

Issue 27
Summer 2024

intouch

News of ministries
within the
Affinity Family



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affinity
gospel churches in partnership

The background is a blue-tinted photograph of a church service. In the foreground, a man in a white shirt is seen from the side, looking down at a book. Behind him, other people are seated, some looking towards the front. Overlaid on the right side of the image is a complex network diagram consisting of numerous colored circles (red, orange, green, white) of varying sizes, connected by thin lines, resembling a molecular or network structure.

Affinity is a growing network of
1,200 Bible-centred churches and
Christian organisations throughout
Britain and Ireland. We declare and
demonstrate the unity of Christ's
Church for the advancement of
Christ's kingdom.

Find out more by visiting
affinity.org.uk

Director's Desk

It is a pleasure to share with you our Summer edition of In Touch magazine.

It may feel like we are in a season of 'small things', where we witness people turning to the Lord, growing in Him, and working for Him, but not on the scale we long for. In such a time, it is easy to lose heart. However, knowing the power of God's word, we press on, confident in God's sovereign power to save as he pleases, and that as we preach boldly and serve faithfully, he will graciously command the blessing.

As this edition goes to print, we, as a country, are experiencing a 'big thing' – a general election. For many Christians, this can evoke a sense of despair or disinterest. We are saddened that the main parties have largely rejected Christian morality, which can lead us to lose interest in participating, feeling powerless to effect any real change. However, James Mildred, in his article on page 4, exhorts us to engage with politics as part of our Christian duty. It is not just about voting in the election. As Christian citizens, whatever the result, we must continue engaging locally and nationally with community leaders and political representatives to work towards good and just laws.

There are many other ways we can preach the gospel and serve Christ in our communities. SASRA has written a piece on page 8, reminding us that this summer marks the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings, which began

the liberation of France. We are also reminded of the miracle needed a few years earlier to evacuate our troops from France as they retreated. At that time, the King called for a Day of Prayer. We, as the church, need to pray for the miracle of revival in these days.

On page 13 you will find an inspiring example of how we can serve those in their darkest hour. Affinity members, Daylight Christian Prison Trust, run a letter-writing ministry, sharing hope with those in prison. Could this be something you could do?

We trust you will find this edition of In Touch encouraging and informative. I would love to hear from you with any comments or questions. You can write to me directly at director@affinity.org.uk, and our Editor's details are found on the back of this magazine.

Wishing you God's richest blessings over the summer season.

Graham Nicholls





Confronting Political Apathy



After months of speculation, the Prime Minister announced a general election for Thursday, 4 July. In a rain-soaked statement, Rishi Sunak framed the election as a choice between the Conservatives, who 'have a plan', and Labour, who he claimed do not. Labour leader Keir Starmer responded that this election is all about 'change'.

From my conversations, it's clear that Christians will be voting, but many face a double challenge: they do not know who to vote for and they are not enthusiastic about the prospect.

The feeling of apathy

I want to address the apathy many feel about this election. Why is it there, and how can we view it from a biblical perspective? Diagnosing this apathy is straightforward. Politics has been chaotic and unimpressive over the last few years, marked by instability, power grabs, and scandals. The relentless 24-hour media exposes us to these issues up close. When a Conservative majority of 80 is reduced to under 40 due to scandals and defections, disillusionment and apathy are understandable.

No party represents my view

What is there to get excited about as we contemplate which party will govern our country? This form of apathy is real and understandable. But as a Christian, I care about my nation (Jeremiah 29:7) and pray for those in authority (1 Timothy 2:1-2). I see the connection between politics and people. Laws and social policies have consequences. I want a society where God's wisdom and word are honoured.

"First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way."

1 Tim 2: 1-2



“An election is an opportunity to follow our prayers for godly leaders with servant-hearted action by carefully and wisely voting for candidates pursuing policies that will bless our neighbours.”

In the Bible, I am commanded to love my neighbour (Mark 12:30-31) as myself. I am also commanded to pray for those in authority (1 Timothy 2:1-4) with the aim of seeing freedom for the gospel. An election is an opportunity to follow our prayers for godly leaders with servant-hearted action by carefully and wisely voting for candidates who will bless our neighbours.

