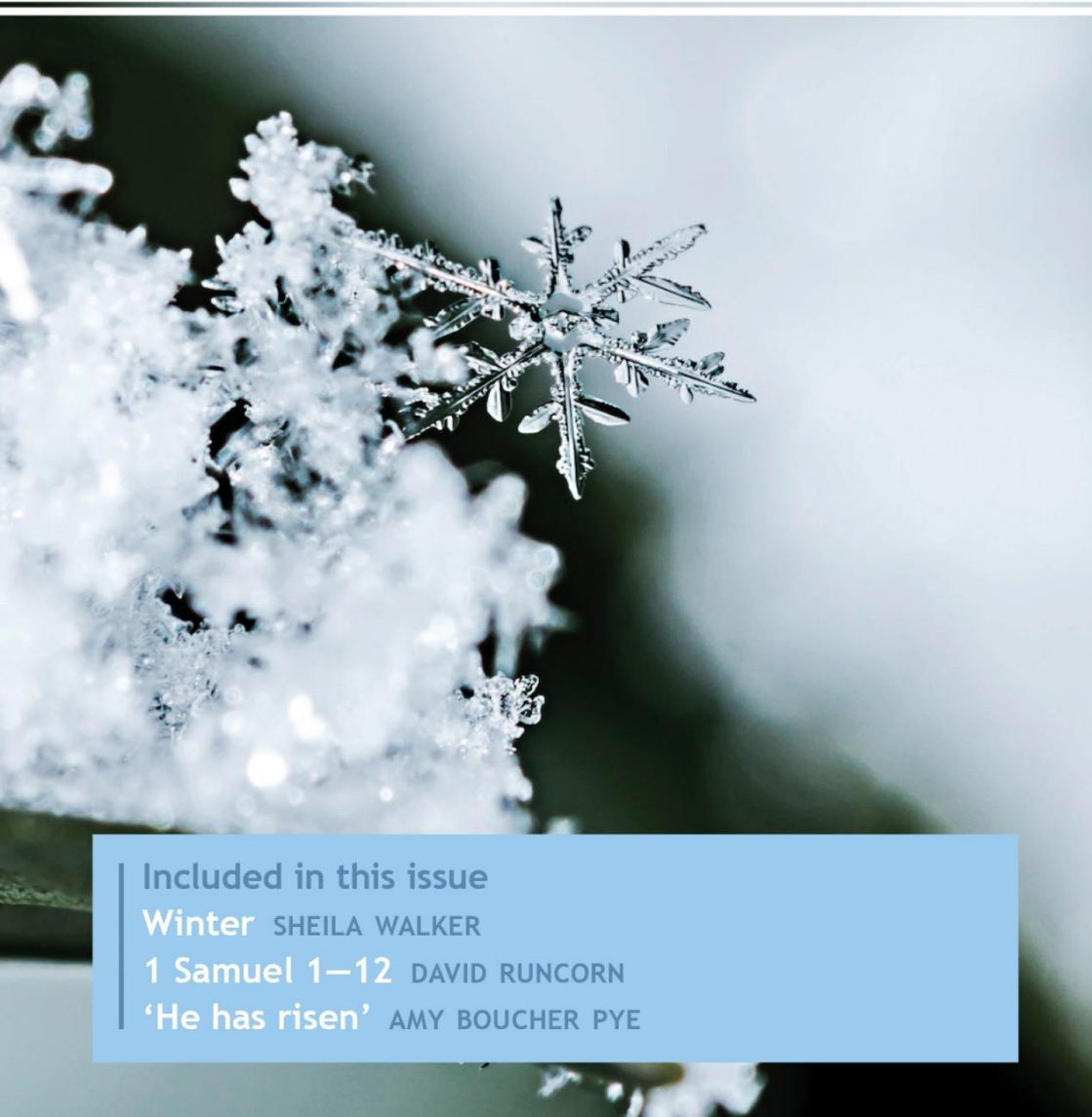


JANUARY-APRIL 2024



New Daylight

Sustaining your daily journey with the Bible



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New Daylight

Edited by Gordon Giles

January–April 2024

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Suggestions for using *New Daylight*

Find a regular time and place, if possible, where you can read and pray undisturbed. Before you begin, take time to be still and perhaps use the prayer of BRF Ministries on page 6. Then read the Bible passage slowly (try reading it aloud if you find it over-familiar), followed by the comment. You can also use *New Daylight* for group study and discussion, if you prefer.

The prayer or point for reflection can be a starting point for your own meditation and prayer. Many people like to keep a journal to record their thoughts about a Bible passage and items for prayer. In *New Daylight* we also note the Sundays and some special festivals from the church calendar, to keep in step with the Christian year.

