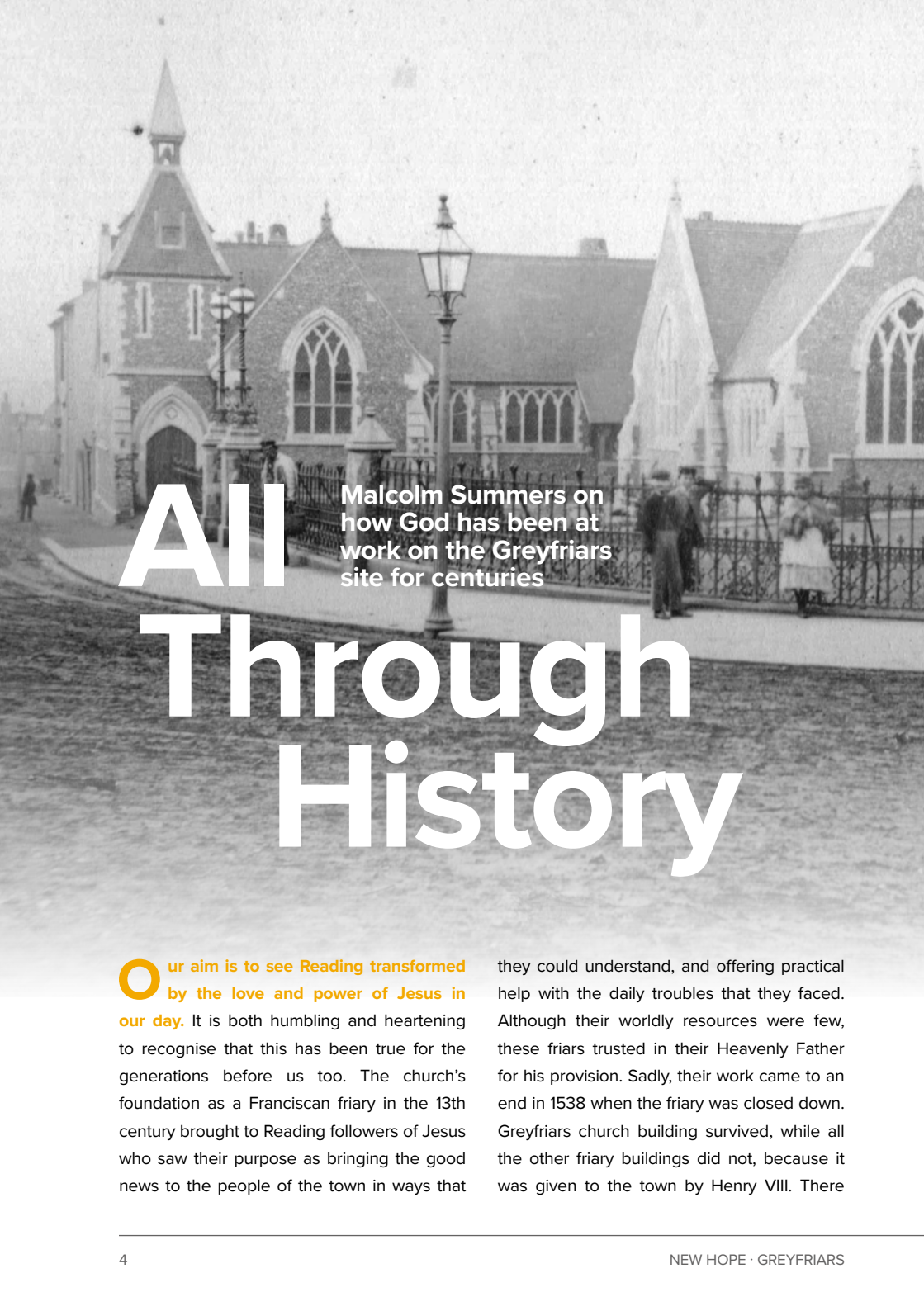
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All Through History

Malcolm Summers on how God has been at work on the Greyfriars site for centuries

Our aim is to see Reading transformed by the love and power of Jesus in our day. It is both humbling and heartening to recognise that this has been true for the generations before us too. The church's foundation as a Franciscan friary in the 13th century brought to Reading followers of Jesus who saw their purpose as bringing the good news to the people of the town in ways that

they could understand, and offering practical help with the daily troubles that they faced. Although their worldly resources were few, these friars trusted in their Heavenly Father for his provision. Sadly, their work came to an end in 1538 when the friary was closed down. Greyfriars church building survived, while all the other friary buildings did not, because it was given to the town by Henry VIII. There

followed a period of 325 years before it became a place of worship and a source of Christian witness once again.

Greyfriars became a parish church in December 1863, fully restored after being mostly used as a prison, and ready to resume its mission. In the 1860s there were some 200 children of school age in the parish who had never attended a school. Consequently, barely a year passed before a large building was constructed where the Centre now stands, catering for the education of over 500 children. A Mission Hall was opened in North Street (opposite where the ambulance station is now) to reach into the centre of the parish. Its 780 seats were soon filled to overflowing, with the gospel being clearly preached week by week.

The work undertaken by the church has varied as the needs of the town have changed, from a daily service of prayer throughout WW1 to a drop-in centre for the unemployed in the Memorial Hall in the strife-ridden 1980s; from overflowing Bible classes (including special times for female servants to attend!),



Greyfriars Mission Hall



The building in 1875

to outreach lunches and talks to the business people of the town. Over the last 20 to 25 years, new areas of outreach and support have been opened up through the establishment of New Hope Community Church in the heart of the parish and the Greyfriars Nursery.

Although Reading has always been the church's primary mission field, support for worldwide mission has been a notable feature of Greyfriars' ministry. More than one hundred individuals and couples have responded to God's call and been supported by the church as mission partners over the years. Similarly, many have gone into training for church ministry from our congregations.