I am also told to keep my spiritual fervour (Romans 12:11), that I am salt and light in this world (Matthew 5:13-16), and that I should speak up for those without a voice (Proverbs 31:8). With Christ, I am to fulfil the Great Commission of making disciples (Matthew 28).

Thinking biblically

I believe apathy about the election is a sin. That might strike you as bold, but I want to make you think! I could list reasons to care about elections, but I don't want to be disingenuous. I have felt the same apathy.

Apathy about the election is sin

Given these realities, surely apathy about the election, a significant moment in our nation's life, is sin. This attitude needs to be challenged and changed, with God's help and relying on his Spirit and grace. Apathy can lead to anger and cynicism, also sinful attitudes. If you look at the fruits of the Spirit, apathy is as far away from them as you can get.

So, my suggestion is to repent of our apathy and pray for wisdom and help from the Lord to engage in politics with optimism and hope. We know politics is not the ultimate in this world. As citizens of the new world, we are free to engage well, investing in God's kingdom, knowing that in his power and providence, some good laws will be passed and some bad ones will be stopped.

CARE's election website, **engage24**, provides resources, from prayer points to manifesto analysis and voting records, plus a quiz to help you align your views with the main parties. I encourage you to use this site.



Love my neighbour

Often we view voting as an individualistic exercise, fuelled by the 'me and my vote' mentality. Instead, what if we approached voting through a 'love your neighbour' lens? Ask yourself what your local constituency needs. Apart from the spiritual problem, what are the practical, environmental, economic, and other challenges? And what can you do to engage with these issues?

So, there you have it. Resist the sin of apathy. Pray for God's help and wisdom. And approach politics through a people-centred lens.

engaGE24 
a project of CARE

James Mildred is the Director of Communications and Engagement at CARE. CARE's ministry is to bring a uniquely Christian insight into the policies and laws that affect our lives. You can find out more about CARE by visiting care.org.uk



A Call to Pray

Eighty Years On Since the D-Day Landings, SASRA Encourages Us to Keep Praying for Members of Our Armed Forces

*Written by
Sandrina de Klerk,
Communications
Assistant at SASRA*



The Second World War resulted in an estimated death toll of over thirty-eight million; an amount so large it is hard to comprehend nearly eighty years on. Britain was still recovering from the war that was supposed to end all wars only a few years prior, unaware of the horrors WWII would bring.



The role of the church, gospel work, and the prayers of Christians have never been insignificant during times of war and military activity, but all the more vital. We see in times past that when the situation seems desperate and hopeless, people look to a higher power. This was the case during WWII, where the prayers of the church and the guiding hand of God can be clearly traced, from the miracle of Dunkirk to the D-Day Landings that changed the course of the war. Christians all over Europe and the rest of the world were united by one thing: prayer.

Whether they were Scripture Readers or Chaplains preaching to soldiers who might not see the morning, or soldiers fighting on the frontline witnessing to their comrades, whether they were those working in hospitals or factories, or the ones praying from home; they placed their trust in God and committed all their needs to him.

In desperate need of a miracle

Within the first year of the war, the British people were in desperate need of a miracle. The British Expeditionary Force and French and Belgian troops had been

The Soldiers' and Aviators' Scripture Readers Association (SASRA) provides the serving personnel of the British Army and Royal Air Force with a practical and constant experience of the Christian Faith through living and working alongside them in their units. Find out more at sasra.org.uk

pushed back and trapped at the French port of Dunkirk. It was a dire situation; the Royal Navy began to organise 'Operation Dynamo', but Churchill and his advisors predicted the rescue of 20,000 to 30,000 men at best out of the nearly 400,000 who were stranded. The nation held its breath as they waited for the outcome. A National Day of Prayer was called on 26 May 1940, not by the church, but by the King and Parliament.

King George VI addressed the nation to join in prayer: 'at this fateful hour, we turn, as our fathers before us in all times of trial, to God Most High.' He urged Britain to humbly and confidently 'commit our cause to God and ask his aid' and finished with the comforting words, 'with God's help, we shall not fail.'



