

intouch

NEWS OF MINISTRIES
WITHIN THE AFFINITY
FAMILY

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SPECIAL EDITION



AFFINITY THROUGH THE STAGES

*From early years to later life: Affinity partners
supporting people through every season*

affinity
gospel churches in partnership



INTRODUCTION

I am thrilled to be writing the foreword to this booklet which describes how different Affinity agencies are serving others through the various stages of life.

Writing to the church planter Titus, Paul says that “those who have trusted in God” should inevitably be those who are “careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.” (Titus 3:8)

Throughout this booklet, there are wonderful examples of people who, motivated by the gospel of grace, are seeking to do good. They are providing care, friendship, advice, shelter and compassion in order to model gospel living and to provide opportunities to share the gospel message.

It is both humbling and exhilarating to see the wide range of care provided by our agencies from the beginning to the end of life.

We give thanks to God for all his people who serve him as they serve others.

I hope you enjoy reading this as much as I have.

GRAHAM NICHOLLS

AFFINITY DIRECTOR



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Cornerstone

Adoption and Fostering Service

because foundations matter.

LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO HIM

‘Dear God, I forgive mum,’ he said matter-of-factly, without hesitation, and with real sincerity. A short but most powerful prayer. I was shocked. These were not the words I was expecting from a 6 year old child, very recently removed from the only home that he had ever known. We had explained that as Christians we pray to God, but that not all people believe in God, and that they were free to choose what to believe. Not expecting him to take me up on an offer to pray, I was taught a valuable lesson. God talks to all children. Sounds like something we know instinctively, but are shocked when we encounter it.

As Christian short-term foster carers with Cornerstone, we, like all foster carers, provide a safe, warm, predictable family space to care for children who have recently been removed from traumatic and abusive home lives. This is to allow

“I was taught a valuable lesson. God talks to all children.”

space and time (6–12 months) for the social work team to work with the birth family to make things better and try and get the children back home, if appropriate and safe. This process is overseen by the courts and is often triggered through child neglect because parents are struggling with many issues, including alcohol and substance abuse.

The practical care of these children is the simple part. The more demanding aspect is often managing behavioural challenges: their dysregulated, wild and raw emotions and memories being stirred up at the most inconvenient times (e.g. bedtime) again, and again, and again. Prayer for endurance, patience, love and understanding for our foster carers is essential, so that we can communicate God’s real practical love in a tangible, resolute way.

If pushed beyond what we can manage, child placements in families can ultimately fail, and the child is moved on again, repeating the damage, and leaving the foster carer drowning in guilt, despite trying their best.

Prayer for the foster child is a given. They are victims of adults' mistakes and pay a high price, and need authentic, holistic healing. As we work to reverse malnutrition and promote re-wiring of neural circuits in the brain through repeated positive messaging, we trust that they will eventually believe that if they cry or call out, someone will actually come to help them. Prayer is also needed for protection for the child, both physical and spiritual, and that God will give wisdom to the arbiters of hope and justice in the child's life. Also, that God's will be done for them both now and in the future, wherever they go.

Perhaps most importantly, pray for the healing and building of positive relationships that surround the foster child. Not just between birth family members, or foster child and birth parents, but even between foster parent and birth parent. Don't underestimate the healing that can come to a foster child when he or she sees you, as their now trusted, reliable foster carer, being kind to and working with their birth mother. It is a really powerful demonstration to the foster child of forgiveness and restoration, which Jesus was all for!

This early years ministry is for those whose hearts have been stirred by God, for those who know something of the pain He has for these lost, hurting children. Psalm 68 says God 'sets the lonely in families' and is a 'Father to the fatherless.' Maybe he is even calling you to foster children?

— EH



"This early years ministry is for those whose hearts have been stirred by God, for those who know something of the pain He has for these lost, hurting children."

EH is a foster carer with Cornerstone Fostering and Adoption Service. Find out more about Cornerstone's work through the links below and discover how you can get involved – whether through prayer, by financial support or by opening your home to children in need of a helping hand.

*Child details have been changed for confidentiality

About Cornerstone

Cornerstone is the only Christian fostering and post-adoption support service in the UK. They operate a Fostering Service and a Post-Adoption Support Service in England, currently covering the North East, Yorkshire/Humber and the Midlands. They are seeking to grow across the UK. Find out more about them at:



cornerstoneuk.org



CornerstoneUKFostering



cornerstonefostering





CROSSTEACH

BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN FAITH AND EDUCATION

Imagine every young person in your community exploring the Christian faith. Would you see that as prayers being answered? A pipe dream? A fantasy? How do local churches connect with young people?

The number of young people in our churches has been declining, yet we know that many key spiritual decisions are made before the age of 18. Schools work is one clear and strategic answer. By providing high-quality, gospel-centred schools work that inspires all pupils to engage with the Christian faith, in partnership with local churches, Crossteach connects with over 15,000 young people every year.

In today's diverse and fast-changing world, young people still seek meaning, purpose, and

understanding. Christianity can offer real answers to their questions. Crossteach plays a unique and valuable role in this journey. Whether students come from a Christian background, another faith, or none, Crossteach creates meaningful opportunities for exploration and reflection.

Working to bring faith to life

The work of Crossteach is designed to enrich Religious Education (RE), support Collective Worship, and provide extracurricular activities that go beyond the classroom. Crossteach aims:

- To provide direct encounters with Christians speaking about their faith in ways that are enjoyable, memorable, and challenging.
- To teach informed RE lessons that provoke critical enquiry and thoughtful reflection.
- To lead inspiring, stimulating Collective Worship that is relevant and respectful.
- To run extracurricular activities that allow pupils to explore fundamental questions about human life, religion, and belief.

These activities are carefully aligned with national and local educational guidelines to ensure they enhance school life. In one school, pupils achieved their best-ever GCSE RE results (2024), with senior staff reportedly 'gobsmacked' by the impact, and all for free.

For many pupils, Crossteach offers their first real encounter with practising Christians. This face-to-face interaction often has a stronger impact than textbook learning, as students see how faith is lived in everyday life. Pupils are encouraged to ask honest questions, think critically, and form their own views – helping prepare them for life in a pluralistic society.