As we look around us at the needs of our town today, we can rejoice and give thanks to God that Greyfriars continues to serve its community and its needs in many ways, including through refugee work, support for the bereaved and the poverty stricken, Bed for the Night, Street Pastors, student work, and partnering with many local organisations – to reach all those who need to know the touch of Jesus to transform their lives.

A God-shaped Partnership

David Walker is joined by Katherine Shepherd, CEO of the Mustard Tree

DW: Can you tell us a bit about the Mustard Tree?

KS: At the Mustard Tree we are passionate about local people supporting local people. We work to identify unmet needs and innovate and grow projects which support individuals who are isolated and facing disadvantage. We don't want anyone who is going through a difficult time to have to face it alone. Our projects are varied but are all designed to empower people and bring lasting positive change:

- **Rahab** (rahab.co.uk): Supporting those who are working in the sex industry, including those who are exploited. Working with them to break free from cycles of abuse, poverty and addiction.
- **Starting Point** (startingpoint.org.uk): Providing mentoring and creating opportunities for young people aged 11–25 who face disadvantage.
- **Engage Befriending** (engage-uk.org): Reducing isolation and loneliness by developing positive relationships and networks in our communities.



'We don't want anyone who is going through a difficult time to have to face it alone'

DW: We are thrilled that, having completed our redevelopment project, the Mustard Tree were keen to move into the offices in Sackville Street. Can you tell us why it helps you to work closely with the local church, and in this case be based alongside Greyfriars and New Hope?

KS: The timings all came together and it felt very God-led. We have been partnering with Greyfriars for a long time, and started our Engage coffee morning for older people in the Atrium when it opened. We have now started running young people's hubs from the Centre. There are great opportunities at Greyfriars and New Hope to encourage people to feel welcomed and to connect with the church community.

DW: Partnerships are key to us in fulfilling God's call and we are certainly delighted for the Mustard Tree to be based in the Sackville Street offices and to use space in the new Centre. Although we don't yet know all the areas that will benefit us both, we are praying that we can partner on youth outreach, helping the poor and those who are marginalised by society, in areas where we can really make a difference for the kingdom of God. What are your plans over the next year?

KS: There are so many opportunities to partner together. Whether it's through joining up activities to provide holistic support, planning a new project, or through volunteering or prayer. This year we are developing our navigators programme, meeting young people in A&E at a time of crisis, and then offering support through our Starting Point hubs and mentoring to enable young people to unlock and release their potential. We are building our Studio offering young people a voice to influence decision-making and meaningful work experience. We continue to build our chaplaincy team supporting women sex working in the Western Elms area. We are developing our support for older people through befriending and the coffee morning. I'm also passionate about developing the support we offer to parents. So if anything I've said captures your imagination then get in touch; we would love to hear your ideas and to connect the people we work with to opportunities in Greyfriars and New Hope.

'If anything I've said captures your imagination then get in touch; we would love to hear your ideas'

DW: It really feels like this will be a God-shaped partnership that demonstrates the unity across the church in Reading. How important is unity between Christian charities and churches, and what is your prayer as you continue to work alongside the churches in Reading?

KS: We believe we are one part of God's vibrant and diverse church in Reading and we want to work together to see God transform lives. There is a lot of synergy in our visions! I often talk about each one of us holding a piece of a jigsaw puzzle. God creates us for a purpose, with our own unique gifts, passions, skills and experiences. My prayer is that as each one of us does what we are called to, and we work together in unity, God will build his church and release his blessing and we will see individuals and communities find hope and be forever changed through God's love and power.



To find out more or get involved please visit themustardtree.org or email katherine.shepherd@themustardtree.org.

New Season at New Hope

An update from Chrissy Haines

New Hope church was planted in 2001 with a vision for incarnational ministry to the local community. It includes a group of terraced houses in which people live for 3–5 years to establish Christ-centred community within the church and the local area.

The community around New Hope has changed dramatically in recent times and the church has been prayerfully seeking God's will for how our ministry can best match the changing context. In January 2019 the congregation heard God calling the church to stop, let go, and "let the vineyard go fallow". This was a hard word to receive, and in the following years we've been through a tough season of uprooting. The more we've been uprooted, though, the clearer God's call has become: to let go of everything we cling to, in our church and in our own lives, and to cling to Christ alone. He's inviting us to return to ancient paths, to work out the fullness of discipleship across our entire weeks.

At the start of this year, we collectively let go of our old ways of doing church, taking things back to the basics. We stopped our traditional format of Sunday services, adopting a more home-church style of gathering, with a focus on group Bible study. We moved to mostly lay leadership, with Chrissy and Carl Haines leading the church, and Abi Ord remaining a



‘The more we’ve been
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dedicated staff member to support the church pastorally and in its outreach.

There is a deep sense of joy and excitement in the church as we refix our gaze on Jesus and see where God is taking us. We're deepening in friendship and discipleship and slowly working out how to share more of life together. From here, we don't know where God will lead us! All are welcome to join us on this journey, especially as we build more rhythms beyond Sunday mornings. Please especially be praying for us, though: that we walk humbly, hear God's voice clearly, and that his will be done through us.

On the Money

Duncan Ross tells us about Greyfriars' new partnership with Christians Against Poverty



What makes someone give up a safe, rewarding career in financial services? In 1996, John Kirkby believed God was calling him to apply his money skills to help those in financial need. Fast forward 28 years, and Christians Against Poverty, led by John, has helped many thousands of people to address their money worries. CAP's reputation is so strong that money guru Martin Lewis steers his followers to CAP, both for beating debt and for household money management.