The nation did respond. Churches across the land were packed full, with many gathering outside the buildings when there was no more room inside. They committed themselves to God, admitting the desperate need of his intervention. In the following week, God's answer to their prayers could be clearly seen in the events that are now often referred to as the 'Miracle of Dunkirk'. Nearly 900 Navy and private vessels sailed across an unusually, perhaps miraculously, calm English Channel. Easterly winds blew smoke over the beaches where soldiers waited to be evacuated, and while cloud cover prevented the Luftwaffe from bombing the Allied Forces, above the cloud, the Royal Air Force were able to engage. Instead of the hoped-for 20,000 to 30,000 rescued soldiers, 338,226 British and Allied troops were rescued from the beaches. When looked at in the context of the prayers of the nation, it is hard to see this as anything other than divine intervention from the Most High God that the King urged his subjects to appeal to.

Over the six-year span of the Second World War, there were seven national days of prayer called in total. Three of those days were held within the first

year. Four years later, in spring 1944, the seventh and final National Day of Prayer was called, followed by the D-Day Landings on the beaches of Normandy. This was the largest amphibious invasion the world had ever seen in the history of warfare.

The history of that day is well known and well documented, and the victory of that day and the weeks following is still celebrated eighty years later. Though the war continued for another year after D-Day, it was the beginning of the end of the war in Europe. SASRA prepared to send Scripture Readers to Normandy as soon as possible after D-Day, and Scripture Readers worked with the invasion troops overseas, with those preparing to go over and with the injured troops and prisoners of war.



One of the reports from a Reader in 1944 says this: 'I am very happy to report times of blessing. I have been working amongst the men back from the Normandy battlefield. Both officers and men have given me a very vivid description of what faith in God means in the thick of the battle; many made the great decision on the field. The good seed sown in the days of preparation has brought forth fruit now, but in many cases, it was sown in tears: "He that goeth forth and weepeth bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing bringing his sheaves with him."'

Continuing the mission today

As we consider the Second World War, the events and prayers of times past, let us not think that the necessity of ministry to the Armed Forces has become any less important today. In many ways it can be more challenging for people to support the British military and those who work with them in the 21st century than it has been historically. As global situations and military conflicts develop, it becomes increasingly difficult to see how, humanly speaking, these tensions can be resolved. Wars are not black and white and many fall divided on which side is right or wrong and disagree with military and political decisions. However, this does not create reason to withdraw support or to neglect praying for our Armed Forces and those who work with them – it makes it more vital.

As we are unaware of what may happen in the future and how our troops may be involved, we must again turn to God in prayer for the salvation of many and the presence of Christian witness among them. We estimate that only around 0.3%

of British Army non-commissioned ranks are evangelical Christians. This is far below the national average and is on par with the most unreached people groups in the world today.

"SASRA exists for the same purpose today as it did during wars of the past: to serve those who serve and to tell them of the call to be a soldier of the Lord's Army.

As the Scripture Reader working with the Normandy troops said, 'The good seed sown in the days of preparation has brought forth fruit now.' The gospel needs to be shared with our soldiers now. They are the ones who may well be on the frontline of conflict in the future and so the prayers of the church for the outcome of the good seed that is being sown is essential.

Whether in times of peace or of war, SASRA exists for the same purpose today as it did during wars of the past: to serve those who serve and to tell them of the call to be a soldier of the Lord's Army. Today, SASRA Scripture Readers all over the United Kingdom work behind the wire among our forces. With both your prayer and financial support, SASRA will continue to serve as they always have. Will you be a part of this mission?



AFFINITY THEOLOGICAL STUDY CONFERENCE 2025

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Spurgeon's insight rings true to this day and forms the cornerstone of our upcoming Affinity Theological Study Conference, where we will gather together

to contemplate our great God of wonders: who he is and how he acts.

We warmly invite you to join us at King's Park in Northampton from Wednesday 5th to Friday 7th March where we'll discuss topics such as Christ's weaknesses, divine immutability and simplicity, and the power and personhood of God.

Here at Affinity, we're passionate about enabling discussion. You'll see that reflected in the style of this conference through our collective conversations and small group interactions.