Themes like forgiveness, hope, and love regularly feature in sessions, offering not just intellectual stimulation but spiritual and moral development. Whether through a thought-provoking RE lesson or an after-school discussion group, pupils are given space to consider what these values mean in their own lives.

Importantly, Crossteach is not in schools to persuade pupils to adopt Christian beliefs. Rather, it provides a clear and respectful account of what Christians believe and why. Its staff are distinctively Christian, speaking authentically and knowledgeably about their faith, in a way that encourages curiosity and critical thinking.

One Year 10 pupil reflected, ‘They don’t tell you what to believe. They just explain what they believe and let you think about it for yourself. It really made me question things in a good way.’

Working with both schools and churches

Since its foundation, Crossteach has worked collegiately, building long-term, trusted relationships with schools and churches. Every session is delivered at the school’s invitation and under its direction, reflecting Crossteach’s commitment to integrity, transparency, and partnership.

Thanks to this church-school collaboration, some young people have stepped from the school environment into a church community – occasionally leading to personal faith decisions. One recent baptismal testimony began, ‘It all started in a Crossteach club.’

One secondary school teacher commented, ‘Crossteach brings RE to life for our students. They explain Christian beliefs in a way that is both clear and challenging, but never pushy. The students always come away thinking more deeply.’



"One Year 10 pupil reflected, 'They don't tell you what to believe. They just explain what they believe and let you think about it for yourself. It really made me question things in a good way.'"

Working with you

Crossteach is a growing organisation which continues to serve schools across the country with integrity, warmth, and purpose – building bridges between faith and education, and leaving a lasting impression on the hearts and minds of young people. It also seeks to connect with more young people, beginning new initiatives and merging existing ones into their team.

So what part do you play in this strategic work? Crossteach can support you in your schools work through training, access to resources and sharing expertise and experience. You can also support Crossteach through prayer, volunteering and donations. By partnering together, we can make a lasting impact.

About Crossteach

Crossteach is an educational charity which has been teaching about the Christian faith in schools since 2001. They visit lots of different types of schools – primary and secondary, community and Church of England, private and state-funded, academy and maintained. Find out more about them at:



crossteach.com



facebook.com/crossteach



instagram.com/crossteachuk





Lovewise
For the best in relationships

“When Lovewise first started there were lots of opportunities to give presentations in schools, but this has become increasingly difficult.”

TEACHING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT THE GOODNESS OF GOD’S DESIGN IN ALL THINGS

Lovewise is a charity committed to teaching children and young people about God’s design for marriage, relationships and sex. It was started in 2002 by two paediatric doctors and a headteacher. Together, they were concerned by the number of young people in their clinics and in schools who were suffering from the consequences of sex outside marriage and the breakdown of home life.

Lovewise in the past

I first came across Lovewise about 15 years ago when my children were in primary school and I was serving as a school governor. As a paediatrician myself, I was also seeing children and young people in my clinics suffering from the consequences of family breakdown and casual sex. I was shocked to discover that school sex and relationships education lessons taught almost nothing about marriage, and the overall message about sex (using

explicit cartoons) was that it is something fun that ‘grown-ups’ do when they love each other.

At that time it was relatively easy to withdraw my children from the lessons in school. A Christian friend and I used Lovewise materials to teach both our own children and those in our church who were the same age. We were able to teach them about the goodness of God’s design for men and women and his design for marriage, relationships and sex. I have loved teaching this material ever since.

When Lovewise first started there were lots of opportunities to give presentations in schools, but this has become increasingly difficult. I do go into some schools to teach, but Lovewise is increasingly making material available online and free to schools and churches, as well as writing resources for parents and teenagers.

Lovewise in the present

Over the years since then, the situation in schools has become even more concerning, with Relationships, Health and Sex Education (RHSE) now being mostly compulsory as well as the push to include LGBT+ content throughout the curriculum.

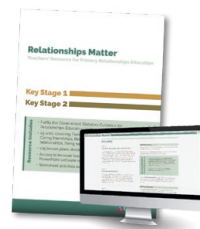
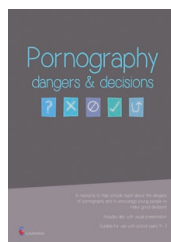
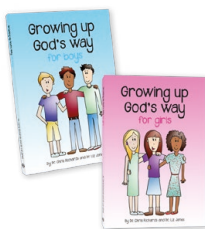
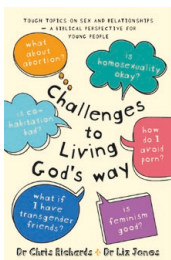
There is increasing evidence of the use of explicit material and an emphasis on mutual consent rather than on any moral or ethical position being clearly taught. Schools are reluctant to be perceived as judgemental, and therefore, children are not taught about the emotional and physical harms of casual sex or even of violent and perverted sexual practices – everything is presented as a matter of mutual consent.

Schools frequently do not communicate with parents about what their children are being taught (especially when LGBT+ content is in lessons other than RHSE) and may even be reluctant to share resources with parents. School libraries often contain books promoting LGBT+ lifestyles and even books which are extremely explicit.

Lovewise and you

With all these challenges, what can you helpfully do? You can:

- Teach from a young age the goodness of God's design in all things and the authority of God's word.
- Be ready with resources that will help to teach children the goodness of God's design for their bodies and relationships as they grow up and go through puberty and adolescence into adulthood.
- Find out (if you are a parent) what your children are being taught in school. Ask questions about anything that concerns you or that you are unsure about. You may be able to suggest alternative resources, such as Lovewise materials for schools.
- Talk to children and teenagers both at home and in your church. Find out what they are hearing at school, from their friends and online.
- Confidently and prayerfully engage in discussion with young people. Be clear about what the Bible says, but be willing to hear what they think and feel.



About Lovewise

Lovewise is a charity which seeks to help parents, youth groups and schools by providing presentations on the subjects of marriage, sex and relationships from a Christian perspective. Find out more about them at:

-  lovewise.org.uk
-  facebook.com/lovewiseuk
-  instagram.com/lovewiseonline
-  x.com/LovewiseUK





TAKING THE GOSPEL TO THOSE 'BEHIND THE WIRE'

Each of us have numerous other Christians to whom we're grateful. Some have helped us take our first steps to Christ. Others have led us to trust in him. Many more have taught, reproved, corrected and trained us, sharing their lives and speaking gospel words into ours.

