

BCM UPDATE



Partnership in the gospel

In my mind's eye I can still see the figure of Edwin Orton standing on the box in the old Bull Ring fearlessly preaching the gospel as us younger ones stood nearby supporting him. We stood with the spiral staircase of old behind us, and the market stalls in front. Edwin was small of stature but a man who possessed a giant faith. I thank God for the mentorship, love and example of Edwin. I was brought up in a council estate on the east of the city, but I was made in Birmingham City Mission.

I started as a student in the Mission in 1975 and this will be my last front page article as the outgoing CEO of Birmingham City Mission. From now on, quite rightly, Giles, our new CEO, will pick up this privilege and responsibility. As I have thought about what to write, the words from Philippians have repeatedly come to mind: 'I thank my God every time I think of you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.'

Over the years, as much as possible I have made it my practice, when the daily post was brought into my office, to quietly thank God for every person who sent a gift, whether small or large. Many have been moved by God to give sacrificially so that we could be set free to preach the gospel and help the people of our city. Numerous times we have had to seek God to meet our needs for £10,000 and the following day a cheque of that amount arrived. The Lord had moved someone even before we prayed!

Pictured above: Young people from 13 churches came to BCM's 60th anniversary youth event at the end of June. With special guests Philippa Hanna and Rich and Rachel Hendrikson, it was a great night to celebrate what God is doing in Birmingham.

I want to thank you all for *your* partnership in the gospel. For the hundreds of times that you have read our 'BCM Update' and then prayed over it or taken it to your church prayer meeting. For those who have been able to support the Mission financially or have given their time as volunteers. For those who have attended our Annual Celebrations or even been at a BCM Conference. You are as much a part of what has been achieved over the years because we couldn't have done it without you.

My final words are, *please continue to partner with BCM in the gospel*. As we look at our city, which has altered greatly over 60 years, if ever we needed a City Mission in 1966 we need one to flourish even more so today. Pray for Giles, who I believe is God's man for BCM, and for all our staff who are committed to 'preaching the gospel and helping those in need'. If you are able, please increase your regular giving to the Mission.

May the Lord continue to bless BCM and enable it to thrive in the years ahead.

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

Wes Erpen, Chief Executive



The front line of care

Issues surrounding care reform are in the spotlight as our new Prime Minister, Andy Burnham recently announced his commitment to 'expending quite a lot of political capital' to fix adult social care, and talked about his own father's Alzheimer's disease diagnosis. It is good to have acknowledgement of the enormous need amongst our older generation in the UK.

The ElderLink Team see first hand that a major problem for our ageing population is social isolation and loneliness. As we visit and pray for the 40 older members on our Befriending Scheme, we are encouraged by the real relationships that have developed. Over time we see change as we gain the trust and confidence of isolated individuals, from opening up about deeper worries to becoming grateful for prayer, sometimes when this has not featured in their lives previously.

This summer, we have been to the homes of each of our scheme members with a dessert and a Bible verse postcard, as well as the usual activity pack we offer each month. It is good to touch base with everyone, especially in a heatwave, and we bring bottles of ice-cold water on the hottest days.

Our work also involves attending funerals, contacting scheme members' families, and networking within the community for local referrers and



services to whom we can signpost our members. The Befriending Scheme has grown by 25% this year as the Lord has provided for us. This summer we have been out leafleting south east Birmingham where we operate to let people know about the service we offer, and we are hopeful that this rate of growth can continue into the next 12 months.

Julie has been volunteering a day each fortnight with us for almost 4 years. She explains, 'It is a blessing to be invited into scheme members' homes to be a friendly face and to chat with them. For many it is their only source of Christian contact. I hope we are a blessing to them.'

'Moments that Matter' Befriending

Bringing hope and comfort to older people in Birmingham



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

Scheme Member



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

Scheme Member



ElderLink

'A gentle introduction to social interaction, which can significantly improve mental and emotional wellbeing.'

Social Prescriber

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.

0121 707 9422

elderlink@birminghamcitymission.co.uk

Access the online befriending scheme referral form:

Scan the QR code →
or visit

birminghamcitymission.org.uk/elderlink



Birmingham City Council



Yardley Neighbourhood Network Scheme
Connecting People. Improving Lives

It is special to be able to talk about Jesus in a natural way and most are happy for us to pray with them. We learn a lot about them and their past lives which is lovely. I am sure they look forward to us going and that is a good reason to keep up contact.'

A gentleman who became a member in January said, 'It is very nice to have someone to see me and have a chat. All of the team are very nice. I look forward to the visits. I do go out but I really appreciate the visits as I have no family visiting.'

Jesus is the answer to our broken lives and broken care system and it is a privilege to be able to minister amongst older people with this hope.