We believe there's something profound to gain when everyone's voice is heard and as we learn from each other. So whether you're a pastor or layperson, this Study Conference is for you.

Don't miss this opportunity to be part of this enriching theological exploration. Reserve your place today and join us at the Affinity Theological Study Conference 2025; we can't wait to meet you.

Find out more by visiting affinity.org.uk/studyconference

Sharing faith with those in prison, one letter at a time



Daylight is a Christian charity and Agency member of Affinity 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. This is a guest post providing information about their crucial Letter Writing Ministry.

Working alongside local Bible-believing churches, and through HMPPS (His Majesty's Prison & Probation Service) and Community Chaplaincy Networks, we aspire to be a nationally reaching, locally rooted provider of the highest quality gospel ministry to prisoners; offering prisoners and their families Biblical guidance and assisting them to lead and socially useful lives upon release.

Demonstrating Christian compassion

As part of our work in prisons, for many years now, we have run a Letter Writing Ministry, where our volunteers write to



Written by Hannah Mansfield

Hannah is Office Manager for Daylight Christian Prison Trust, which exists to prayerfully proclaim the gospel of God's grace in prisons, and to ex-offenders and their families.

prisoners to offer support during their sentences. Many people in prison receive little or no contact from family and friends, so receiving a personal letter can be a great encouragement to them. As well as being an opportunity to show them some Christian compassion in a practical way, the letters also provide an informal setting for sharing the gospel.



One prisoner, Andy, had picked up a mix of teachings from various religions in the past but was keen to learn more about the Bible during his time in prison. With the encouragement of our letter writing volunteer, he began to read our Bible study sheets and pray regularly. Just before his release earlier this year, Andy wrote to our volunteer, saying, 'I do thank you and Daylight eternally for your support over the last 18 months via four prisons. It has been so beneficial having your regular letters in my life'. Andy is also continuing to receive Bible study material now he has returned home, and we pray that the Lord will use this contact in his heart and life.

"I send you thanks and heartfelt gratitude for your friendship that sustains me and the opportunity to resolve, consider and discuss Scripture and theological issues."

An opportunity to encourage

For prisoners who are already Christians, the letters provide an opportunity to encourage them as they seek to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. Our volunteers are often able to answer questions that prisoners come across in their personal Bible study times or recommend good Christian reading material.

Wyatt, a Christian prisoner who has been corresponding with one of our volunteers for several years, often lets us know how much the contact means to him, writing, 'I send you thanks and heartfelt gratitude for your friendship that sustains me and the opportunity to resolve, consider and discuss Scripture and theological issues'.

For our 20th anniversary year, we have rebranded with a fresh logo and new website, reflecting our vision 'to give light to those who sit in darkness'. As part of this, we have introduced a new sign-up card, enabling prisoners to request regular Bible study sheets and sign up for our Letter Writing Ministry.

Having begun to distribute these cards into various prisons over the last few months, we have been overwhelmed by the number of requests for letter writing that have come back. As a result, we are praying that the Lord will provide more volunteers to meet this need.

If this could be you or someone you know, then Daylight would love to hear from you. Please get in touch by emailing hannah@daylightcpt.org or calling 01245 252735, or visit their website daylightcpt.org to find out more.



Have you listened to the Affinity Talks Gospel Podcast yet?

Throughout the episodes, we have been delving into the heart of gospel ministry and church unity across the UK.

Join Graham Nicholls, Director of Affinity and local church pastor, along with Lizzie Harewood, Executive Officer at the Association of Christian Teachers, as they unveil stories of gospel transformation happening right now across the country.

As we meet with churches and para-church organisations, projects and Christian movements, each episode will inspire and inform you about the incredible work God has done and is doing. You'll be encouraged as you hear about the gospel's impact, and you'll be equipped to pray more intelligently for various ministries and serve in new ways.

Listen to Affinity Talks Gospel Podcast on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, YouTube or wherever you get your podcasts.



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CONTACT

Graham Nicholls, Director
director@affinity.org

Joel Upton,
Executive Assistant
office@affinity.org.uk

PO Box 905
Haywards Heath
RH16 9TJ
www.affinity.org.uk



@AffinityTalks

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