The Soldiers and Aviators Scripture Readers Association (SASRA) has a long history of proclaiming Christ and discipling Christians in the military. Our 20 Scripture Readers (SR) serve in a context where fewer than 2% of people are Christians – a similar percentage to the Christian populations of countries such as Oman and Bhutan.¹ All SRs are former soldiers or aviators. Now back in uniform and serving on bases

around the UK and beyond, the Lord uses their experience to help them reach those with whom the local churches struggle to connect.

Thanks to the generosity of individuals, churches and grant-awarding bodies, the number of SRs has nearly doubled in the past few years. Each SR can tell a story of how other Christians have moved them towards knowing Jesus and proclaiming him 'behind the wire'.

Here are Patrick's, Peter's and Gerhard's stories.

Patrick's story

During Patrick's basic training in Winchester, he met and chatted with a seasoned SR, who gave him a Bible. At Sennybridge, a second SR gave him a Christian book to read. Then, during Patrick's Phase 2 training in Bordon, a third SR spent time reading the Bible with him one-to-one. These three SRs were used by God to bring Patrick to the point of placing his trust in Christ.

1. See OperationWorld, 'Pray for: Bhutan'. Available at <https://operationworld.org/locations/bhutan/>. Also OperationWorld, 'Pray for: Oman'. Available at <https://operationworld.org/locations/oman/>. Accessed 30 June 2025.

Of course, Patrick's Army career as a trooper in a cavalry regiment – and therefore his contact with SRs – continued once a disciple. Two further SRs encouraged him in his faith during his five-year tour in Germany, while his SR from Bordon stayed in touch and linked up with him when he was back in the UK for training. When Patrick was subsequently stationed on Salisbury Plain, he was disciplined by the resident SR.

Finally, Patrick was encouraged by a SR to apply to SASRA as a SR himself in 2023. He is now back on Salisbury Plain serving as an SR.

Peter's story

Peter's Christian journey also started during basic training in Winchester, and with the same seasoned SR. Their conversations prompted Peter to reflect on his beliefs and to explore how Jesus makes it possible for us to have a relationship with God.

An Army musician, Peter was then posted in Colchester, where another SR met him for Bible studies and drew him into a Bible study group. These studies – especially one on Romans 5 – played a significant part in Peter putting his trust in Christ. And having a SR to support, meet and pray with him was a real lifeline as Patrick worked through the challenges that he experienced as a Christian in the Army.

A crucial next step for Peter was being given the opportunity and help to lead a group Bible study by the SR. After a number of years and some gentle encouragement from the SR, he was persuaded to join SASRA as a SR. With SASRA's desire to work within the RAF as well as the Army, Peter is now in his first year at RAF Benson, alongside training at Cornhill and the Ministry Training Scheme in Oxford.



"Our 20 Scripture Readers (SR) serve in a context where fewer than 2% of people are Christians – a similar percentage to the Christian populations of countries such as Oman and Bhutan."

Gerhard's story

The common ingredient in Patrick and Peter's story was also crucial in Gerhard's experience. When he first joined up and was sent to Pirbright, an evening group Bible study led by the SR opened Gerhard's mind and heart to Christ. Their developing friendship was also used to grow Gerhard spiritually, leading him to attend church together. On future postings, other SRs played a crucial role in deepening his spiritual roots and equipping him to live and speak the gospel.

Unlike Patrick and Peter, who served as soldiers for 10 years and then joined SASRA relatively young, Gerhard completes his full service as the most senior NCO next summer. He will then join SASRA as a SR, with huge experience of the Army, ministry and the Scripture Readers who have disciplined him over these nearly 30 years.

Phil Parker
Ministry Director

About SASRA

SASRA's people are all believing Christians and ex-Forces, called into the work in order that the serving personnel of the British Army and Royal Air Force all hear the gospel during their time of service. Working alongside the Chaplaincy, SASRA's Scripture Readers work to introduce soldiers and air force personnel to a practical experience of the Christian faith by living and working alongside them 'behind the wire'. Find out more about SASRA at:



sasra.org.uk



facebook.com/sasra.org.uk





LOVING THE 'LEAST' AND THE LONELY IN LEEDS

Caring For Life is a ministry established in 1987 to share the love and gospel of Jesus with those who live on the margins of society and who struggle to cope in a cruel and unloving world. We seek to rescue damaged and vulnerable men and women, many of whom have been homeless or suffered abuse. We seek to rebuild these broken lives through love and practical care and, most importantly, seek to see people in relationship with a God who loves them, through faith in Jesus Christ.

People come to us from many different backgrounds and with a variety of issues. The love and help offered extends across the city of Leeds and is broad-reaching. We offer housing support, budgeting and benefits advice, provide food parcels, healthy meals, and take people to medical appointments. We also offer daytime activities on our farm, working with animals and nature through agriculture and horticulture, as well as involvement in such things as art and catering. We also host a range of Bible studies, introducing people to the Lord.



"We seek to see all those in our care as people and not as problems to be solved."

Many in our care suffer due to childhood traumas, and others have various addictions. Some have learning difficulties, and a considerable number struggle with very poor mental health. Many continue to live at risk of harm and are actively in danger, so we do all we can to provide safe and secure support to everyone.

Chaos seems to follow many in our care, and when you come to understand a little of their lives and how they have been treated, you can understand why life is so hard and why trusting

people may be such a difficult thing. But it makes such a difference when we offer them time and demonstrate that we are willing to walk with them for the long haul. They are also helped in finding purpose and a way to move forward through our belief that they have God-given value, and having our help to discover skills they never knew they had.

Caring For Life's work is built upon the belief that all people are made in the image of God and are therefore deserving of love and respect. We seek to see all those in our care as people and not as problems to be solved.

Sadly, so many come broken by life's circumstances, they don't have anywhere to call home or a place to feel safe or valued. But with God's help, and by walking alongside people, by listening and loving, we see broken lives put back together again, and many responding to the love and care we offer.