What's this got to do with Greyfriars? CAP extends its reach by enlisting partner churches. And for 2024 and beyond, we're in! Greyfriars has signed up as a CAP church. Fronting our Money Management course, from the Greyfriars congregation, is Duncan Ross, who has recently trained as a CAP Money Coach. A former Maths teacher, Duncan felt he was being nudged by God to use his enjoyment of numbers to help those in need in our community. Duncan to vicar David: "David, do we have any CAP involvement?" David to Duncan: "No, but wouldn't it be great if we did!" It's not only God who can nudge.

Who is the course for? Anyone who has to manage household finances and would like to become less anxious or just smarter at creating money plans. The course is free and open to all.

Using CAP expert videos, group discussions and fun exercises, you'll learn to:

- build and balance a household budget in the short and longer term
- understand what spending is essential in your life, and what is not
- spot – and avoid – potential bumps in your financial road.

Course attendees will be provided with a CAP-hosted private spreadsheet, which is designed to accept your personal details of income and outgoings. Paper-based planning will be supported too. Duncan and other helpers will be happy to support you as much or as little as you wish in creating your personal money plan.

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Our first course runs on four Monday evenings in April in the Greyfriars Centre. More will follow. Interested in joining?

Email CAP@greyfriars.org.uk to find out more.





Work matters

David Walker on being called and equipped at work

For the last 15 years I have worked as a minister in the Church of England, passionate about equipping all God's people for ministry wherever they may be. Prior to that I spent 15 years working in business helping telecoms companies develop their global strategies. During my time in business I had a very clear sense of purpose and calling from God, that I was to be a light and a messenger for the Gospel in my place of work. Before I graduated from university, I worked in a wide variety of jobs: in shops, pubs, restaurants,

cleaning cars, picking litter for the local Council, being a binman, a gardener and even selling underwear in old people's homes!

Whatever you do, your work deeply matters to God because who you are and what you do matters to God. And that includes the 95% of your life when you are at work, on the front-line. Whatever you may think of your job, your pay or your colleagues, God wants to work powerfully through you to help redeem this world and everything in it, and that includes the places where you spend your day-to-day lives – your work. When the Bible speaks about our work, it includes our paid work, unpaid work, housework, and voluntary work.

God created work. The first words in Scripture are “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). God spent six days working, creating, forming, breathing life into creation. And God has created you in his image, to reflect his image to this world. This means that you and I are to make our invisible God visible. That includes us demonstrating his creativity and his care and stewardship and love of this world. We read in Genesis chapter 2 that God put Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to “work it and take care of it”.

So, you and I are created by God to work. Work isn't a distraction from our faith. It's not a filler between Sundays. It's not just a means

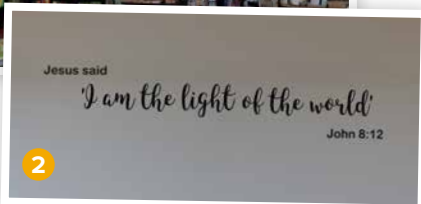
‘Work isn't a distraction from our faith. It's not a filler between Sundays’

‘Part of God's plan for his creation to flourish is to see your workplace flourishing. You are called by God to be his light, his representative’

to an end. It is a core part of what it means for us to be human and it's at the heart of God's call upon our lives to join with him to redeem society and this world. Work is part of what it means to be fully alive in Christ.

The Bible is full of people at work: builders, stonemasons, tanners, musicians, kings, tent-makers, soldiers, farmers, fishermen, doctors, lawyers, tax collectors, shepherds, and more! Whether you work in business, healthcare, education, public service, the arts or any other sector, God needs you there. You might be the only Christian in your team. You might be the only Christian in your place of work. You may be the only one to bring the hope of Christ to that place and those people where you work. “Whatever you do,” writes the Apostle Paul, “do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Colossians 3:23).

Part of God's plan for his creation to flourish is to see your workplace flourishing. These are the places where culture is set, where policies are made, where lives are shaped and relationships are built. These are places where you are called by God, to be his light, his representative. This is pioneering ministry on the frontline and God is calling you to bring his kingdom there.



LIGHTING UP THE ATRIUM

1 “Let your light shine” (Matthew 5:16): prominently displayed in the Atrium, this verse is taken from a sermon Jesus preached to a crowd, reminding us of the counter-cultural lifestyle that God seeks for his followers – lights to be seen by many but, unlike the stars from the world of celebrity, we are not there to draw attention to ourselves but to shine brightly so that all might see the good works of God.

2 “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12): with the words “I am”, Jesus echoes back to the first time God names himself in front of Moses at the burning bush. There is something about this name that expresses God’s sovereignty and compassion for everyone. This verse, outside the Prayer Room, reminds anyone coming into the Atrium that God is their light and hope too.

The writing’s on the wall

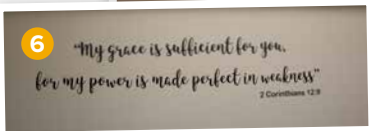
Natalie Worsfold highlights the scriptures we can find around the Greyfriars site

We want our whole site to be a place where anyone can encounter God. As it was redeveloped, themes from scripture inspired and guided us: eight of these verses from the Bible now adorn our walls to remind us that God is alive and lives in and through us.



WATER OF LIFE IN THE CENTRE

- 3 “Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst” (John 4:14): God is there to be found by all. Jesus offers life to a woman with whom he was culturally prohibited from speaking, beside a well: a story captured in John 4. This verse reminds us that accepting the offer of life from Jesus is not restricted. Jesus invites us all to come to know him, to belong.
- 4 “He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul.” (Psalm 23:2-3): In Southlake, our church lounge, we remind ourselves that God restores and comforts us. He is more than enough for us.
- 5 “Whoever believes in me, rivers of living water will flow from within them” (John 7:38): As we are refreshed by the water of life from Jesus, it flows out from us in abundance through the Holy Spirit. This scripture in the Centre Foyer recalls that once we’ve captured the love of Jesus, he helps us to behave and grow into a lifestyle that honours and pleases him.



