



**BRISTOL  
CHRISTIAN  
FELLOWSHIP**

EQUIPPING CHRISTIANS  
TO BUILD CHURCHES  
TO CHANGE OUR WORLD

# BCF NEWS

March 2010

## Planning permission approved

**Cathy Knowles** has the latest news on the Resound building project at Blackhorse.

Brilliant news – the Planning application has been approved, and 3 weeks early which is really amazing – the ease with which this has been achieved is testament to God’s provision and grace. The next stage is to commission the architect and the structural engineers to draw up the plans for the tender package to be sent out to a shortlist of builders.

Thank you to all who have pledged funds for the project. It’s not too late if you haven’t yet. £33,000 has been pledged over the next year so far.

### **Severn Ridge**

The pre-planning enquiry is still in progress with the council for their informal advice on applying for permission for two more dwellings on the land. We can then submit a planning application before marketing the property.

### **Café Oasis**

Dave recently announced the decision to close Café Oasis and sell the property. Valuations are being sought so that it can be marketed soon. Please pray for Mike & Lesley as we go through this process.

# Becoming who we are meant to be and doing what we are meant to be doing

Dave Day

Do you ever find that you are sitting in a meeting listening to a talk when a thought comes into your mind which might appear to be different from the gist of the talk but you know is important? That happened to me recently in the Ark. Whilst listening to an excellent talk, the thought came into my mind that discipleship is about 'becoming who we are meant to be and doing what we are meant to be doing'. As I have continued to think about this, I think it is an important statement for BCF as we continue on our journey.



We recently had a team day with our advisors. For a few years, we have had extended retreat days joined by Mac, Andy Au (Brighton) Billy Kennedy (Pioneer Network leader from Southampton) and David Lawrence. As we have processed a lot of change in the past few years, we have been grateful for their advice and input. They are all seasoned church leaders with a lot of integrity. One of the areas of discussion for the day was examining who is BCF and what it is becoming. In other words, who are we and what are we meant to be doing? We have said that BCF is a family of churches, communities and people. It is also a charitable trust serving our BCF congregations and partners nationally and internationally. Our aspiration is to be a missional community of people reaching out and seeing lives and communities changed by the power of the gospel.

But what are we becoming? Our changes have quite rightly focussed on developing churches in communities. Time, effort and resource have been directed to ensure this can happen. This has been affected by the involvement of the whole wider family of BCF but as each church develops its own flavour, leadership teams and styles, we need to keep asking what unites us as BCF and what does being part of BCF really mean?

People like Neil and Zoe, Rhi and I, and countless others have established core values and an ethos that has made us who are. We know, however, that it is vital for the next generation to own and develop those

values for the next years. An example of this happening is Transition. The Antioch call has been part of our foundation since our early days. I have been privileged to express that in many areas of the world, Zambia and India having the most profile and involvement from people in BCF. Transition, all sons and daughters of the church, have captured the same Antioch vision, but expressing it in ways and nations that are relevant for them and their generation. That principle needs to be considered for BCF as a family of churches. A decision made at the recent retreat was that Matt, Tim and Pete, the leaders of the new churches, will meet to lead a process to set out a draft vision for the future of BCF, as they will be amongst those leading the church into the next years. They will bring their deliberations back to Andrew, Neil, Christine and me to help us all examine who we are to become and what we are supposed to be doing.

Just as I am sensing that discipleship is all about becoming who we are meant to be and doing what we are meant to be doing, the same is true for BCF. I will not be satisfied until we have become who we are meant to be and doing what we are meant to be doing.

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## Grow your own

Would you like to be part of a small group and learn “hands on” how to grow fruit and veg organically. We have a fantastic opportunity to do this in 2 gardens in the Downend and Mangotsfield areas which have been kindly donated to us by members of Resound. Some initial preparation will be necessary and the intention is to start as soon as possible so that we can grow things this spring.

You can do as little or as much as you are able – even if you are physically challenged like me we can find something for you to do. I am sure there will be some brunches and BBQ's along the way – the aim is to have fun and friendship. We might even have some cooking sessions to show how the produce can be used – yum! Who knows where this could lead? I have visions of local community involvement with several gardens being “worked” where healthy lifestyle and diet could be taught and the formation of strong friendships with those people around us that we have yet to meet. So in short my vision isn't just a garden club for “silver spaders” it is much more – it is outreach mission! So who is up for it? If you think this is for you contact **Diane Self** .

