

BCM UPDATE



Diamond year

Birmingham City Mission started in 1966. It began with a few volunteers going into the old Bull Ring next to St Martin's Church. On a Saturday evening, by the concrete spiral staircase that dominated the paved area alongside Woolworth's, the gospel was preached and homeless people were fed. There were no staff, buildings, vehicles, or money, but in those early weeks the vision to 'proclaim the gospel and to help those in need' was born.

This year, we will be celebrating our sixtieth anniversary, which means it is our Diamond Year. I have had the wonderful privilege of working with BCM for over fifty years. As a teenager with long hair I volunteered, and so connected with the Mission from the beginning. In the providence of God there have only been two CEOs of BCM during these sixty years and, as many reading this will know, Edwin Orton, the first CEO and founder, was my school teacher, Pastor, mentor and great friend.

Diamonds are formed about 125 miles deep under the earth's surface. Pure carbon, which experiences extreme pressure and immense heat over a long period of time, crystallises into its uniquely strong and valuable structure. Over these six decades we have experienced times of pressure, of great challenge; and of periods when we have

felt something of the heat that comes with seeking to reach a city with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The testimony of BCM over these sixty years is that our God has been faithful. He has kept us, and His timing has always been perfect, sending the resources at just the right time - whether it is people to serve, or the necessary finances to keep going.

As you will see from the advert on the back page of this BCM Update, the next few months are very important as we look to the Lord to send the person of His choice to take over my role, and to lead the Mission into the future. Please make this a special matter of prayer and ask the Lord to give great wisdom to BCM's Directors.

We are arranging a variety of events for our Diamond Year, so please see if you can attend any of them. I would especially encourage you to put our Annual Celebration, Saturday 17th October at St Martin's Church, in your diary. It will be a special occasion as we give thanks to God for His goodness over sixty years and publicly introduce the new CEO of BCM.

Thank you for your support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Wes Erpen'.

Wes Erpen, Chief Executive



I was given a small, red book

In recent years Garry Thomas has volunteered for BCM's ToyLink project, but his connection to the Mission began almost 40 years before. Here he tells his story of how he came to faith in God.

My journey with God started in my last year of school, when I was given a small, red, Gideons New Testament. I had no religious background, yet I read that little book avidly and began to write down particular verses that touched me. To this day I still have those notes written on scraps of paper. After a while I started to pray, along the lines of the Lord's Prayer, or saying, 'If you are real, God, can you do this... or that?'

I am forever grateful for the part that BCM had in my journey of faith.

When a friend of mine was invited to BCM's Youth Camp, I went along with him. Neither of our families were particularly well off. His was very large, and mine a 'single-mom family', so we didn't have it easy growing up. Though it was a struggle at times, we were happy.

So we both got packaged off on the camp. I remember being excited and nervous at the same time. There was a large mansion-type building and dormitory. We played games and went on long walks, and there were times of reflection and discussion. I was very curious and asked a lot of questions. The

BCM leaders were always helpful, even with the more difficult kids. Nothing phased them, and they were genuinely concerned about our well-being. Something seemed different about them. One leader kept in touch afterwards, answering my continuing questions about faith, which was a great help and comfort, and recommending a church. But for some reason I didn't go.

By this time I was 17, had left school and started a Youth Training Scheme in electrical and mechanical engineering. I made new friends, unfortunately involved in drinking and drugs, but there was always something inside me telling me to keep away from those things, so I never took drugs. There was another man on the YTS who would talk to literally anyone and everyone about God. He invited me to a Morris Cerullo crusade at what was then the NEC. I said I would go, I think to get him off my back. I didn't really know this guy, and I'm a bit of an introvert, so I would never normally do something like that. At the end of the night I walked up to the front and gave my life to Christ.

I joined a small Pentecostal church in a community centre in Small Heath. The people there made me feel so welcome and have helped me much in my life. It was there I met Dawn, and we were married a few years later.

Since 1998 I have been working for Jaguar Land Rover, building cars on the track. I have never been ashamed of my faith, and my colleagues know I am a Christian, and respect me for it. A few years ago at work I joined a Christian network, and the opportunity arose to volunteer to renovate the basement at BCM's Clock Tower. I put my name forward as a debt of gratitude to BCM for all they had done for me in my early spiritual journey, putting in the foundations of my faith, helping me to build on stone and not sand.

This Christmas, for a second year, I and a group of JLR colleagues have had fun driving around and delivering gifts for BCM's ToyLink. I was greatly humbled by the smiles of gratitude on recipients' faces, and the difficult stories some shared.

As I read through this testimony, it amazes me how God has always had an influence in my life, and how he has guided me, even cajoling me out of my comfort zone, but always making me grow and be stronger. I am forever grateful for the part that BCM had in my journey of faith, and they are always in my prayers and thoughts. I imagine many, many others are grateful like me for the amazing impact that God has had on their lives through BCM, whether it be by prayer, giving, deeds or love and compassion. It is needed more than ever in this world crying out for God's love.