SEEKING GOD IN WORSHIP

- 6 “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9): In the Vestry, the small room where preachers and clergy prepare for worship, this scripture speaks of how we need to depend on God in all we do. The Apostle Paul is struggling with something. He prays for God to take away this weakness and God’s answer helps keep him humble. God knew Paul’s need, just as he knows our needs.
- 7 “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10): This verse in the Prayer Room is a call to draw close to God, an invitation to come to know him through prayer and stillness, when life today can be so busy and noisy. An invitation to surrender.
- 8 “Act justly, love mercy, walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8): As we leave the Prayer Room, these words above the door remind us what God requires of us, as we step out into the wider world, connecting our faith to our actions and following the simple way of Christ.

Finding Sanctuary

Laura Humphreys & Fiona Summerfield
on an ever-evolving ministry

Greyfriars' vision is to see Reading transformed by the love and power of Jesus, so how amazing that Jesus has given us the opportunity to be his hands and feet ministering to the needs of people from all over the world without leaving the RG postcode! In Sanctuary Ministry we might sit beside someone and listen to the story of why they can never go home, learn of how much being a Christian has cost, hear of family far away that cannot be visited, speak to authority and advocate, offer practical help with English, housing and employment and provide a place of welcome, community, warmth, safety and healing. The enormity of needs can be overwhelming but Jesus can do much with our little, and his hope is in the positive outcomes.

As the 2023 autumn term got underway we saw a worrying trend at our Atrium Sanctuary drop-in. The government had accelerated the

'The enormity of needs can be overwhelming but Jesus can do much with our little'

processing of asylum claims but was giving follow-on notice to quit Home Office accommodation in only seven days to those with positive decisions. Refugee homelessness was growing and winter was fast approaching. We prayed for practical solutions in the face of difficult conversations and rising anxiety and, from foundations laid years before, God brought together "Faith", "Care 4 Calais", "Resettlement", our brand new Centre and



three other churches in Reading to provide a sanctuary night shelter every night of the week over the winter. For four of those nights, over 20 amazing volunteers from our congregation have given shelter to the homeless and food to the hungry in the Centre. Those who have experienced trauma and felt abandoned have been welcomed into a place filled with Jesus' love and kindness and relationship-building has enabled us and our partners to help with follow-on accommodation.

It has also been a great encouragement to see how God has worked to make Conversational Kitchen a regular ministry at the Centre. We provide a conversational English class, facilitated by church volunteers and a TEFL-trained teacher, and lunch cooked by sanctuary seekers themselves. Initially there was uncertainty. We wrestled with where Conversational Kitchen should be located, starting at New Hope but

finding that the Centre was a better option; then came delays in when we could start using the new kitchen at the Centre and a lack of catering volunteers. But God provided answers to our prayers. We received a grant from the Diocese, which was a marker that this was a ministry God wanted us to keep pursuing. Then just as we were about to restart Conversational Kitchen, one of the volunteers felt God say we should wait; we weren't clear why, but were obedient. In the intervening time we made links with a local charity, "Together for Mental Wellbeing", who were keen to partner and organise the catering!

It is so encouraging when we see those we've met through the Sanctuary Ministry whilst out and about in Reading. Please pray that God uses us to bless the sanctuary seeker community as we continue to build relationships and share God's love in these practical ways.

A Slice of Life

Alyssa Carey tells us what the students have been up to

Every Tuesday night students traipse across town from the university to gather in the Centre for our student lifegroup, more formally known as Life. We eat together, study the Bible and pray for one another.

We kicked off this year by looking at the foundations of what we believe. Students come from a whole host of backgrounds and church experiences, so it was helpful for us to unite around the core of what we believe to start the year, all on the same page.

In the spring term we took a few weeks to think about what it means to practise the sabbath. University is a busy time, and so we thought about how to live from a place of countercultural rest. One of our second-years, Emily, reflects on these sessions: “that immersive, intentional rest in God is really restoring; when we feel exhausted or burnt out, we should look to God and the peace he provides.”

Now, we’re studying the book of Jude. One thing I love about our students is their wild curiosity and questions and the way we explore them in community. In one week, we had questions on whether Nephilim in Genesis 6 still exist today, the difference between discernment and judgement, and who really is the Archangel Michael? Izzy, a second-year student, says that “Life has given me an encouraging Christian community which has taught me about the value of



the sabbath and God’s word. Hearing each other’s stories is very encouraging and shows that God is always working.”

It’s been such a joy to watch our students grow this academic year. I’ll leave you with the words of Tim, one of our first-years: “Through all the different talks and discussions that I have had in Life this year, it has really shown me that there is more purpose to my life than I originally thought and that I have a loving Lord who is waiting to guide me. I have truly loved all the chaos and banter this year and never want it to end!”



Passing on the Faith?

Jonathan and Sandy Thatcher on encouraging the next generation

‘Sandy, did you know that elephants have green poo?’ Not an aspect of creation and the Garden of Eden that Sandy had been expecting to cover. Being involved with children is seldom boring, and they can make surprising connections.

The working title we were given for this piece was “Passing on the faith”. Which made us think about what exactly we are doing when we engage with children on Sundays or at other times at church. Is it “passing on the faith” – and if that isn’t quite it, what are we doing and why?

We all know that you can’t actually “pass on” faith. Faith in Jesus is a personal and individual choice: you can’t just catch it like flu. Nevertheless we all want the next generation, our children and others, to make that choice to commit their lives to him.

So perhaps what we are about is preparing the way and encouraging children towards that outcome, and then supporting them as they take their first steps in walking with Jesus.

Introducing children to God’s story – the story of creation and fall, and of rescue and redemption – is obviously part of this. Faith needs to be founded on fact, and talking and singing of God’s love and actions sows seeds and lays foundations for the future.