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# Resound: discipleship groups

Tim Groves

*O my God, since Thou are with me, and I must now, in obedience to Thy commands, apply my mind to these outward things, I beseech Thee to grant me the grace to continue in thy Presence; and to this end do Thou prosper me with Thy assistance, receive all my works, and possess all my affections. (Brother Lawrence).*

How might we continue on our personal and collective journeys today? It is clear that for some of us, our spiritual lives are parched by neglect and weakened by fatigue. The need is obvious. But what of the solution? What is clear is that this will not be found by structural change, we could care less for such reform.

For the early Methodists the solution was founded on these assumptions: *'being a company of men and women, seeking the power of godliness, united in order to pray together...and to watch over one another...helping each other to work out the faith.'*

Similarly, it is our intent, our vision if you will, that discipleship groups support the renewing work of the Holy Spirit in all our lives. While God's grace is the agent of change in our lives, acts of discipleship and means of devotion enable that grace to become more effective in our lives. The presence of the Holy Spirit and our obedient life in the Spirit are crucial to personal maturity and to the health of the church.

Following Christ is not only a necessity, but a precondition to the fulfilment of our highest possibilities. Once again we must grab the invitation and seek God's blessing as the ultimate value in life. Nothing less than living our lives in the steps of Christ will meet the needs of our soul or the needs of the world. This is why discipleship groups are so important. These changes have been necessary that we may know God more deeply.

It is the purpose of discipleship groups that they support the formation of Christ centred lives. Our current preoccupation with discipleship is not centred on wanting to develop better self-images, or achieve self-fulfilment or find self-affirmation. It is not even to develop those personal qualities that make for singularly outstanding Christians. It is simply that we may be made alive to the presence of God, and live openly to Him and each other. Discipleship in short is the lifelong pursuit of a life lived to the glory of God, in union with Jesus and obedience to the Holy Spirit. This amounts to nothing

short of taking up the cross daily.

It would be remiss of me not to comment on the generosity of those of you who have considered the discipline of giving. Can I thank all those who have, or are considering giving to the Resound building project. May you all, in the words of Paul *'be enriched in every way for your great generosity'*, which he goes on *'will produce thanksgiving to God through us'* (2 Cor 9:11).

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## A request for prayer

**Robert and Miriam** have been back from working overseas since the end of last year. They are asking for prayer for the newly arrived language, culture and ministry training team starting in their old location. Led by a couple they trained, they are 12 in all, from various countries. They have just finished language orientation and home stays, and are now starting real living, with all the adjustments that means.

The location had its first Christian presence 8 years ago with the team Robert and Miriam led. "The early years were painstaking language learning, living and sharing. There was no written language, it was another major religion/culture with no knowledge or experience of ours, or people like us from outside, living in their world. After a gap, the last years were working with the community to establish their language and related heritage. ("If our language died, we'd be a flower with no fragrance.") Out of that time came deep connections, with prayers and stories shared of Jesus' life, and ours as his followers.

Miracle stories from the first years are ongoing, but today we're asking for prayer: 1) For the new team and their leaders, to depend and draw on the Holy Spirit daily for miracles, signs and wonders way beyond their own strength and possibilities. They are Jesus' heart, hands, feet (and as they learn the language, his mouth) to this people. 2) The welcome they have had so far has been excellent and the home stays caring. Pray the Spirit opens the hearts and eyes of the people in the area to the team and the reason they're living there, and for transformation as they take hold of Jesus for themselves.

It may not sound so different from what we want here in Bristol, but please pray for this team of young families and singles, as they want to be and speak the love and truth of God in Jesus in a challenging context, spiritually and physically. A harvest is promised if we keep on sowing in faith, hope and love.

For anyone in the fellowship who used to receive updates relating to this people group, and who would still like to, or anyone new (young or old, no age restrictions!) who would like to start receiving occasional news so they can keep praying for them, we're happy to keep the info flowing. Just let us know. Thanks."