New Daylight and the Bible

New Daylight contributors use a range of Bible versions, and you will find a list of the versions used opposite. You are welcome to use your own preferred version alongside the passage printed in the notes. This can be particularly helpful if the Bible text has been abridged.

New Daylight affirms that the whole of the Bible is God's revelation to us, and we should read, reflect on and learn from every part of both Old and New Testaments. Usually the printed comment presents a straightforward 'thought for the day', but sometimes it may also raise questions rather than simply providing answers, as we wrestle with some of the more difficult passages of scripture.

New Daylight is also available in a deluxe edition (larger format). Visit your local Christian bookshop or BRF's online shop brfonline.org.uk. To obtain an audio version for the blind or partially sighted, contact Torch Trust for the Blind, Torch House, Torch Way, Northampton Road, Market Harborough LE16 9HL; +44 (0)1858 438260; info@torchtrust.org.

Comment on *New Daylight*

To send feedback, please email enquiries@brf.org.uk, phone +44 (0)1865 319700 or write to the address shown opposite.

Writers in this issue

Amy Boucher Pye is a writer, speaker and spiritual director. She's the author of seven books, including the new *Holding Onto Hope* (BRF, 2023). Find her at amyboucherpye.com.

Terry Hinks is a United Reformed Church minister, serving two churches in Buckinghamshire. His love of the Bible, stillness and prayer has led him to writing many prayers and meditations, including *Praying the Way* (BRF, 2018).

Liz Hoare teaches on prayer and spirituality at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford. The author of *Twelve Great Spiritual Writers* (SPCK, 2020), she has worked in parish ministry and has a special interest in spiritual direction.

Tony Horsfall is an author, retreat leader and mentor based in Bournemouth. Among his many books published with BRF are *Mentoring Conversations*, *Working from a Place of Rest*, *Rhythms of Grace* and *Grief Notes*.

Emma Pennington is canon missionary of Canterbury Cathedral. Formerly a parish priest, area dean and spirituality adviser in the diocese of Oxford, she is the author of *At the Foot of the Cross with Julian of Norwich* (BRF, 2020).

Roland Riem is vice dean of Winchester Cathedral. Roland is currently also studying and teaching on Matthew's gospel, with a focus on the parables and Jewish-Christian relations.

David Runcorn is an Anglican priest, an author, a spiritual director and a retreat leader. His ministry has included local churches, Lee Abbey chaplain and a director of ordinands. You can meet him at davidruncorn.com.

Elizabeth Rundle has written many study and devotional books, including *20 Questions Jesus Asked* for BRF, has written and presented scripts for local and national radio and television, and led 16 pilgrimages to the Holy Land.

Sheila Walker is a former associate priest with three rural churches. She has worked as a teacher, editor, careers adviser, information officer, librarian and writer; also as wife, widow, single parent and stepmother, and grandmother.

Sally Welch is diocesan canon of Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford and co-director of the Centre for Christian Pilgrimage. She is the former editor of *New Daylight*.

'He has risen!' Practising resurrection



The season of Easter, which we've now entered, should be one of joy, feasting and the drinking of a lot of bubbly – so says the theologian Tom Wright. I agree. Many of us have come to observe the season of Lent with fasting and self-examination, but we lose out when we do not enjoy the spiritual practice of celebration. And we have the best news to rejoice over – Jesus lives! He did not stay dead! The resurrection is real! Alleluia!

As we explore the story of the resurrection this week through the synoptic gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, we see how it is one of contrasts – surprise, shock and disbelief along with wonder, celebration and overflowing joy. For instance, the way the women, when Jesus appears to them, believe straight away differs from the men, who take longer to understand that Jesus really is alive and has a resurrected body. Thus if we hold a lurking feeling that we should react to these stories in a particular way or by a certain timeline, we can find encouragement by the varied responses. God understands that we may come to know and believe in his resurrected life according to our own personality and volition.

During this season and beyond we can, in the words of the poet Wendell Berry, practise resurrection. When we do so daily, we stand against hopelessness and despair. We recognise the glories of our Creator God, who formed us in his image. We acknowledge that the risen Christ may appear in our lives in unexpected and amazing ways. And we collaborate with the indwelling Spirit, who empowers us to love the needy, work for justice, forgive those who repent, extend kindness to the awkward and walk with our God day by day.

This week I invite you to notice how Jesus may break through and surprise you. Perhaps you will receive an act of kindness from a stranger, or enjoy the best night of sleep in a long time, or delight at the smile of a child. When we ask God to show us how he is at work, we will see more and more the evidence of his resurrection power. Not least in how we seek to live each day.

