

BCM UPDATE



Unexpected encounters

It was Saturday 29th November. Jackie and I were visiting Hanbury Hall. It was the first day of their Christmas celebrations and it was here, years ago, that we joined the National Trust. The main entrance hall had been decked out beautifully with a tall, decorated tree, and the Christmas theme of bygone years was evidenced in many of the rooms. Having 'done' the house, we set off for the obligatory coffee and cake, followed by a visit to the second-hand bookshop.

The weather was overcast and the ground wet, but as Jackie was using a motorised scooter, we made our way around the back to look at the gardens. On the path there was a small tunnel we needed to go through, and a man, also on a scooter, appeared out of it. He was followed by three energetic children and a lady, who I assumed was his wife.

As we got closer I passed the time of day, saying that the children, who were jumping from one puddle to another, were having fun. The lady exclaimed that she had to get them ready for the other grandparents. So the four of us talked about our families. They shared that they had been going through a difficult few years, including the death of the man's brother. After a while I said, "Will you let me pray for you?" They agreed and, as Jackie's scooter was next to the man's scooter, I asked them to hold hands, and for the lady to hold Jackie's other hand. I put my hand on the lady's shoulder and asked the Lord to comfort and bless them. I am sure that anyone looking on must have wondered what was happening! We said our goodbyes, and they were visibly moved.

In his life, the Lord Jesus had unexpected encounters that appear 'just to have happened,' and yet they were used for people's blessing. One day, unexpectedly, a Jewish leader called Jairus came to Jesus and fell at his feet. He pleaded with him to heal his dying daughter. As a loving father he must have been at his wits end! Jesus agreed, and a large crowd followed him, no doubt wondering what would happen next.

In the crowd was a woman who had been ill for twelve years. She had visited many doctors and spent all her money but had only got worse. Hearing that Jesus was in the crowd, she came up behind him and touched his clothes, thinking, 'If I only touch his clothes, I will be healed!' Immediately, she was. Jesus realised that power had gone out of him and asked, "Who touched my clothes?" The woman, like Jairus, fell at Jesus' feet and he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace. You are freed from your suffering."

If I had been Jairus, I would have been thinking, 'Hurry up, Jesus, my daughter is dying. You can come back for this lady!' And then the worst news arrived for Jairus, 'Your daughter is dead!' The words Jesus spoke next have sounded through the centuries into many people's situations: "Don't be afraid, just believe." Jesus went on to raise Jairus' daughter from the dead and perhaps the healing of the woman served to increase Jairus' faith as he faced the unthinkable.

May God prepare us all for the unexpected encounters that we will face this month.

Wesley **Wes Erpen, Chief Executive**



A lifetime of memories

ElderLink is one of very few projects offering face to face visits to older people in Birmingham. Recognising the value of its provision, the Yardley Neighbourhood Networking Scheme has granted funding to the team to employ a new part-time staff member and expand the service.

Beatte (pictured above) is one of ElderLink's befriending scheme members. She has received regular visits from the team since 2024 when she was referred to them by a social worker. During that time she has been visited at home, in hospital and, most recently after a dementia diagnosis, in her care home. Over the years, as they have chatted, prayed and looked at old photographs together, her ElderLink visitors have become friends. Beatte said, 'Your visits have made me feel better. I've enjoyed them all, and you've been kind!'

Beatte sang, remembering all the lyrics, 'Goodnight, Irene...'

Beatte's story begins on Gray Street in Aston, where she grew up in her Gran's house. She was the eldest of four children and lost her three brothers and mother quite early on in life. Her father was a 'tic-tac man' for the Perry Barr racing stadium and used to work in the evenings. She was such a beautiful baby that her mother won a prize for her in a competition. She has many memories of Gray Street. It was near the bus depot and she loved watching the tram lights as they came and went. Even as a very young child she had jobs to do around the house, like washing and switching on the lights.

Beatte often talks about Leonard, her kind brother who loved his Gran very much. Beatte said, 'He stayed with her 'til she died. He looked after us all before that. He sewed and knitted and bought Gran her first washing machine.'

She loves her family, those still caring for her and those who are gone.

Of the war, Beatte said, 'Of course it was a war, but I didn't know much about it.' However, she recalls the air raid shelters, one in the garden and one in the house for her aunt, Irene, who was just a week older than her and had TB, so she 'had to keep in. She was a lovely girl - very dark. As the war finished there was a song that came out...' and Beatte sang, remembering all the lyrics, 'Goodnight, Irene, I'll see you in my dreams...'

Beatte took huge pride in her appearance and enjoyed dressing up to go to the Hippodrome and the pictures in town. 'I had the loveliest clothes. I was well dressed more than anybody.' Beatte worked for a short time in a china shop, 'but that was pulled down when they built the university. I loved that job. I had to find another, so I got one in the Jewellery Quarter. In the war, there in the back of the shop they were working on guns, but I used to do watch straps. I only stopped working when I had my first child.'

Beatte was widowed in the 1980s. She has always enjoyed gardening and there is a beautiful rambling rose at the front of her last home. She said, 'I had a beautiful garden... roses. Right by the front door is a rose tree - it's gone wild. In the back garden I bought six bushes - pink, blue, white.' Before moving into the care home, she lived there with her daughter, Sarah, and two grandsons. She loves her family, those still caring for her and those who are gone, like Leonard, Irene, Rose, Edith, Billy, Norman, and so many more. 'I thought about writing it in a book,' said Beatte, 'but I never finished it.'