# Faith and fear

**Matt Sanderson**

I used to do quite a lot of rock climbing and I even qualified as a climbing instructor. But even after many years of experience I would still feel uneasy and have to take a big gulp before I stepped backwards off the edge of a cliff at the top of a long abseil. I knew the theory and had the experience (and a certificate to prove it), but nothing quite exposes your true beliefs more than having to actually trust your life to them. I would often identify with the prayer of the father in Mark 9 as I stepped backwards off the edge. 'I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief.' My doubts were further exposed by the sense of relief I felt when I found that the rope did hold me; after all, if I had no doubts then why would I feel a sense of relief! The trick was always to have confidence in the rope and the knots and not to let fear win.

Abseiling literally is a step of faith and it has enormous parallels with my walk with God. While it is important to understand the theory (or theology) to the best of our ability, the extent to which we really believe it only gets tested when we try to live it out. This is not easy, and different things in our lives will quickly expose the gap between theory and practice.

Abseiling is not a very forgiving activity. If it goes wrong the consequences are usually pretty severe. This is why we take it seriously if we do it. However, because God is loving and forgiving, I think that sometimes I'm guilty of underestimating the seriousness of how I live my life. But, even with forgiveness there are consequences to my choices. It is precisely because God loves us and knows those consequences that he calls for high standards.

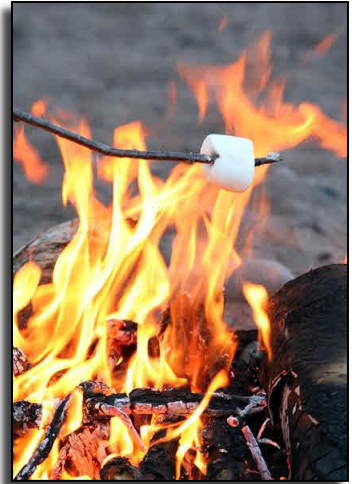
I wonder if where we place our fear is as important as where we place our faith. Fear could paralyse me from enjoying climbing but having no fear could result in a complacency that would be a danger to myself and others. In my discipleship fear could prevent me from actually living out what I believe to be true, but having no fear could result in a life wasted. Perhaps this is what the Psalmist is getting at when he says that 'the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'.



# BCF Thornbury

## Sarah Orrell issues a compelling invitation

Say what you like about Thornbury, but we do pride ourselves on currently being the only part of BCF where you could, potentially, toast marshmallows during worship. I mention this in case you have visions of ‘St Pauls, the Hacket’ being a rather chilly option for a Sunday afternoon in March. The truth is the overhead heaters are more than effective, and several serving suggestions have already been made for raising hands in worship armed with a toasting fork, for that tasty mid-sermon snack.



Even without the marshmallows, there’s plenty of reason for hope in BCF Thornbury. Glancing around, we see a surprisingly strong cast list – people with a wide variety of backgrounds who have been following Jesus through some pretty difficult times, and are still standing. And those are just the stories we know about. In the face of economic belt-tightening, it turns out we have a huge storehouse of things money can’t buy.

So in Thornbury, we continue to explore the shape of church. We’re cashing in on one of those distinctive BCF flavours that we all recognise and value – the network of belonging that goes way beyond the edges of meetings, and even off the end of the current email list. That belonging seems to flow easily into other churches, and is stirred in local coffee shops and pub quizzes. Genuinely hungry people have turned up among us because of something that happened in Tesco, or in the playground. Even people who have travelled a different road, or have relocated, are in different ways finding a sense of shelter with us, a place by the fireside.

The same is true across the board for the BCF family, and beyond. Whatever the apparent success or failure of great ideas and wholehearted efforts, there’s something organic and ingrained that holds us together in the body of Christ despite ourselves, and longs for a freer flowing between us. I think God wants to use each of us to draw each other out in aspects of our lives we hadn’t even thought were relevant. It’s a compelling invitation to go with the flow...

# The trellis or the plant

Pete Osborne

A man comes home from the local garden centre with various pieces of wood in the back of his car. He grunts and huffs and puffs as he drags them into his garden and starts to assemble them. A few hours – and a sore thumb – later, the wood takes shape. The man steps back, wipes his brow and with a sigh of satisfaction, stares lovingly at his newly built trellis. A monumental structure that will allow his climbing plants to grow well and reach new heights. After tending to the plant, making sure he waters it well and cares for it, he finishes his work for the day. Over the next weeks he continues to care for his plant, admiring the trellis and anticipating how it will enable the plant to grow.