Most importantly, we seek to introduce people to Jesus, the One they need more than anyone else. He is the One who heals the brokenhearted and gives hope to the hopeless; the One who forgives the sinner and gives strength to the struggler; the One who cares about the soul as well as the body.

We praise the Lord that thousands have been touched by the love of Christ through Caring for Life, but we rejoice most of all in those who have come to love Jesus as Saviour and Lord after being introduced to him through our programmes. We have seen, and are seeing, many disadvantaged and vulnerable men and women – people who it might be hard to engage with in worldly terms – coming to faith in Jesus.

One man said, 'If it hadn't been for Caring For Life telling me about Jesus, I would be lost and probably dead today.'

Who cares about the least and the lonely in our world? Jesus does, and because He does, so should we. That's why Caring For Life is here: to reach those Jesus reached with a love that offers hope for today and a brighter hope for tomorrow.

'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine you did for me.' Matthew 25:40



"If it hadn't
been for Caring For
Life telling me about
Jesus, I would be lost
and probably dead
today."



About Caring for Life

Caring For Life is a Christian charity established in 1987 to 'Share the Love of Jesus' with at-risk and hurting people, including those who are homeless. Through providing long-term support, homes and friendship, Caring for Life gradually helps people to move on from past heartache and hardship towards a happier future. Find out more about them at:

 caringforlife.co.uk

 [facebook.com/
CaringForLifeCharity](https://facebook.com/CaringForLifeCharity)

 instagram.com/cflcharity

 x.com/CFLCharity





OAK
HILL
COLLEGE

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR THE HARVEST FIELD

In today's fast-paced and ever-changing world, the need for rooted, reflective, and resilient Christian leaders has never been greater. And yet, at the very moment when gospel clarity and courage are so needed, many churches and training institutions across the UK are facing sharp challenges: fewer people are considering full-time Christian ministry, financial pressures are rising, and the church itself is undergoing significant change.¹

The questions we hear from potential future leaders are often the same: *Can I afford it? Am I up to it? Where is the world heading?* These are not just practical questions; they are deeply spiritual ones. And they are not new.

¹ See <https://www.e-n.org.uk/uk-news/2024-07-major-consultation-event-addresses-recruitment-crisis-in-church-leadership-suggests-ways-forward>. Accessed 20 October 2025.

So what are we to do? Jesus gives the church a clear strategy. We are to pray: 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.' (Matt 9:37-38)

The Lord is continuing to answer this prayer, and students are continuing to take time to study and prepare themselves for future ministry. Over the past year, I've had the privilege of hearing the stories of students who are preparing for ministry – some through full-time residential training, others part-time. Their journeys are marked by faith, sacrifice, and a quiet but profound hope in God's purposes. They are a great encouragement to us.

Preparing for a diverse church

One growing area of focus for us is how to serve leaders in the increasingly diverse and global church in the UK. With 47% of the world's migrants identifying as Christians, the diaspora church in places like London is vibrant and growing. We've been privileged to partner with others in thinking through how to better equip leaders in these contexts.

Take Dorna, for example – an Iranian Christian who came to faith in her teens. At university, she sensed a strong call to ministry: 'I really wanted

to just go and get things done,' she says. 'But a number of people from my church encouraged me to slow down and train. Full-time training has helped really form and shape me – by God's word and his people.' Now, her sense of calling is both deeper and broader: 'I've still not figured it out completely, but I'm excited to see that there is need everywhere – and that, while the Lord doesn't need us, he uses us.'

"Our students' journeys are marked by faith, sacrifice, and a quiet but profound hope in God's purposes... "



Preparing for an uncertain church

The Church of England, too, is navigating a season of uncertainty. Since 2019, the number of people entering training for ordained ministry has dropped to around 60% of what it was. Yet even here, God continues to send workers into his harvest field.

Tim, a Church of England ordinand, is just finishing his studies and preparing to begin a curacy at St Michael's Fulwell. He's found training in a diverse student body to be a key part of his preparation: 'Wherever the Lord places us to minister next, we're going to be surrounded by people from different denominations – or none – who love Jesus. Learning together has reminded me that our primary allegiance is to the Lord. If we can help one another in ministry, let's do that.'

heart; and that new opportunities – whether through technology, flexible pathways, or changing demographics – require us to remain thoughtful, humble, and responsive.

So please pray for us. Pray for students wrestling with the call to ministry. Pray for the church as it navigates change. And above all, pray to the Lord of the harvest – that he would continue to raise up and send out faithful, servant-hearted workers into his abundant field.

Preparing for a shaken church

Of course, another challenge facing the church is retention. Some workers leave the field altogether, due to burnout, disillusionment, or the weight of leadership. Highly publicised scandals have also shaken trust and caused many to rightly reflect on what Christian leadership really looks like.

In response, this September we're launching a new MA in Contemporary Christian Leadership. It's designed for current and emerging leaders – pastors, parachurch workers, missionaries, and lay leaders – who want to reflect deeply on what it means to do Jesus' work in Jesus' way. Please pray for our first cohort as they begin this journey.

As a college, we face many unknowns. But our convictions remain strong: that deep, broad theological training is essential; that in-person learning, where possible, forms both head and

About Oak Hill

Since 1932 Oak Hill has been training people for gospel ministry. It was founded initially for men struggling to access the training needed for ministry in the Church of England. Now opportunities have widened to many men and women from different traditions from across the country and the world. Find out more about Oak Hill at:



oakhill.ac.uk



facebook.com/oakhilllondon



instagram.com/oakhilllondon



x.com/OakHillLondon





Association
of Christian
Teachers

EQUIPPING CHRISTIAN TEACHERS TO STAY ANCHORED IN JESUS

If you're a member of a local church, you'll notice that there's an overrepresentation of Christians working in caring professions or the public sector. The statistics seem to bear this out. TeacherTapp, a widely used Educational survey app, estimates that around 160,000 teachers in the UK identify as Christians, with about 45,000 attending church weekly.

This should be no surprise: education in this country has deep Christian roots. From the establishment of some of our oldest schools to the founding of our universities, Christians have played a vital role in developing education, which is accessible to all. After the Reformation, they championed literacy so children could read the Bible. During the evangelical awakenings, churches intensified efforts to educate the poor, founding schools that later formed the backbone of today's state education system.