Expanding the scheme

Like Beatte, each member of ElderLink's befriending scheme has a lifetime of memories to share. ElderLink Manager, Catherine Tresham, said, 'We hope to remain a consistent source of support to those we are visiting, even as we expand the scheme and bring in more referrals and volunteers over the coming months. We are making ourselves known amongst social prescribers, GPs, social services, churches and care agencies who are able to refer to us isolated people. We have already recruited Louisa Tam, a new volunteer, and a new staff team member, Zoe Buttery.'

Bringing joy



Zoe said, 'I am really enjoying working with ElderLink. Visiting our befriending scheme members in their homes - it's lovely to see how we

make a difference to their day. And going into care homes to bring a bit of hope and something different to the residents' day, helping them with a craft which brings them joy when they see what they have created - it is such a blessing.'

An increasing demand



According to statistics produced by End Furniture Poverty, 290,000 people in the West Midlands are living without basic furniture or appliances such as beds, ovens and tables. In January, ITV News Central came to BCM's Resource Centre to interview Manager, Chris Fisher, to find out more for their report.

'At least they will have something to sit on or sleep in.'

Chris told them, 'We see lots of people coming in who are in need of furniture. They've been found a property to move into, but there's no furniture in it. In this last year there's been an increase in demand of around 30 to 40% on what we normally see. We can help provide them with furniture at a small cost, which is a great boost for them. At least they will have something to sit on or sleep in.'



The jigsaw craze is taking over at BCM's Care Centre!

Vicky (pictured above) completed the first puzzle of 2026, now ready for display on the jigsaw wall. Since the beginning of February, the Care Centre has extended its opening times, so now there is an extra hour each day for the support, friendship and great food it provides to those who come. Assistant Manager, Alec Petson has kicked off The 321 Course, an 8-week Bible course, for clients who want to find out more about Jesus Christ.



'Moments that Matter' Befriending

Bringing hope and comfort to older people in Birmingham

ElderLink

'It's a lovely way of keeping in touch with the outside world.'

Scheme Member

'Conversation, company, folks who understand and listen.'

Scheme Member



If you know anyone who is over 65, would benefit from a regular visitor, and lives in postcodes B25, B26, B27 or B28, please get in touch.

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elderlink@birminghamcitymission.co.uk

Visit birminghamcitymission.org.uk/elderlink to access the online befriending scheme referral form or scan the QR code →






Be a part of BCM's DIAMOND YEAR

Do you have an idea for an 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 on Saturday 6th June

BCM Open Day on Saturday 4th July

BCM Banquet on Saturday 19th September

60th Annual Celebration on Saturday 17th October at St Martin's Church



Full Fi

FRIDAY 6 MARCH 7.30-9.40PM





BRINGING CHURCHES TOGETHER

AN INTER-DENOMINATIONAL YOUTH EVENT

PRAYER FOCUS

SUNDAY - BCM SHOP

Thank God for two brilliant new shop volunteers, Nida (pictured opposite) and Bethany, both a much-needed help. Pray that customers hear the good news of Easter, and those taking leaflets for local Charlton Road Christian Church would connect there.

MONDAY - CHILDREN'S TEAM

Please pray as the team prepares and delivers its Easter assemblies and lessons, that the hope of Easter would be well received.

TUESDAY - YOUTH TEAM

Please pray that the Fulfil youth event on 6th March would be an uplifting night of worship and hearing God's word. Pray too for the after-school club at Broadway Academy and lunch club at Streetly Academy - for continued good attendance and engagement - and for Easter lessons and assemblies on the theme of self-control, that many schools will book in the team.

WEDNESDAY - CARE CENTRE

Thank God that the extended opening hours are going well, and for good numbers and conversations at The 321 Course. Pray that city council funding to develop the Care Centre's service will soon be confirmed. Pray too that several regular clients with life-threatening illnesses would be healed and discover the peace of God.

THURSDAY - BCM STAFF



Please pray for Roger Flukes, a dear colleague of 17 years (pictured above on his last day at work). He retired last month and we will miss him hugely - a wonderful Finance Administrator and great, kind man of God.

Pray for God's hand on the recruitment process of BCM's new Chief Executive, that the right person to fill the role would be found.

FRIDAY - RESOURCE CENTRE

Please pray for good and plenty of donations of food and furniture, enough to provide for those who come for help (see *An increasing Demand* inside this BCM Update).

SATURDAY - CITY MISSIONARIES

Pray for the team out on the streets, that their conversations with those they meet would clearly proclaim God's love and offer of new life as Easter approaches.



New BCM shop volunteer, Nida did a wonderful job creating the Valentine's Day display. If you are anywhere near Hawthorn Road in Kingstanding, Tuesday to Saturday, pop by for a warm welcome and a bargain. And there are over 900 items currently on sale in BCM's online shop. Just type '**Birmingham City Mission eBay for Charity**' into your search engine and take a look!



22,367

The number of visits made to a food bank or food project over the count period



30,240

The minimum number of people fed from the visit to the food bank or food project

To all who sent in a total of 62 Reverse Advent Calendar boxes of tins, packets and toiletries - thank you! Your donations are a huge help to the food bank as they provide parcels to people in need through the new year. With demand so great and stocks now depleting, we would be grateful for your continued support. Apart from good quantities of pasta, baked beans and soup in stock, the shelves are emptying.

The statistics above are the result of the city council's Food Justice Network City-Wide Food Aid Count 2025. They indicate the number of people needing vital food support over a period of one week in Birmingham.



Wes Erpen, BCM's long-standing Chief Executive Officer, recently spoke about life, mission and retirement in an interview with Jane Kay. Well worth a watch at:

[birminghamcitymission.org.uk](https://www.birminghamcitymission.org.uk/news/an-interview-with-wes-erpen)
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