However as time goes by, the man finds himself busier – he starts to neglect to water the plant and tend to it. Yet each day he comes home, and smiles as he sees the trellis he built, confident in its ability to help the plant grow. One evening on his return from work he stops to admire his trellis as usual, but is shocked to see that the plant has not only stopped growing but seems to be dying. He realises with a start that he is left with only an elaborately designed piece of wood.

As analogies go, gardening ones probably work best for those who know what they're talking about, but bear with me... The structures we create can be helpful in facilitating the life of the church, giving us creative ideas and ways of allowing us to do the things we want. But they are not the thing that causes the life to grow – things like our investment in relationship, our personal discipleship and prayer are. The warning is clear – we must make sure that we don't merely tinker with the surroundings, but facilitate and work on the life within.

# Who's who in BCF

## CJ introduces Roy and Doreen Hassall

Born in Jersey in 1932, the son of an English father and French mother, Roy began his education in a Catholic school. But during the war, the whole family was taken to a concentration camp near Switzerland when Roy was ten years old. Far from this being the harrowing experience we would imagine, Roy remembers quite enjoying his 2½ years there. There was never enough to eat, nor enough clothes to keep him warm in the cold winters, but as a young lad this seemed like an exciting adventure! Nevertheless, he weighed only 4½ stone when he left, but being hungry is not a problem for him now. It taught him to cope with adversity, he says. Eventually after the war they went back to Jersey where 'home' was a tiny wooden bungalow with no electricity or running water, an outside loo and gas lighting. Roy continued his schooling as before, and then went off to London to follow his love of sport, especially football. His parents joined him later. He worked as a clerk with the Pearl Assurance Company and it was here that he met Doreen. Life was one mad social whirl with the Pearl: they had their own library, orchestra, sports field, amateur dramatics society, dining club with free meals and waiter service! Work was just a sideline! Roy was mad about football and made full use of the sporting facilities.

The couple married in 1961, starting off in a flat in London and then moving to Paddock Wood in Kent. They had three sons and now have two grandchildren, a boy and a girl.

Doreen was born in Sutton in Surrey, into a non-Christian family. She was evacuated at the age of four to a place in the Peak District, along with her older sister. Doreen hated it and was ill most of the time. After the war the family lived in Finchley, and then Balham where Doreen went to secretarial school before joining the Pearl.



Doreen loved netball and played for the Pearl Assurance team.

After her first son was born, Doreen read a book called “God’s Smuggler” by Brother Andrew and she realised that although she thought of herself as a Christian, she hadn’t really given the whole of her life to God; she still had one foot firmly in the world! She started going to church, and so did Roy, and they became Christians during the charismatic movement. Roy had a very dramatic experience of being baptised in the spirit when he was prayed for by John Bolt, a close associate of Colin Urquhart and Trevor Dearing. From Paddock Wood, Roy and Doreen moved to Tunbridge Wells where they attended a Pentecostal Church, having already tried the Church of England.

But Roy began to feel restless and left his job at the Pearl to become a trainer with the National Provident Institution. The couple then felt led to move to Exeter where they stayed for fourteen years. They attended “Isca” Church which is “the BCF of Exeter”, until Roy felt God was calling them to a church with a compassionate ministry towards the poor, a “mercy ministry”. They discovered such a church at Brislington called Carmel and after much deliberation they finally moved to Emersons Green where they now live. At Carmel they were asked to take over the “Hands of Compassion” ministry and Roy was asked to draw up a business plan. So having pioneered this ministry, they continued with it for three years, driving ten miles each way to church. They then felt a calling towards “the heart of the community” and this led them to Gateway Church in Yate. Here Doreen was involved in setting up and being trained for Healing Rooms in Yate and Chipping Sodbury.

Wanting to be more involved with the local community, they started visiting churches in the Emersons Green area and did a lot of praying over it. It was at an ecumenical meeting at the URC at Mangotsfield that Roy and Doreen met Ruth and Fran, who told them about BCF’s plans for a church in Emersons Green. Roy’s prayer is for ever increasing unity between churches – and he doesn’t believe in settling down! His hobbies are gardening, watching sport and writing poetry, but his real passion is the prophetic word. Doreen enjoys embroidery, creating her own designs and making lovely pictures from scratch, even dyeing her own materials.