But it’s not just about information. There also needs to be demonstration. Hopefully children in Greyfriars and New Hope will be seeing the reality of faith in Jesus worked out in the lives of their families. But we also want them to see it in us – all of us – as we gather together in worship and service. We may not be able to “pass on the faith” in a literal sense, but we can surely pass on a sense of the excitement, encouragement and joy of being part of God’s family.

Being directly involved with children at church is a great privilege. But whether we are or not, through our actions, attitudes and relationships with one another we are all part of preparing and encouraging the next generation to walk with Jesus.

One family in Reading: One focus on global mission

Martin Haley sets out a fresh vision

As members of New Hope and Greyfriars, reaching people of all nations is something we are all called to be part of, and we can do that whether we decide to work overseas or remain here in Reading!

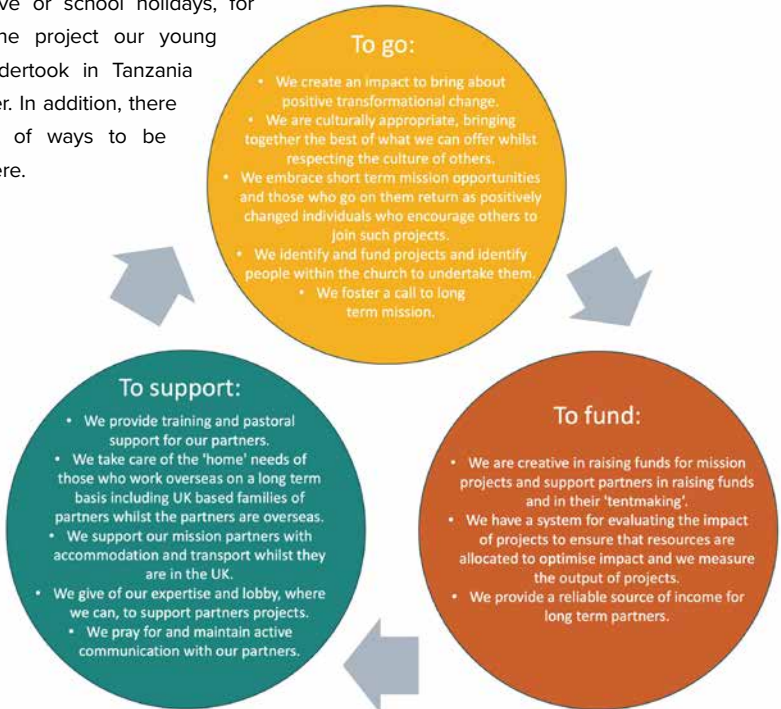
We have a strong history of working with long-term mission partners and currently support 20 individuals. The world is changing and whilst there is still a role for long-term mission work, there are plenty of short-term opportunities which can be undertaken within annual leave or school holidays, for example the project our young people undertook in Tanzania last summer. In addition, there are plenty of ways to be involved here.

To that end, we have set out our vision of where we want to get over the next two to three years. There are three strands to the vision:

To go: church members understand the calling to go to all peoples as ambassadors of a different kingdom to make disciples.

To fund: church members understand the importance of funding global mission

To support: church members support those undertaking global mission in non-financial matters





Transforming Lives in Uganda

We are the Craig family (David, Emma, Amelie, Asher, Arran and Anja) and since 2012 we have lived and worked in Arua in north-west Uganda, sent through a mission agency called Pioneers. Our passion is transformation of lives through the Good News by sharing God’s word and trying to live it out practically.

One way we do this is by empowering vulnerable children and their communities through an organisation called Cheka Child (www.chekachild.com) which seeks to provide quality education and community development especially to the most marginalised, like widows and orphans. Emma coordinates a small local card project with the strapline “an honest, income-generating project”, which has helped disciple families and also helped to roof their homes, pay medical bills and educate their children. Cards from the project are available for sale in the Atrium!

As well as parenting our four children (whom Emma home-schools) in a challenging

environment, the other role that grows and stretches us is team leadership of our gifted and passionate Pioneers missionaries.

We are called “mission partners” of Greyfriars and believe that the global church needs to hold hands as partners around the world, sharing our God-given resources with one another to build up the body of Christ and bring others to know him. Greyfriars already has a deep heritage here in Arua when the Williams brothers pioneered a mission hospital on a rocky hill called Kuluva. It continues to minister to many broken bodies and souls today. One of our own Pioneers team members is having a significant impact there as a missionary doctor.

We have had many highs and lows over the years here so your prayers and financial support allow us to be healthy and keep going in the field. Practical support like the use of a vehicle when we’re visiting the UK is incredibly helpful. Thank you for your ongoing partnership!

Faith at work

We hear from members of our community working in the arts and creative industries

SARAH PIERCE

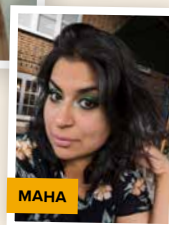
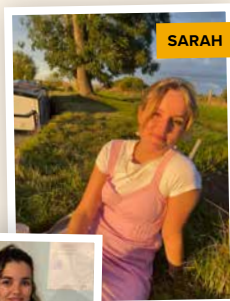
I work as a producer at a trailer agency. We make trailers, teasers and do social media advertising for film and TV. There's lots of things to love about it - I get to watch films before they're released, work in a fun team of creatives and see tangible output. I have to think creatively nearly every day, when brainstorming and when navigating problems we come across.

My work shows me the necessity of having faith in Jesus. Everything at work is constantly changing: whether it's trends, client requirements or pop culture, you're never up-to-date with everything and always looking for the next big thing. Knowing Jesus who is the same yesterday, today and forever brings a consistency and reassurance when I get wrapped up in the transience of entertainment.

SEVIN SOHRABI

Since my childhood in Iran I have had a strong interest in art. I work in the Atrium Coffee Shop but in my free time, I engage in painting and sculpture. My belief serves as a guiding light in my creative endeavours. When immersed in art, I find a sense of detachment from the world and art becomes a soothing refuge for my soul. More than just a form of expression, it reflects the values and inspirations derived from my faith.