Joys and challenges for Christian teachers

Teaching is a natural fit for many followers of Jesus. If we believe God is the creator and

redeemer of all things, then as his image-bearers, we are called to contribute to his creative and restorative work. Education does just this! It reflects his creativity by unlocking potential, passing on knowledge, and helping students thrive. It brings order to complexity and builds resilience in children, helping them learn from mistakes and grow.

Education also restores. It provides Christians the chance to serve as the face of Christ, to work productively with families, to rebuild children's trust and to forge hope across a community. It also allows avenues for *ultimate* restoration through the communication of the gospel in assemblies, lunchtime clubs and RE lessons.

But by all accounts, it feels that staff in the educational sector are surviving, not thriving.

"Around 160,000 teachers in the UK identify as Christians, with about 45,000 attending church weekly."

Though once seen as a ‘job for life,’ teaching now struggles with retention. On average, teachers stay just 13 years, with nearly a third leaving within five. The profession is also younger, with most primary teachers under 40 and a third under 30 – double the proportion seen in many other developed countries.

This isn’t to say younger teachers are less skilled, but it does highlight serious issues with turnover, retention, and staff wellbeing. And Christians are not immune. I frequently hear from Christian educators choosing to leave. They’re facing the same intense workload, increasingly extreme classroom disruption, and rising SEND and mental health needs as their non-Christian peers. But they’re also wrestling with deeper challenges – concerns over ideological content in the curriculum, freedom of conscience and speech, and the fear that students are being led down paths that conflict with the truths of the Bible.

How ACT supports Christian teachers

These challenges are why the Association of Christian Teachers (ACT) exists: not to pressure teachers into staying in a profession that overwhelms them, but to help them lift their eyes to the one who can restore purpose to their calling, give secure footing when education feels rocky and unstable, and offer biblical truth in a world flooded with falsehoods.

We are here for all teachers, whatever their age or stage, but we have special concern for those who enter the profession and quickly feel the weight of discouragement. Isolation is a common experience for Christians in a largely secular context (though no school is truly secular!) and can easily lead to despondency.

ACT’s mission is threefold:

Connect – Through our online and in-person community, ACT provides a space to share, pray, encourage one another, and build networks.

We believe Christian fellowship strengthens and equips teachers in their calling, and our *Faithful Foundations* small group biblical mentoring course helps teachers navigate personal challenges and opportunities alongside like-minded educators.

Resource – Through blogs, articles, podcasts, and events like our annual conference, we offer practical tools to help teachers live out their faith in education. Our website includes assemblies, lesson materials, and more. We regularly address topics our members ask about, such as navigating the RSE curriculum, setting up Christian Unions, and approaching academic subjects from a biblical perspective.

Influence – We advocate for Christians in education by engaging with policymakers, the media, and key partners to ensure a strong Christian voice in the public square. This includes involvement in significant legal cases like the Kristie Higgs appeal¹ and speaking out on issues such as the accurate representation of Christianity in the RE curriculum.

One young teacher responded to our recent ministry survey, saying, ‘Just knowing that you are there is such a comfort to me as an ambassador for Jesus in my school.’

And that’s our mission: to equip Christian teachers, helping them feel a little more prepared, a little less alone, and anchored in the ultimate truth – that Jesus is the reason we serve, and in him, we can step forward in faith wherever He has placed us in education. ‘For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.’ (Eph 2:10).

1. Kristie lost her job as a school pastoral assistant for sharing her concerns about RSE on a private Facebook post. Find out more on the Christian Concern website: <https://christianconcern.com/cccases/kristie-higgs>. Accessed 20 October 2025.

About ACT

ACT is a membership organisation that helps Christians engaged in all forms of education to thrive professionally and spiritually. Find out more about them at:



christian-teachers.org.uk



**facebook.com/
associationofchristianteachers**



**instagram.com/
associationchristianteachers**





KINGDOM

THE CHURCH IN A FRACTURED WORLD

**AFFINITY THEOLOGICAL
STUDY CONFERENCE 2027**

10 – 12 MARCH 2027
KING'S PARK, NORTHAMPTON

In a time of significant challenges for the church – crises involving national borders, demographic and cultural upheaval, political realignment, the threat of war, family and community disintegration, disarray in certain Christian denominations, possible economic difficulty, and the impact of AI – the 2027 Affinity Study Conference offers a focused opportunity for deep theological reflection.

Titled *Kingdom: The Church in a Fractured World*, this event provides space for theological discussion and interaction among Christians. Five papers will be distributed in advance, enabling participants to prepare. Sessions include speaker presentations, small-group discussions, and plenary Q&A to explore key issues and refine understanding. Confirmed speakers address pressing topics:

Michael A. G. Haykin on ‘Salt and Light in a Time of Decay: The Church in Chaotic Times’, with reference to Augustine's City of God.

Matthew Mason on ‘Speaking the Truth in Love: When to Speak and When Not to Speak,’ considering free speech in relation to immigration, populism, and Islam.

Collin Hansen on ‘The People of God in the Nations of the World’, examining Christian nationalism and a biblical view of nationhood.

Philip Swann on ‘Authority and Accountability’, addressing conservatism, pastoral abuse, stoicism, and risks of authoritarianism.

Kenneth Harrod on ‘Lessons from the Persecuted Church’, drawing global insights for responses to future persecution, poverty, and other hardships.

Pastors, scholars, and leaders are invited to attend. More details and how to book will follow soon. Spaces are limited, save the date: 10-12 March 2027, at King's Park, Northampton.



"I left feeling like I had a better living knowledge of the wonderful God we worship and have spent more time praying."

"It has sharpened my theological understanding of key doctrinal issues"

"It was a reminder of the need to preach on the doctrine of God biblically and confessionally."

affinity



Daylight
CHRISTIAN PRISON TRUST

BRINGING HOPE TO THOSE WHO BELIEVE THEY ARE BEYOND SAVING

'I'm 26 years old and this is my 23rd time inside – I need help to change'. This was one of the first prisoner quotes I heard when I joined Daylight thirteen years ago, and over the years that have followed, I've seen that this is the story of many in our nation's prisons. 63% of those serving short sentences will reoffend within a year of release.