Pictured left: Workers from Jaguar Land Rover brought 100 vehicles through December right up until Christmas to BCM, making a massive contribution to delivering ToyLink parcels.



The gift of a Bible

The Youth Team, its volunteers and church partners, visited 34 schools in the month leading up to Christmas. They delivered 92 assemblies, 13 lessons and some clubs to an estimated total of 13,000 students.

The Christmas assembly was on the theme of 'Peace on Earth'. It dealt with conflict in our communities and the world, keeping calm and resolving arguments in our everyday lives; and explored how Jesus came to bring us peace with God.



An important element of the assembly was a video resource the team created with Augustus Stewart (Setting Captives Free) and, pictured above in a still from the video, Nathan Dennis (First Class Foundation). These are two Birmingham men who have overcome violence in their own lives. Dennis commented on the assemblies, 'Young people listened to real stories of conflict, choice and transformation. What stayed with us most - many students asked for Bibles. Not prompted. Not pressured.'

At some schools the Bibles ran out and more had to be delivered later.

Eight schools, more than ever before, alongside BCM's visit accepted an offer to students and staff of a free New Testament and Psalms, provided by Good News for Everyone (formerly Gideons). The demand was so great that, at some schools, the Bibles ran out and more had to be delivered later. At one school, as students began to file out of the assembly hall, nobody took the books being offered. But when one boy plucked up the courage to do so, lots of others followed. Some even came back to ask for Bibles. A teacher explained that what their students know about Christianity is from RE teachers, and so it is good for them to have the chance to read the Bible for themselves.

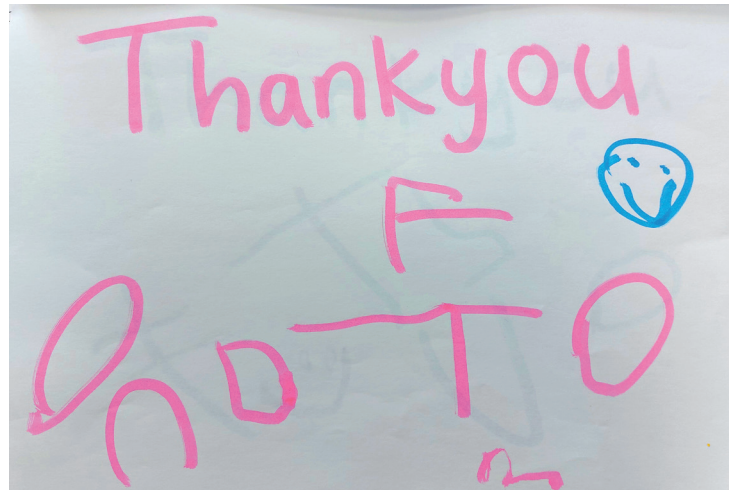


Wonderful generosity

BCM's Christmas ToyLink is a massive project that would not happen without hundreds of volunteers and donations. This Christmas 1,500 families in need - which is 3,500 children - were supported through the festive season.

One ToyLink volunteer commented, 'What you are doing is amazing. I hadn't quite realised the scope of the operation, how many families you support and how much is required for it to run smoothly.'

A huge thank you from us at BCM to everyone who gave so generously their time, energy and money. On the next page we have tried to name each local business that contributed, but if you have been missed or are a school, church or individual, we thank you just the same! And here are just a few messages of thanks from those who were helped this Christmas...



'I wanted to reach out to express my gratitude for your kindness. The gifts I have received for my children are greatly appreciated. They are going to love them. Thank you for thinking of others in need and being there to support our family in this difficult time. May God bless you and everyone working there in abundance.'

'A few days ago I had a parcel for my daughters in the hotel. It was Christmas gifts. I am really speechless. You don't know how much it means to us. I couldn't help myself from thanking you and everyone who contributed.'

fitzgerald
CivilEngineeringContractors

NOURISHED

PTV

GROUP





GREAT FOOD, CAROL SINGING AND COMPANY were highlights at the Care Centre's two Christmas meals (pictured on the front page, and staff and volunteers above). One client commented the food was better than at the Harvester! Thanks go to 'I'm homeless, get me out of here!' for covering all the meals' expenses, and to James Brindley Academy for providing Santa with a gift each for everyone. Pastor Peter Scarrott and BCM's Wes Erpen shared clear messages on the real good news of Christmas, and so for a few hours together we shared the hope, peace, joy and love that Jesus brought to the world.

Phil Ansell, Care Centre Manager



ELDERLINK HELD CAROL SERVICES IN 12 CARE HOMES, our 'Knitivity' (knitted nativity) touring with us and losing only a king and a sheep on the way. At Perry Locks Care Home a choir from Holy Trinity Birchfield joined us with their amazing harmonies. Our hamper deliveries were gratefully received in 32 private homes and a hospital. One lady immediately sent a thank you letter to the children at Oaklands Primary School who provided the hampers. She wrote, 'It is nice to be remembered when you think the world has forgotten you. I really liked my gloves as my hands get cold these days, and when I wear your Christmas socks I will always think of you.'

