

BCM UPDATE



Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel

If I were to ask you, do you have a favourite character in the Old Testament, I wonder who you would choose? Abraham, Rebekah, Moses, Joshua, Caleb, Nehemiah, Esther, David... The list is no doubt endless. I don't have a favourite one, but I do warm towards the prophet Jeremiah.

A little like Moses, he was initially reluctant to do what God wanted him to do, making the excuse that he couldn't speak as he was only a child. But God told him, 'You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you and will rescue you.'

Jeremiah went on to become a fearless prophet, he prophesied during the reigns of five kings and had a ministry that spanned over forty years. He had a hard ministry as his message was rejected by most, and he experienced opposition from those who should have known better, even being beaten, put in stocks, imprisoned, and thrown into a cistern. Though he experienced dark times over the years, he was a faithful servant of the Lord.

On 31st March Paul Olise retires from Birmingham City Mission. He has worked for the Mission for forty-three years

and, like Jeremiah, he has been a faithful servant of the Lord. For almost thirty of those years Paul has been the Evangelism Co-ordinator and, through his leadership and example, staff and students have consistently been encouraged to guard and develop their relationship with the Lord, and by his example have been taught the importance of prayer.

It is difficult to put a number on it, but through Paul's ministry in leading our City Missionaries over the years, tens of thousands of people have heard the gospel in our city, hundreds of thousands have received Christian literature, and only the Lord knows how many have put their faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul's commitment to preaching the gospel has been like the prophet of old. Jeremiah said, 'If I say I will not mention him or speak anymore in his name, his word is in my heart like a fire, a fire shut up in my bones. I am weary of holding it in; indeed, I cannot.' The words of the Apostle Paul come to mind, 'Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!' Paul will be greatly missed.

Give thanks to God for Paul and please pray for him and Jenny as they move into this new season of their lives, that God will richly bless them both in all that they continue to do for Him.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Wes Erpen'.

Wes Erpen, Chief Executive

Any questions?

'Why is there suffering in the world?... 'Could God have saved the world some other way without Jesus dying?... 'Are Adam and Eve in heaven?... 'If Jesus has forgiven you, can't you just go on sinning and it doesn't matter?' Great questions, and not easy to answer! These are just a few asked to BCM Children's and Youth Workers in the past month as they have toured Birmingham's primary and secondary schools delivering assemblies, clubs and lessons, in both mainstream and special needs contexts.



Youth Team Co-ordinator, John Platt, explained, 'During his ministry, Jesus asked those he met many questions, and always welcomed questions back. Much of his teaching was in response to a question he received. Children and young people naturally have all sorts they want to ask about the world and the meaning of life, so it is questions that enable us to share our faith in a way that is relevant to the asker.'

Asking questions is a good thing to do about anything that is important in life.

Lessons and clubs give us time to delve into topics and give students opportunity to ask questions. Initially students can be reticent, but with encouragement they write down questions on post-it notes or put up their hand to ask. Their teachers tell them, 'Come on class, we have a practising Christian here. This is your opportunity to ask them the question that you have always wanted to ask!' The teachers, if they do not have a Christian faith, cannot talk to students from a personal perspective and value the fact that our unique position as BCM workers enables us to do so.

We reassure students we will not be offended if they ask questions that seem to challenge our faith, and that asking questions and assessing the evidence is a good thing to do about anything that is important in life. We try to answer them honestly, showing we have confidence in our faith, that the Bible stands up to scrutiny and



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that we can trust God with the questions to which we do not yet know the answers.'

Exploring the Bible

Around 20 to 30 students attend one of the Youth Team's weekly discussion clubs. At that school teachers have recently noticed a group of Year 10 boys meeting each day to read the Bible together in the library, and our Youth Worker, Olly Scott, along with the pastor of a local church, have been invited to join them. Olly recounted, 'Everyone sat and listened whilst one boy read out John 1 and we had a great discussion. We explored themes as varied as creation, Christ's deity and who the Pharisees were. Praise God for what he is doing amongst their generation!'

This Easter the Youth Team are visiting 20 secondary schools to lead assemblies on the theme of self-control, looking at Jesus in the wilderness and the Garden of Gethsemane, and challenging students to make wise choices each day. The Children's Team are delivering 9 special assemblies (pictured above left) on the story of Barabbas.

We need volunteers

If you are interested in being a regular volunteer delivering assemblies and lessons in schools, please email childrensteam@birminghamcitymission.co.uk or youthteam@birminghamcitymission.co.uk to discuss opportunities.



weakness

BIRMINGHAM SPRING CONVENTION 2026

OUR STRENGTH

birminghamcitymission.org.uk/news/birmingham-spring-convention

Friday 8th May 7.30pm to 9pm
Saturday 9th May 11am to 4pm
with speaker **JOHN HINDLEY**
Seminars on... **★ Knife crime**
★ Faith in schools **★ Mission**
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THANK YOU to the fantastic group who took on a very wet night out in a cardboard box this February and raised essential funds for BCM's work with homeless people at the Care and Resource Centres. We are so grateful for your energy and stamina, and being willing to take part.



Thank you too to the Deputy Lord Mayor of Birmingham for coming to chat with everyone, and to Tracey and the team from Asda who brought doughnuts and helped with all that was needed to keep the Sleepouters warm and well fed. This group has been a great support to our Sleepout for several years now.

One family of four came all the way from Welshpool for the night to be a part of it - Carl Pritchard, his mum Ann (pictured above in her box), brother Craig and son Samuel. Carl said, 'I would certainly do it again, although the weather was horrendous. I love kindness and what you do at BCM, so I thought, "I've got to do this for the homeless" even though I didn't know how it would turn out. My colleagues at my company, Invertek Drives, have been so interested and supportive about what I was doing and I never thought we would raise so much - it's my first time fundraising for something I care about a lot.'