There are many secular organisations doing good work within the prison system, but here at Daylight, as our name suggests, what we seek to do is to *give light to those who sit in darkness; a light which can only be found in Christ.*

**"63% of those
serving short
sentences will reoffend
within a year of
release..."**

Rob* was a young man who had been told by police and probation that he was a lost cause, and so he believed he was beyond saving. In conversation after a Sunday service, and in the following weeks, we were able to show him accounts of people in the Bible who failed but were used by God, and to point him to a Saviour who welcomes sinners; those who others would consider a lost cause. As happens with so many of the people we meet in prison, Rob was only with us for a short time. Yet we know he heard the truth of the gospel; a seed was planted.

Of course not everyone we come across is used to prison life. For some, it is their first time inside, and we meet them in a state of shock at finding themselves in this situation. This was the case with Ed*, a Christian man who came along to activities run by our Daylight chaplains. Reflecting on the first Bible study session he attended, Ed writes,

I thanked God that night for such amazing providence in providing a context where I could be built up in my faith, share experiences with Christian brothers, and be accepted without scrutiny of my recently acquired criminal record.

Self-harm continues to be a huge issue in prisons, with 54% of men and 62% of women in prison having mental

health problems. As a result, we regularly come across those who are struggling and feel they have hit rock bottom. One such prisoner, Henry*, was at his lowest point when a chaplain appeared at his door with some of Daylight's study sheets, and it was lovely to receive a note from him recently showing how the Lord brought that at just the right time. He writes,

I just wanted to tell you that I have material from you, that has most definitely saved my life. I found your items when I was at my worst, and it was most certainly my darkest time. I was suicidal and could not see a way out, yet for some reason, the chaplain here gave me your material ... I am here today because of you.

Our ministry also leads to contact with families of prisoners, and one particular joy has been contact with a couple who were already supporters when their foster son, George*, found himself in prison. After putting them in touch with one of our chaplains, they were delighted to hear that he had already seen George, and wrote,

Your work meant all the difference to us, your man did what we couldn't do and reached George before we even knew where he was! Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Daylight. Your work is right on the line of God's will.

This contact has now spanned almost ten years, and it is always a joy to see messages from this couple arrive in my inbox.

In The Great Commission, Jesus commanded his disciples to 'go and make disciples of all nations,' and while they can often be forgotten, we believe that includes prisoners! Last year, we worked in over thirty prisons, but there are still many more to reach, and we want to help local churches become part of this; whether it's by going into nearby prisons, volunteering to write, or by supporting us prayerfully and financially. To learn more about how you or your church can get involved, please visit our website daylightcpt.org.

Hannah Smith
Daylight Christian Prison Trust

**Names changed to protect identities*

**"I was suicidal
and could not see a
way out, yet for some
reason, the chaplain here
gave me your material
... I am here today
because of you."**



About Daylight

Daylight is a Christian charity that exists to 'glorify God and enjoy Him' by prayerfully proclaiming the gospel of His grace in every UK prison and to ex-offenders and their families. Working alongside local Bible-believing churches, and through HMPPS and Community Chaplaincy networks, Daylight aspires to be a nationally reaching, locally rooted provider of the highest quality gospel ministry to prisoners.

 daylightcpt.org

 [facebook.com/
DaylightCPT](https://facebook.com/DaylightCPT)





UNITING AND EQUIPPING CHRISTIAN HEALTH PROFESSIONALS FOR JESUS

In its 76-year history, the Christian Medical Fellowship (CMF) has had at its core the aim of bringing together Christians in medicine (and, latterly, nursing and midwifery too) to grow in faith and serve Christ in their professions. Before workplace theology became a thing, CMF was one of several professional fellowships that were helping Christians connect their faith with their work lives.

Starting with the students

Our founder, Douglas Johnson, famously said that if you get the student ministry and literature right, then everything else will fall into place. Our first and most significant point of contact has been

with medical, nursing, and midwifery students. We have a presence at almost all medical schools in the British Isles, as well as a growing number of nursing and midwifery schools, typically in small student-led groups, either attached to the main university Christian Union or as a small, independent group based in a training hospital. Our next primary focus is our student conference at the end of January, as well as our student magazine, *Nucleus*. We also have local networks of qualified doctors and nurses in university towns and near training hospitals that support and encourage fellowship and faith among students.

The focus is on getting them to think biblically about all the day-to-day challenges that their work and study present, and how a living faith in Jesus equips them to face these with courage, hope, and strength, often in a very different spirit to that of the prevailing culture. Throughout their careers, through our conference, workplace fellowships, regular publications (including magazines and blogs), online national prayer meetings, and our expanding local networks, we strive to continue supporting and equipping members to live out their faith and to enable them to support one another.

"The focus is on getting them to think biblically about how a living faith in Jesus equips them to face challenges with courage, hope, and strength."

Continuing a career-long connection

The biggest challenge is keeping members connected and engaged as they enter professional life, start families, and get involved with local churches. Very often at this stage, it is just our publications that people are engaging with, especially our flagship magazine, *Triple Helix* (and *Spotlight* for nurses and midwives). However, we attract around ten per cent of our members to the national conference in April/ May (approximately 450 people) and around 180 residents (i.e. junior doctors) to our autumn residents' conference. For older members, we also run a seniors conference every couple of years.

But where the life and ministry of CMF happens the most is our network of Catalyst Teams across the UK. They organise welcome dinners for students and newly qualified health professionals in their area, as well as local groups and workplace fellowships.

One of our core aims is to engage with Christian health professionals at every stage of their careers. We see many students transition from being student group leaders to leaders in local fellowships, while others go on to have significant Christian voices in their professions. We have sought to cultivate thought leaders through mentoring and peer relationships. It has been exciting to see how many members are active in the British Medical Association and the Royal Colleges, as well as in NHS Trusts and commissioning bodies, being salt and light amid the institutions of the health professions and the NHS. Many also go on to serve Christ in global mission, using their skills to bring healing and the good news of Jesus to bring hope to a hurting world.

Investing in each other

I would add to Douglas Johnson's maxim about students and literature to say that we also must invest in relationships that edify and equip people to live and speak for Jesus wherever God puts them in their professions. Because none of us can walk the way of Jesus alone, we must walk as part of a body, a community, both in the local church and the broader family of Christ.