Earth-shattering news

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, 'Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?'... There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

'Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Alleluia!' This refrain will echo around the world today as Christians express their joy over the good news of Jesus – he who died yet lives. But as we rejoice, take a few moments to put yourselves in the sandals of the women who discovered the empty tomb.

Weighed down with grief after their friend was killed, they wanted to care for his broken body. But they could not buy the anointing spices until the sabbath was over and the new day dawned. Spices in hand, in a fog of grief, they made their way to the tomb and realised that the stone would be too heavy to move. How shattering that must have felt – they who wanted to pour out their love in the only practical way available were stymied in their quest.

Then consider their great surprise when God intervened with the earth shaking and an angel appearing to do the heavy lifting. This unexpected turn of events, with the blazing-bright appearance of this angel, must have shaken off the weariness of their deep grief. The women stay alert while the guards can't handle the shock, their bodies closing down.

What a joy for us that God continues to burst on to the scene. If we feel weighed down in an impenetrable fog, we can trust that he can send the light of his Spirit to dispel the clouds. Jesus is alive!

Risen Christ, you weren't contained by the tomb! You are risen! Alleluia!

AMY BOUCHER PYE

Easter Day

Divine passive

In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: "The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again."' Then they remembered his words.

Because of its vitality, I love using the active tense when writing. But I also love what is known as the 'divine passive', and that is what we see in this passage. It appears just after the angel asks the women why they are looking for the living in a grave; as they say, 'He is not here; he has risen!' In the Greek, the latter part of that sentence is more accurately translated 'He has been raised!' The angel delivers this stunning news, and the grammar points to God as the one who made it happen.

The women hardly have time to ponder what this means when the angel reminds them what Jesus said previously – that after being killed he would be raised again to life.

It is easy to overlook the wonder of God sharing this miracle with *women* first. Many rabbis would not trust women to be witnesses. Women received no education and were not allowed to read the Torah, the scriptures, or even touch them. All of their learning would have been done via their fathers, husbands or rabbis. Yet God revealed that his Son was alive to those from this less-valued segment of society, going against the expectations of that culture. For God is not limited by what humans create.

On this Easter Monday, why not take some time to ponder the upside-down kingdom of Jesus, including that he died but did not stay dead, that lowly women, not rulers and kings, heard the news first, and the many other wonders that God brings about, including in our own lives.

Saving God, thank you for how you break into our hearts and minds. Open me to receive from you in whatever form you choose. Amen.

On a mission

‘Then go quickly and tell his disciples: “He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.” Now I have told you.’ So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. ‘Greetings,’ he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshipped him. Then Jesus said to them, ‘Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.’

What a whirlwind for the women. Tasked with sharing the shocking news that their friend was not dead but alive, they reverberated with not only joy but trepidation. They would have felt that stomach-churning anticipation of sharing a big announcement when one does not know how everything will turn out. The closest I can imagine was sharing the news that my husband and I were expecting a baby.

The women’s emotions would have been rocked even more when none other than Jesus himself appeared to them! Note how they fell down immediately to worship, grabbing on to his feet – that detail would have lodged in the minds of the original audience, indicating that this was not a spirit-only resurrection. After all, Jesus had feet that they could clasp.

The place mentioned by the angel and Jesus is important too – Galilee. This was the main space for Jesus’ ministry; his friends, whom he calls his brothers, would know where to meet him. Also, that he does not specify Jerusalem as the meeting place underscores that he comes not only for Jewish people but Gentiles too.

Jesus loves these women and treats them with respect. He tasks them with sharing the extraordinary news of him being alive, all the while giving them reassurance and telling them not to fear. The risen Christ continues to love and affirm us, and also gives us the mission of sharing his good news. Perhaps today you will sense a nudge with his loving invitation to partner with him.

Living Lord, help me to receive your presence. Thank you for entrusting me with collaborating with you. Equip me to do your will, with love. Amen.

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New Daylight provides four months of daily Bible readings and comment, with a regular team of contributors drawn from a range of church backgrounds. It is ideal for anybody wanting an accessible yet stimulating aid to spending time with God each day, deepening their faith and their knowledge of scripture.

Readers' comments on New Daylight:

'Thank you for all you do to make every issue so readable and enlightening, giving us the opportunity to get closer to God.'

'Thank you to all the wonderful writers who bring scriptures to life and make them relevant for us in the here and now.'

'I just wanted to say how much I appreciate the notes for helping to keep me going with reading the Bible and shedding light on demanding passages.'



New Daylight
is edited by
Gordon Giles,
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