Catherine Tresham, ElderLink Manager

Save the date...

A convention for all the family

BIRMINGHAM SPRING CONVENTION 2026

Friday 8th & Saturday 9th May

at The Priory Rooms, 40 Bull Street, B4 6AF

with speaker **JOHN HINDLEY** giving 3 talks on 'Weakness our strength'

Plus on Saturday...

Choice of seminars

KIDS STREAM led by BCM's Children's Team



THIS CHRISTMAS THE CHILDREN'S TEAM delivered 17 'Christmas Special' assemblies, 34 lessons and 8 special needs workshops. This year we looked at how 'Nothing is Impossible for God', including an angel appearing to Joseph, and Mary's baby Jesus, who is Immanuel. The children had some great questions in lessons, such as, "Immanuel means 'God is with us', but what does that actually mean?" and "How did the angel know to visit Mary and Joseph and what to tell them?" It was such a great chance to share the events of the first Christmas.

Kathryn Hindley, Children's Team Co-ordinator

LAURA EHIO

AL JOHNSON

BEN PUTT

AN INTER-DENOMINATIONAL YOUTH EVENT

FRIDAY 6 MAR 7.30PM

AT TRINITY@BIRMINGHAM, SMALL HEATH

JANUARY'S PRAYER FOCUS

SUNDAY - YOUTH TEAM

Give thanks for the team - its staff, volunteers and church partners. Please pray that their work in schools this term will build on the message of hope and peace they shared before Christmas (see *The gift of a Bible* inside this BCM Update). Pray for more schools to book the team for a visit. Please pray particularly for the students at the 2 school clubs each week - for growth in relationships and understanding, and for continued good attendance. There were 30 students at one club last term!

MONDAY - CARE CENTRE



Thank God for the joy and peace of the Christmas meals. Pray for the clients as we move into a new year, that they would be supported and able to move forward through often difficult situations. Pray that discussions with Birmingham City Council about new funding progress, and for wisdom regarding the development of the Care Centre.

TUESDAY - BCM SHOP

Thank God for his blessing on the shop last year, and pray that customers would continue to feel its warm welcome in 2026. Please pray for more volunteers to join BCM's eBay selling team.

WEDNESDAY - ELDERLINK

Please pray for the team as a new staff member and a new volunteer join this month. Pray that they would bring comfort and hope to the older people they care for this year.

THURSDAY - CHILDREN'S TEAM

Thank God for all that Anna Page has contributed during her time at BCM, and pray for her as she starts work full time for her church. Pray for energy for the team as they tackle a very busy month full of bookings.

FRIDAY - RESOURCE CENTRE

Before Christmas one of BCM's Resource Centre vans broke down and the cost of repair is almost £15,000. Please pray for the funding to cover this unexpected expense. **If you would like to contribute towards the repair, please contact our Head of Finance on 0121 766 6603 (ext 3) or at zoebond@birminghamcitymission.co.uk**

SATURDAY - CITY MISSIONARIES

Please pray for BCM's City Missionaries as they support those in need and share the good news of Jesus Christ in Birmingham this year. Pray for wise and gentle conversations, growing relationships and protection.

JOB VACANCY

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

BCM exists to share God's love across our city through gospel proclamation and practical care for those in need. We are seeking a committed Christian leader to serve as our next CEO, providing spiritual leadership, strategic direction, and oversight of our wide-ranging ministries.

The CEO will:

- Lead and support staff and volunteers with a servant-hearted approach;
- Work closely with the Board on vision, planning and governance;
- Oversee key areas including finance, fundraising, publicity, departmental leadership and safeguarding;
- Represent BCM in churches, community settings and partner organisations;
- Uphold BCM's twin priorities - preaching the gospel and helping those in need.

Location: Birmingham

Hours: Full-time (37.5 hours per week)

**Salary: £40,000 to £45,000
+ a car allowance of £5,000**

A genuine Christian occupational requirement applies. The successful applicant will require a DBS check.

For an application pack or more information:
jeanharborne@birminghamcitymission.co.uk

**Closing date for applications:
Saturday 28th February**

Be a part of BCM's DIAMOND YEAR

Do you have an idea for a fund or awareness raising event you would like to hold on behalf of BCM in 2026? Or an individual challenge you could take on in aid of the Mission? Or how about joining BCM at its 60th year events....

60 Bridges Walk

Saturday June 6th

BCM Open Day

Saturday 4th July

BCM Banquet

Saturday 19th September

60th Annual Celebration

at St Martin's Church

Saturday 17th October



Birmingham City Mission

The Clock Tower, 2 Langdon St,
Birmingham B9 4BP

birminghamcitymission.org.uk

Telephone: 0121 766 6603

Email: office@birminghamcitymission.co.uk