For my sculptures I use recycled and simple materials, turning overlooked, disposable

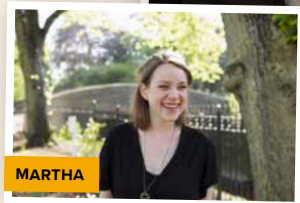
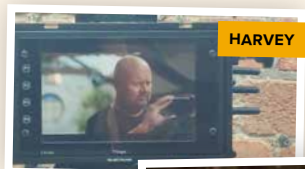


materials into art. The use of recycled materials aligns with my belief in renewal and rejuvenation. Through my work, I aim to convey messages of hope, beauty and connection, in harmony with my faith.

MAHA URBANSK

During the 2020 lockdown, I painted a piece alongside live-streamed worship. It was a beautiful time with God and helped me realise that painting is my act of worship to him.

I am inspired by Biblical scripture, combining verses with symbolic colours, fauna, flora and numbers. My style is heavily influenced by old-school tattoo art; each image has specific meaning and I adore the bold colours. I mostly create paintings; sometimes the Holy Spirit gives me very specific pictures or ideas. It's always humbling to hear that my work has blessed someone. I'm grateful to God for the opportunity to share what he inspires me to create.



HARVEY JESSOP

In recent years I've stumbled into the world of film production, making films for RightNow Media, the world's largest library of video-based Bible study resources. The aim is to produce engaging, thought-provoking Bible teaching content which looks beautiful and has high production standards.

Working as a producer, I enjoy planning shoot locations, refining scripts, liaising with presenters and helping to lead our great crew on shoot days. We've produced about 20 film series so far, with speakers from the UK, Ireland, South Africa and Australia. It's a real privilege to be able to use God-given creativity to produce films that seek to encourage people across the world in their faith journey.

Incidentally, all members of Greyfriars and New Hope are entitled to a free subscription to the RightNow Media platform. If you're interested, follow the QR code.



TOM & MELISSA POLLARD

Outside of our role at Greyfriars we work as freelance musicians, playing at events such as weddings, conferences and festivals. We especially enjoy writing and sharing our own music, and over the last few years have performed songs from our first album Songs of the Watchmen across the country.

We find that inspiration comes from our own journeys, and songs flow most readily when rooted in relationship with God and others. We're beyond excited to be recording our second album Army Rising live at Greyfriars in April, but our primary goal in all this remains to honour God and to make his name known.

MARTHA SHRIMPTON

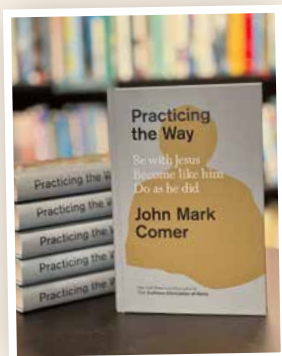
I am an actor, writer, presenter and work in arts education. I also run NIMBUS COLLECTIVE, aiming to help everyone explore faith and connect with God through creativity.

I've been working in the arts for 15 years and every day is different, which I love! I often think that the word "creativity" has been stolen to mean something different to what God intended. We think of a paint brush, but God calls creativity "imagination", the ability to see something that isn't yet there. See, God is the Ultimate Creator and we are all made in his image. You are creative too! So, although my work life often involves telling stories, diving into different worlds or creating a new one myself, my challenge is how can I live a creative life with God? What's the new thing he's calling us to, to use our imagination and play with him in our everyday? Now, THAT is exciting!

The Atrium Recommends



Each issue we bring you a few recommendations from the Atrium. This time Alyssa Carey has a few ideas



PRACTICING THE WAY – JOHN MARK COMER

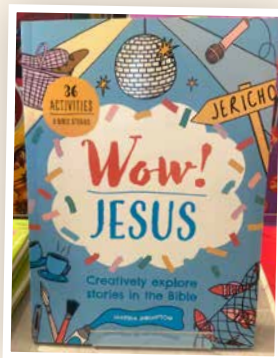
Be with Jesus. Become like him. Do as he did. Following Jesus is not just something we believe, but it should be something that we actively do. In his latest book, John Mark Comer invites us to a way of life that is framed

around our faith, where we spend time with Jesus in his presence, make room for ourselves to be formed into people of love and then go and live lives that reflect his on this earth.

WOW! JESUS – MARTHA SHRIMPTON

If you would like to creatively explore stories about Jesus at home or need a resource for children's work at church, then Wow! Jesus is a colourful and interactive practical book that helps children and families connect creatively with God. Written by Martha

Shrimpton, who is a member of our church and founder of Nimbus Collective, and bringing together her passion for creativity and her faith, this book delves imaginatively into stories and offers reflection time for both adults and children.





DESK/AMBIENT LAMP

An engraved acrylic sheet set in an illuminated wood base with LED lights, with an inscription of the well-known verse from 1 Corinthians 13

that reads: "Love is patient, love is kind". A very thoughtful gift for your dear ones to remind them of the truth of what love is.



SPARKLING SUNSHINE

As the weather starts to heat up, this drink is the perfect refresher on a warm spring day. With flavours of elderflower and mint over

ice, this revitalising glassful is guaranteed to leave you feeling cool as the temperatures rise.

Transform Reading

David Walker shares a story of blessing through unity

Psalm 133 reminds us of “how good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity”. Reading is a great example of how God has brought blessing through many years of church leaders praying and seeking God together in unity.