Louisa Tam was another participant. She said, 'It rained the whole day but fortunately stopped around 11.30pm. I tried to slip into my cardboard box with a mat and sleeping bag. It's difficult to sit inside because the box is small and crowded. I kept myself warm with waterproof clothing, which the homeless may not have. It's difficult for the street sleepers in the cold winter nights in the UK. The homeless ministry is extremely helpful to them physically and spiritually. Let's remember *one of the least of our brothers* which Jesus mentioned in Matthew 25. Praise the Lord for this unforgettable experience!'



Hear from folk at BCM's Care Centre, sending their thanks in a special video to all who slept out this year >>

birminghamcitymission.org.uk

</news/thank-you-sleepouters>



IN-SERVICE TRAINING

**Thinking of preparing for Christian ministry?
Spend a year with Birmingham City Mission**

BCM's In-Service Training programme is designed to offer a broad scope of both teaching and hands-on experience as interns work with our skilled staff across the Mission's projects. The programme offers three streams: General, Children's & Youth Work and Ministry to the Homeless.

birminghamcitymission.org.uk/in-service-training
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BCM Intern, Ethan Yeung joined the ElderLink team making tealight holders in their care home services this February, when the theme was 'Jesus is the Light of the World'.

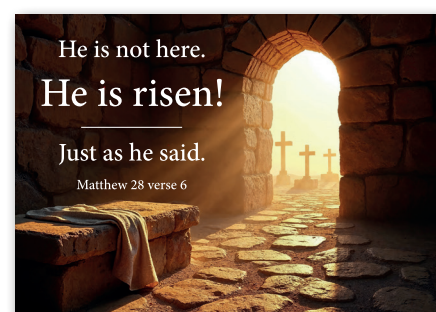


'I can still feel it in my heart.'

ElderLink Manager, Catherine Tresham spoke about a recent service, saying 'As we started, one care home resident beautifully explained to me, "I might have lost a lot of my mind, but I can still feel it in my heart."'

The new theme for Easter is the story of Lazarus, when Jesus says, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life'. One ElderLink volunteer has created a living Easter garden on a dish as a visual aid. They will sing hymns and residents will plant dwarf sunflowers and sweet peas to grow on their care home window sills.

Families at Blue Coat School in Harborne have donated Easter eggs for every Befriending Scheme member. ElderLink staff and volunteers will deliver these, along with a Bible verse postcard, as they check in each home to see that all is well, and to share the joy of Easter.



APRIL'S PRAYER FOCUS

SUNDAY - BCM SHOP



Thank God for the teams from HSBC and Mondelēz International (pictured above) who decorated the BCM shop from top to bottom in March. Please pray for Shop Manager, Edith Green, the staff, volunteers and customers as they chat and pray together in Kingstanding. Pray too for quality donations and great sales!

MONDAY - ELDERLINK

Please pray for the older people on our Befriending Scheme, that they would know the hope of the resurrection this Easter.

Pray for the churches ElderLink is linking to their local care homes, that their relationship would bless many and lead to more opportunities for intergenerational ministry.

TUESDAY - YOUTH TEAM

Give thanks for a great Fulfil event, and that the Easter message was shared in 25 schools last month. Pray for assemblies and RE lessons in April, and for the team's preparation for GSUS Live which they will take into schools in May.

Pray for weekly lunch clubs where good numbers of students come to ask lots of questions (see *Any questions?* in this BCM Update).

WEDNESDAY - CARE CENTRE

Thank God that The 321 Course is going well, stimulating good conversations and questions about the Bible.

A housing provider will establish a fortnightly drop-in session at the Care Centre from the end of March. Please pray this will lead to more people finding their own homes. Pray too for success in funding bids to enhance the centre's services.

THURSDAY - FINANCES

Please pray for an upturn in financial donations at a time when the Mission's monthly outgoings is exceeding its income.

FRIDAY - RESOURCE CENTRE

Pray for the Resource Centre staff and volunteers, for time, energy and manpower as they go out on the vans, shift furniture and help clients in a busy warehouse. Pray for clients who may be homeless, facing difficult life issues or simply struggling to pay the bills.

SATURDAY - CITY MISSIONARIES

Please pray for BCM's City Missionaries as Evangelism Co-ordinator, Paul Olise, retires, and pray for Jonathan Hackett taking over his role. Pray too as the team goes out and shares the good news of Jesus to those they meet on the streets and in their communities this Easter.

As we come to the end of another financial year, we would like to thank the many people who have given so generously, enabling BCM's work in helping those in need and proclaiming the gospel in Birmingham.

This has been a particularly difficult year financially as we have faced ever increasing operational costs. If you are able, please do consider giving regularly, or reviewing the amount you give, and help us sustain BCM's provision in the coming year.



Please contact our Finance Team on 0121 766 6603 (option 3) with any questions about leaving BCM a gift in your will and support our future work in the city. Download a legacy brochure at birminghamcitymission.org.uk/donate



We were excited to run our Solid Rock holiday club

again this year - to share Bible stories, answer questions and have lots of fun with nearly 60 children. We were also encouraged during the week to train and inspire two teams working in similar contexts, one from London and the other from Madrid.



Young people from 21 churches came to BCM's Fulfil youth event in March. It was a fabulous time of keepy-uppies, the football cage, dancing, singing, worship and hearing from Ben Putt on 'The Woman at the Well'. Thanks to all our amazing guest performers - football entertainer Al Johnson, spoken word poet Rickeal Rix, and worship band Horizon Music International.

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