As part of the **Social Hazard Action Group** we are trying to organise a parent toddler group at the Crossways centre in Blackhorse. It will hopefully be held on Thursday afternoons, but we need more volunteers to help or lead the group (BIG thanks to all who have already signed up).

If you would be interested in finding out more please get in touch with me.

Thank you all – **Rebekah Brain**

# Mutende update

Some of the latest news from the children's village in Zambia, from **Jim Newton-Smith**

The Mutende Working Group report a number of developments at the Children's Village in recent months, the most notable being the construction of the Junior School on land adjoining the orphanage.

- The new school is close to completion with the rooms currently being decorated with a view to opening in the next few months. It is planned to include a nursery, reception and middle school with about 30 to 40 children in each class through three sessions per day.
- The school is to serve the local community not just for the children from the orphanage.
- Godfrey, a director of BDWEZ, the micro business enterprise that the Cables are involved with, is likely to get more involved with the business side of developing the chicken rearing at the Village as he understands chicken rearing. There is greater scope to buy eggs and chickens wholesale and sell on with the ability to rear 800 chickens at full capacity. Special thanks to everyone who bought chickens as part of the Mutende Chicken Appeal.
- Chibesa, another of BDWEZ's staff, may get involved with IT training at Mutende for half a day a week to provide ongoing input into the orphanage.
- The well is working but there are still issues regarding the borehole supply, and the tower needs the platform to be replaced. The citrus trees are doing well but the vegetable patch has become somewhat neglected.
- The last people to visit noted the houses looked in good repair with decorations in cheerful colours. However, the playground needs attention due to continual termite attack.
- The current Director, Leontina, is to move out of the Village with her family including her older girls in order to release more accommodation for another 12 much younger children.

**Watch this space** for more information regarding publicity. The information leaflet is currently being revised to encourage more one-off donations and, when ready, volunteers will be needed to place the new one in hotels, pubs and other public places.



## Bristol Christian Fellowship

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## BCF Diary March 2010

Sun 7	Resound all-age meeting	10.30 am	Barley Close School <i>Jon Bird</i>
Sun 7	Thornbury: 4ALL	4.00 pm	St Mary's
Sun 7	Aardvark	7.00 pm	The Ark: Revenge ( <i>Dave Day</i> )
Sun 14	Resound meeting	10.30 am	Barley Close School <i>Dave Day</i>
Sun 14	BCF Thornbury	4.00 pm	St Paul's, The Hacket
Sun 14	Aardvark	7.00 pm	The Ark: Vows (Worship evening)
Sun 21	Resound meeting	10.30 am	Barley Close School <i>Tim Groves</i>
Sun 21	Thornbury: 4ALL	4.00 pm	St Mary's
Sun 21	Aardvark	7.00 pm	The Ark: Love your enemies ( <i>Andrew Price</i> )
Sun 28	Resound meeting	10.30 am	Barley Close School <i>Colin and Cara Medus</i>
Sun 28	BCF Thornbury	4.00 pm	St Paul's, The Hacket
Sun 28	Aardvark	7.00 pm	The Ark: Giving to the needy <i>Dave Mitchell</i>
<b>April 2010</b>			
Sun 4	Easter meeting	10.30 am	Barley Close School
Sun 4	Thornbury: 4ALL	4.00 pm	St Mary's
Sun 4	Aardvark	7.00 pm	The Ark: Baptisms & The Lord's Prayer ( <i>Neil</i> )
Sun 18	BCF Joint meeting	3.00 pm	Thornbury Baptist Church Centre <i>David Lawrence</i>

## Release 2010 - the healing revolution continues

**19-21 May 2010 - The Colston Hall**

Join Bill Johnson, Mark Stibbe and Love Bristol  
for 3 days of radical release of God's healing power

More details available from

<http://release2010.org>

## Prayer for Crossways pre-school – Sunday 28 March

There will be a short time of praying for Crossways pre-school at 9.45 am on Sunday 28 March, and every last Sunday of the month, before the Resound meeting at Barley Close School. Contact Debbie Carter for more information.

Entries for the April Bulletin by 23 March, please. [bulletin@bcfnet.com](mailto:bulletin@bcfnet.com)

BCF News is edited by Ian Wilson.

Read it online: [www.bcfnet.com/resources/BCF\\_News](http://www.bcfnet.com/resources/BCF_News)