Over 25 years ago, a group of church leaders sensed a call from God to gather each week to pray for Reading. Reading Christian Network (RCN) was born out of a desire to meet and pray in unity, across denominational boundaries. This movement grew and continued for years, bearing much fruit for the kingdom of God in the town. It was out of this unity movement that the homeless drop-in centre, CIRDIC, was started, which now has over 70 volunteers each week helping serve the marginalised in our town. It was out of this unity movement that Street Pastors started, with teams now walking the streets of Reading, assisting the police and first responders as they seek to help those in need in our town centre. It was out of this unity movement that A Bed for a Night, the winter shelter for the homeless (now with a second shelter for refugees) started in partnership with the charity FAITH, with churches across Reading opening their doors to welcome those in need to sleep in comfort and safety.

The unity movement in Reading, now renamed Transform Reading, is growing and



making an impact on our emerging generations in the town. In addition to the church leaders and those from Christian charities who gather each Wednesday morning to pray at Reading Family Church, God is also growing unity among the youth and younger adults.

Youth leaders from across Reading regularly meet at Greyfriars to pray and plan town-wide gatherings. For the first time since it began, Transform Reading brought together 20/30s in Reading for a gathering at Greyfriars. The event saw young adults worshipping together, praying together and hearing from Simon Ponsonby from St Aldates in Oxford. This gathering now has momentum and the group is planning to meet again in the summer.

Most churches have realised that this Spirit-led unity is so “good and pleasing” (Psalm 133) that we choose to gather once a term on a Sunday evening as the church in Reading. Over the last year we have had three town-wide gatherings, meeting at the Globe Church in Portman Road.

The vision of Transform Reading is that we would bring glory to God through our unity, gathering around the whole Gospel, through the whole church, to the whole of Reading. The story of God’s Spirit unifying the churches in Reading is powerful and fruitful and continues to bring blessing to Reading.



Transform Reading Youth

Dan Bright on an exciting new cross-Reading initiative

Each week youth workers from a wide range of churches across Reading meet together to chat, pray, support and encourage one another. In 2023 we started to dream together about what it would look like to curate an event for all the young people we work with in our schools and churches, to encourage them in their faith and promote unity. This led to two Reading Youth Nights last year and another planned for Easter 2024.

At both events in 2023 we had almost 200 young people from 17 different churches meet together for donuts, games, worship, talks and prayer ministry response time. At our event last November, 30 young people raised their hands to follow Jesus for the first time! We have seen young people bring along their friends, build cross-church friendships and

be encouraged by the number of Christians of their own age in Reading. The events also offer young people an opportunity to share their faith from the stage and to get involved with leading and shaping these events.

The Transform Reading Youth events are a truly collaborative approach to youth ministry, with each church playing its part. Each event is hosted by a different church, and each of the youth workers plays a different role in the planning and delivery of the events. There's such a great sense of unity among the youth workers across Reading as we work and pray together to see God's kingdom come among young people in this town. Our hope and prayer is that as we work together as one, the young people we work with will see the love of Jesus among us and put their trust in him.



B4N

Linda Flintoft on answered prayer for A Bed For The Night in 2024

The local building was derelict. It was transformed in just a few weeks to house up to 20 of Reading's rough sleepers.

We had no kitchen. God provided plentiful hot food cooked by caterers at local schools. We prayed for volunteers. Each night we have a perfect number – brilliantly gifted, very willing, working well as a team and enjoying ourselves. We pray for peace and protection. The atmosphere is like a big family, some lively banter with good conversations.

Sometimes guests come burdened and downcast but always we know God's presence and peace. We pray for our guest's futures. We see new accommodation being sorted and openings for employment.

We always pray for salvation and for Jesus to break the ties of addiction. We discover a guest has given his life to Jesus and is going to rehab. What an encouragement! And we discover we are the answer to a mother's prayers.

All this done in the power of the Spirit, for the glory of God. "Thank You Lord!"

*In each edition of One Family we get to know some of our church family a little better...
Rūta Grainytė chats to Sevin and Atabak*

FAMILY SNAPSHOT

Sevin Sohrabi and Atabak Pezeshki

Sevin and Atabak came to Greyfriars after they met Arash outside of church and he promptly invited them along. They found a sense of belonging and grew closer to the community and its values, eventually becoming members in 2022.

During the week, Ata and Sevin fill their time with developing friendships and faith through Bible studies and meeting with other Christians. By surrounding themselves with friends who share their faith and values they know they have the support and prayer of their brothers and sisters in Christ. Ata works as a personal trainer both in the gym and online, and Sevin supervises the Atrium Coffee Shop, helping bring smiles and delicious lattes to your table. She balances her work with her love for creativity and art, through which she is able to express herself more freely in her spare time.



Busy as they are, it can sometimes be challenging to make Jesus a part of their daily lives. This struggle is one all of us can relate to, and Ata and Sevin shared what can help them keep that connection with Jesus. They found that community is vital, and have recently joined New Hope, as well as spending time in prayer and the Bible.

Sevin and Ata emphasise how important it is to have God at the centre of their family in all moments, even when they feel lost or hopeless. During such darker days, Jesus' guidance and strength has helped pull them through, as he has shown them his love and faithfulness. Through the struggles, they have both learnt to rely on him and his plan for them. They have an understanding and trust in God's faithfulness and deliverance through uncertainty. This trust has only grown them in their faith as individuals and as a family, highlighting the hope they have in Jesus. The couple say that being a part of Greyfriars has been a source of strength and guidance to them, reminding them of God's presence in their lives.

Parenting in Faith

Heather Harper offers reflections from the Parenting for Faith course with Rachel Turner



We long for our children to experience their own vibrant two-way relationship with God, and the Parenting for Faith course gave us tools to enable our children to do this for themselves.

We discussed how we can make “windows” for our children to see into our own relationships with God, by occasionally letting them see our Quiet Time with God, and verbalising what is going on in our heads as we talk to God about all sorts of things as they happen throughout the day.