Please, therefore, pray for Christian health professionals in these challenging times of funding and staff shortages, alongside increased demand, while new legislation weakens the



"Because none of us can walk the way of Jesus alone, we must walk as part of a body, a community, both in the local church and the broader family of Christ."

safeguarding of human life and worth and the freedom of conscience of health professionals. Also, pray for our student ministry, as the increasing spiritual interest in the upcoming generations means we have many opportunities to share the gospel and see many future health professionals come to Christ.

Steven Fouch

CMF Head of Communications

About CMF

The Christian Medical Fellowship is a community of 5,000 qualified and student members working in medicine, nursing, and midwifery across the British Isles. Their aim is to unite and equip Christian health professionals to live and speak for Jesus Christ. Find out more about them at:



cmf.org.uk



facebook.com/ukcmf



instagram.com/christian_medical_fellowship



x.com/UK_CMF





MEETING THE HOUSING NEEDS OF RETIRING GOSPEL WORKERS

If a church provides housing for a gospel worker during their ministry, where will they live when they retire?

The **Evangelical Housing Association (EHA)** was set up in 1974 to help provide an answer to that question. A joint venture between The Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches (FIEC) and the Grace Baptist Association (GBA), EHA provides housing for pastors and missionaries in their retirement.

The aim of EHA is to offer affordable rent to retired gospel workers and, crucially, to offer residents security of tenure. This means that anyone living in an EHA home doesn't need to worry about the landlord selling the property or going through the stress of 'no-fault eviction'. Once you live in an EHA home, it is your home for as long as it is needed.

"Once you live in an EHA home, it is your home for as long as it is needed."

Currently, there are more than 20 homes on the books of EHA, and some tenants have lived in an Association property for more than two decades.

Providing for those in financial need

Pastors and missionaries are encouraged to apply to EHA in the ten years leading up to their retirement so that the Association can plan accordingly for their needs.

While EHA seeks to support anyone who applies, preference will always be given to those who are on the registered list, and it will only support those whose circumstances are such that they are unable to purchase a property themselves.

If the retiring gospel worker meets the criteria, they are encouraged to look for a suitable property – usually a bungalow – and EHA will purchase it for them. Rent is then charged on the home at a monthly rate until it is no longer needed by the tenant.

EHA is overseen by a committee who are all evangelical Christians who are members of either FIEC or GBA churches. Each member of the committee is the first point of contact for residents and will visit retired workers every year to check in on the properties and to have fellowship and prayer with the tenants.

Maintenance and repairs to homes are carried out as required, involving the residents as appropriate. The Association doesn't offer social care and can't support those unable to live independently. Sometimes people will move from an EHA home into (for example) a Pilgrim Home (see pilgrimsfriend.org.uk) or other suitable care home.

Providing for evolving financial needs

For 50 years, EHA has been supporting retired gospel workers with housing, but the type of support offered has changed more recently.

For example, pastors and missionaries are increasingly planning for retirement with savings. These savings are often substantial, but not enough to buy a home. In these cases, EHA is able to receive these funds as a loan from the retired pastor or missionary to go towards the purchase of a property. The rent is only chargeable on the EHA portion of the funding.

The Association has also expanded those it is able to serve. So, in addition to retired pastors and missionaries from FIEC and GBA churches, it can also support those with a background in the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches.

EHA wants to take the burden away from retiring gospel workers when it comes to housing provision in their later years. By offering homes to those who have faithfully ministered over many years, the Association provides a helpful service to those who have given their working lives to gospel ministry.

"By offering homes to those who have faithfully ministered over many years, the Association provides a helpful service to those who have given their working lives to gospel ministry."

The need in this area of ministry is always evolving. When EHA started its work in 1974, most churches had a manse to house their pastor, today many churches have sold their manses and pay their pastor a higher salary to cover his housing needs. That means that, relatively speaking, there are fewer pastors who need this support than in previous decades. That said, there is a continuing need to house retiring missionaries and those who still have church-owned accommodation during their ministry.

All this inevitably means that EHA needs to continually assess its offering to be fit for purpose. Please pray for us as we consider how best to develop our work and ministry in a changing landscape, and for us to be genuinely helpful to those retiring from full-time ministry. Pray especially for our Committee chair, Roy Saint, our Treasurer, Rick McClure and our Secretary, Susan Deacon, who are most involved in the day-to-day running of the Association.

About EHA

The Evangelical Housing Association serves the needs of retiring FIEC or Grace Baptist affiliated ministers and their wives by providing secure homes in retirement. It exists to support those who have lived in church or mission housing during their ministry and therefore do not have access to other accommodation or the means to finance a property of their own. Find out more about them at:

 evangelicalhousingassociation.org.uk





**Faith in
Later Life**

FAITHFUL FOR A LIFETIME: EQUIPPING GOD'S PEOPLE FOR MINISTRY IN LATER LIFE

Across the UK, older Christians are continuing to live out their faith, not as a fading legacy of things they used to do, but as an ongoing and vital calling. They're joining in with God's mission through mentoring, youth work, hospitality at coffee mornings, worship groups, and active church leadership.

At Faith in Later Life, we believe that every stage of life is full of God-given purpose, and that for many, retirement, far from being the end of fruitful ministry, is the beginning of a brand-new chapter.

Throughout the Bible, we're reminded that we are created for good works, and that flourishing beyond youth is entirely possible. Psalm 92:12-15 tells us that:

*The righteous will flourish like a palm tree,
they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon;
planted in the house of the LORD,
they will flourish in the courts of our God.
They will still bear fruit in old age,
they will stay fresh and green,
proclaiming, 'The LORD is upright;
he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him.'*

And in both the Old and New Testaments, we get to know people like Moses, Abraham, and Anna, who God used most powerfully in their later lives, not in their youth.

Our charity inspires and equips Christians to support older people in knowing Jesus, deepening their faith, and responding to God's call to lifelong disciple-making. We champion

excellent seniors' ministries through practical resources, inspiring stories, webinars, events, and a growing network of Church Champions – dedicated seniors' workers in local congregations across the UK.