We thought about how to encourage our children to make connections with God through their own individual interests – what are they curious about? What makes them angry – injustice, climate change, bullies? I asked the children in Trekkers more questions, such as why they thought Jesus was asleep in the boat with his disciples in the storm on the lake? They thought Jesus was bored, tired or testing his disciples, which made us ask if Jesus tests us?

Another reflection was that the course had encouraged us “to understand how our children might conceptualise God and how this influences their relationship with him.” Have we inadvertently portrayed God primarily as “jolly”, “buddy”, “mysterious”, “busy” or “angry”? How can we balance out these concepts with our children? I realised that I had veered towards “jolly” to overcompensate for the “angry” God of my childhood.

One participant reported being “open and excited that our children can hear from God” and joy that our children “are actually connecting to God” themselves. Another comment was that the course “helped to equip us to support our children to engage with God in all aspects of life rather than compartmentalise ‘religion’ into Church and prayer.” We discussed how to explain to our children why and how we draw near to God through worship; that as families we can show God’s love at church by serving others; and that, young or old, we can all have significance in his kingdom.

Alpha Stories

David Aubrey-Jones looks back on a recent Alpha Course

Do you know what happens at Alpha? I have gradually come to realise that Alpha is good for anybody: non-believers, new believers, occasional church-goers and even mature Christians. We have been running Alpha and again have wonderful testimonies of how God has been working:

One guest was using a walking stick and had suffered from a painful back for years due to a curve in his spine. Following prayer all the pain left and he no longer uses a stick. Another guest told us they had been suffering from the sound of water in their ear for a very long time. They were prayed for more than once, and the sound and trouble totally left. They can hear clearly now.



‘In our Iranian small group, six people gave their lives to Jesus’

One was very worried how they were going to receive their pension, which had many complications before they could receive it. Prayer removed these obstacles. A fairly young guest had been on antidepressants for around three years, and announced after a few weeks that they had stopped using them and no longer needed them.

Another young guest has struggled with addiction for years and endured a terrible life, living off the streets for some time. They have attended Alpha for a couple of years and now gone to a rehab centre. We are only part way into the course, but one of the guests has already said they would like to be baptised at Greyfriars this year.

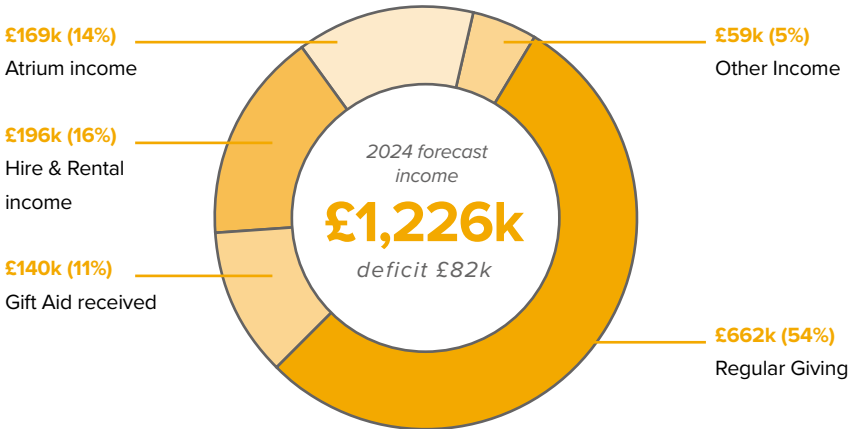
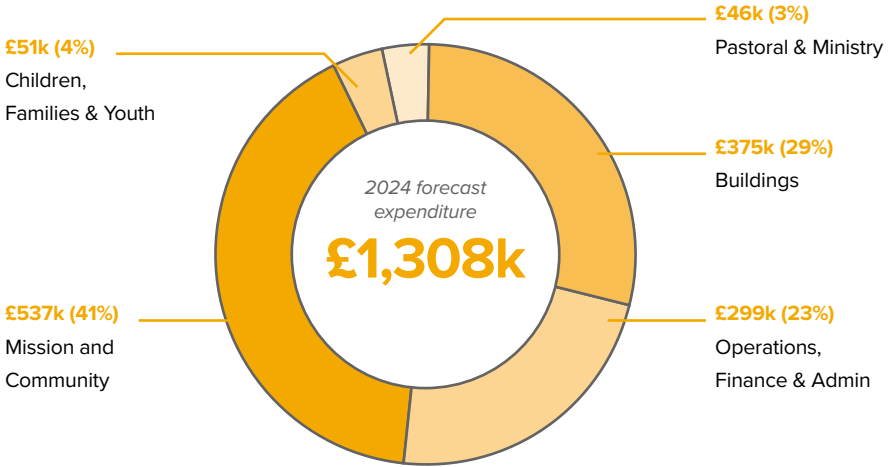
In our Iranian small group led by Arash, who are doing Alpha this term, six people gave their lives to Jesus. It was during the fourth session on prayer that everyone who was a seeker felt ready, having received the love of Jesus through our church family, to pray and give their hearts to Jesus.

During Alpha, we have an offsite Holy Spirit “away day”, this year at Dunsden village hall. At the final session many were powerfully impacted. A number were in tears and one guest I spoke to said it had been the best day of their life!

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If you're interested in joining an Alpha Course, please get in touch: greyfriars.org.uk/alpha

Giving

“Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:7



Our vision is to see Reading transformed by the love and power of Jesus Christ.

If you call Greyfriars and New Hope your home church, please support our mission and ministry by going to our website to find out more about how you can start giving regularly.

greyfriars.org.uk/give

**At Greyfriars and New Hope,
our vision is to see Reading
transformed by the love
and power of Jesus Christ.
Whether you're exploring
faith or looking for a church
to call home, we would love
to welcome you here.**

Join us on Sundays

9.30am · 11.30am · 6.30pm at Greyfriars
10.30am at New Hope

[greyfriars.org.uk/new](https://www.greyfriars.org.uk/new)





grexfriars.org.uk
nhccreading.org.uk