"Christians who are in their retirement years have a wealth of wisdom, experience and skills to offer across the whole church."

Christians who are in their retirement years have a wealth of wisdom, experience and skills to offer across the whole church, and actively engaging them in God's mission is good for the church, it's good for the community, and it's good for the individuals. Research shows that people flourish mentally, emotionally, and physically when they live with purpose. We see this time and again in the lives of those we support.

As one Church Champion put it, 'I didn't retire, I re-fired.' Another shared, 'Being invited to join a team at church again gave me a real purpose after my husband died.'

Our work is aimed at church leaders and volunteers of all ages, but we find that seniors' work is a ministry especially well-suited to people who are retired. There are lots of reasons for this, including shared life experience, time and daytime availability, relational depth, and both practical and spiritual gifts that have been well honed over time.

With the UK's ageing population, there's never been a greater need to share Jesus with newcomers, peers, neighbours, and family members who are in later life. Retired people who are passionate about mission are well positioned

for this frontline gospel ministry, sharing the good news of Jesus and helping older people know the love of God.

We see churches doing this through specialised seniors ministries such as lunch clubs, care home services, Alpha course, befriending ministries and special seniors events like 'Holiday at Home' Almost always, at the heart of these life-giving seniors' ministries is a team of people who are retired from paid work, passionately continuing to respond to God's disciple-making call.

As a result, people are coming to know Jesus in later life, they're being baptised and discipled, they're serving and giving, and along with those who welcome them, they're finding belonging and purpose. Praise God.

If your church wants to help people have faith in later life, or if God is calling you to embrace this chapter of your life by leading a seniors ministry, we'd love to journey with you. Visit **faithinlaterlife.org** to find out more.

We would love you to pray with us: that older people would not be forgotten, that churches would be bold in responding, and that many more would discover purpose, joy, and hope in their later years.

Alexandra Huggins

"With the UK's ageing population, there's never been a greater need to share Jesus with newcomers, peers, neighbours, and family members who are in later life."

About Faith in Later Life

Faith in Later Life is a charity dedicated to inspiring and equipping Christians to reach, serve and empower older people everywhere, through the local church. Find out more about them at:

-  faithinlaterlife.org/
-  facebook.com/faithinlaterlife
-  instagram.com/faithinlaterlife/
-  <https://x.com/FaithinLater>





MISSIONCARE
CALLED TO SERVE

FORGOTTEN BY SOCIETY BUT NOT BY GOD

There was no response. No acknowledgement that I was even there. I peered at the grey-blue eyes staring blankly ahead and sat down carefully beside the bed. Communication was difficult with Betty. She had been in the care home for a number of weeks now and I felt as if no inroads had been made. It seemed impossible to build rapport or make any kind of meaningful connection.

I spoke warmly, trying to initiate some kind of interaction. Still no response. The impulse to give up and visit another person stirred within. I recalled God's incredible patience with me, his incarnation, his unshakeable faithfulness and his steady love. I shot up an arrow prayer: 'Lord, help me to imitate you.' Staying put, I opened my mouth to speak, 'Betty, the *Lord* loves you, with an *everlasting* love.'

The dementia was well advanced. I had never known Betty to speak. Her ability to process

information and communicate verbally had slipped away and she was now living in a nursing home, in bed and immobile. I repeated the phrase, softly but confidently: 'Betty, the Lord loves you, with an everlasting love.' I carefully emphasised "the Lord" as I spoke again – what a beautiful, hope-infused name! I accentuated the word "everlasting", slowing down, trying to portray the permanence of such a great love. Silence. There was no observable response.

I sighed. An unwelcome thought entered my mind. Surely this was pointless and a total waste of time? I thought for a moment of all the other people I needed to visit. Ignoring the impulse to leave, I sat there, with the silence. I knew that Betty was a believer. She had been a music teacher and her family had told me of her love for the Lord. I knew that God had promised never

"I knew that God has given her a Comforter, the Helper who was unaffected by dementia."

to leave her or forsake her. I also knew that he had given her a Comforter, the Helper who was unaffected by dementia.

I repeated the same phrase, carefully and purposefully: 'Betty, the Lord loves you, with an everlasting love.' The words hung in the air and after some silence I spoke them again, and again. Then, slowly, Betty's head moved towards mine. Our eyes met and I repeated the words. To my astonishment, her mouth turned upward and a faint smile broke out! My heart erupted with joy. Connection had been made. We sat there for a while, looking at each other, with smiles on our faces. I thanked God for the truth that had been spoken – and, somehow, received.

Betty is one of countless older adults living in care facilities across the country – often forgotten by society, and at times, even by the church. Yet she is not forgotten by God. That's why God's people are called to visit the sick, to care for the vulnerable and weak and to share with them the love of God, revealed in Christ Jesus.

The Pastoral Team at Mission Care have the privilege of doing just that. We visit older people, bringing the presence of Christ to them. In doing so, we become their memory – reminding them of the beautiful truths of who God is and all he has done. We believe that spiritual growth and worship do not diminish with age but, instead, continue to deepen. That's why we expect to see God's people 'bear fruit in old age' and remain 'fresh and green,' continuing to declare his goodness (Psalm 92:12-15).

As we seek to encourage those who are weary and weak, we ourselves are upheld by God – sustained and strengthened by him. And God's incredible love for each of us remains even if our memories fade and our abilities diminish.



"Betty is one of countless older adults often forgotten by society, and at times, even by the church. Yet she is not forgotten by God."



Please pray that we would remember these truths every single day. Pray for fruitfulness in the lives of older people living in Mission Care nursing homes and for the Pastoral Team to imitate God, walking in love as Christ loved us (Ephesians 5:1).

**Written by a pastoral worker at Mission Care. Names have been altered to maintain confidentiality.*

About Mission Care

Mission Care is a Christian charity operating nursing and residential care homes in South East London. Our charitable objectives are to relieve sickness and poverty and to advance the Christian faith. Mission Care has over 120 years experience of providing compassionate care to the most vulnerable in our society and exists for God's glory. To learn more about pastoral care to older people, please contact the Pastoral Team at pastoral@missioncare.org.uk or visit our website at missioncare.org.uk



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@AffinityTalks

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