Catherine Tresham, ElderLink Manager



Birmingham City Mission's
DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY
Celebration
SAT 17 OCT
2 to 3.45pm
at St Martin in the Bull Ring

with speaker **PAUL MALLARD**
and **THE CHOIR WITH NO NAME**

Join us from 11am to chat to staff and discover more about our projects

- ★ worship
- ★ meet new staff
- ★ project updates
- ★ induction of new CEO




Birmingham City Mission

100% cotton
TEA TOWELS

£7.50 (+P&P)

HOODIES

£25 (+P&P)

Order yours on 0121 766 6603 (option 2)
or email office@birminghamcitymission.co.uk



From city centre to Northfield

It was a great boost to have a good crowd of volunteers joining BCM's City Missionaries for their two-week Summer Outreach programme in early August.



The first week of the programme combined morning seminars on topics such as mission and apologetics with afternoons putting it all into practice in the city centre.

Week 2 focussed on supporting a new church on Northfield's Masefield estate. This Easter the council gave the community hall over to Kings Norton Baptist Church, led by BCM City Missionary, Francis Williamson, to use for Christian witness and the benefit of the local residents. And so the church was born.



The Summer Outreach team began by delivering flyers announcing a week of activities to the whole estate. There was a jumble sale day when BCM's Resource Centre brought over goods to be sold. There was a parent and toddlers group, a litter pick, coffee time, a children's club and Exploring Christianity meeting, all with a trickle of locals coming along. House to house visits throughout the week brought the gospel message to residents, and at the church's Sunday evening service there were four new people.



Please pray for the Masefield estate and its new church, a Christian witness in an area dealing with tough social issues such as vandalism, fly tipping and arson.

HARVEST APPEAL

Please donate

Please help us fill up the food bank's shelves this harvest. At the moment we particularly need:

non-perishable food...

Long life milk · Sugar · Tinned fish and meat (hot and cold)
Hot puddings · Tinned fruit · Pot noodles · Cup a soups · Jam

We have plenty of pasta and baked beans! Please make sure items are not out-of-date and have a long 'use by' date.

and toiletries...

We are low on MEN's deodorant, but have plenty of nappies.

Please deliver to the Resource Centre or get in touch if you need us to pick up large collections. It is a very busy time of year for us, collecting, sorting and dating all the food. If you feel that you would like to help with this, give us a call.

BCM Resource Centre

The Clock Tower, 2 Langdon Street, Birmingham B9 4BP
0121 766 6603 (ext 1) · office@birminghamcitymission.co.uk

Opening hours: Tues to Thurs from 10am to 4pm



If you would like to make a monetary donation:

- send a cheque with a note stating it is for the food bank;
- or call the Finance Office on 0121 766 6603 (ext 3).

You can give online

**birminghamcitymission.org.uk
/donate**

Note 'Harvest Appeal' in the project box.

Thank you.

FRIDAY 13TH NOVEMBER

Fulfil



JESSICA

LESLIE



TRINITY WORSHIP
COLLECTIVE

NAKED TRUTH

AT

TRINITY@BIRMINGHAM



Into the woods

This August a team of 13 BCM staff and volunteers and a group of 29 Birmingham young people went away for a fun few days of growing in friendships, wellbeing, confidence and our understanding of God. We went to the place where BCM Youth Camps began in 1980, to Peck Wood Centre near Alvechurch. It was very special to return there, a beautiful place in the Worcestershire countryside.

Our theme was 'The Big Questions' and we covered key issues surrounding the Christian faith that are often raised by the young (and old) - God's existence and nature, suffering, the Bible, worship, church and salvation. It was a joy to hear profound questions and comments across the small groups. The young people discussed topics such as evolution, transgender identity, and how to respond when someone claims to be a Christian, but their actions do not match up. These were handled sensitively and respectfully, and campers showed real maturity in exploring them.

The young people listened intently as several leaders shared their testimonies of what God has done in their lives and how he has helped them overcome all sorts of struggles they have faced. Some could relate to the issues they covered and it prompted reflective conversations.

It was a joy to see relationships forming and confidence growing.

We took two day trips, one to Stratford-upon-Avon for a Shakespeare trail and shopping in the historic town, and the other to Sheldon Country Park to view the aeroplanes taking off and landing, to play ball games and see the animals on the farm. On site we enjoyed craft activities and board games, and it wouldn't be Peck Wood without plenty of walks in the 21 acres of woodland! As the days went on it was a joy to see campers' relationships forming and confidence growing.

John Platt, Youth Co-ordinator

'Let's do this together'

According to official counts, 4,793 people were estimated to be sleeping rough on a single night in England last autumn, an increase of 96% in five years. Most of us will have witnessed the evidence of this as we walk through our city and see people curled up in sleeping bags in bus stops, on benches and next to shop doorways.



Some may rightly be sceptical of the government's recent pledge to end rough sleeping, even as the announcement comes with £442m of funding. After all, this is a perennial ambition of a succession of governments. Can we really 'get everyone in for Christmas' this time? The Prime Minister acknowledged the difficulty in meeting the challenge, saying, 'The money may not fully get us there, and I'm saying to wider society, faith organisations, let's see if we can do this together.'



BCM's Care Centre is a real part of the solution in Birmingham. Mondays to Thursdays every week, each day on average 50 people come through the doors for a freshly prepared meal, for companionship and practical help. Whilst many of the clients are homeless in some form, for example living in a hostel or temporary accommodation, around 10% are rough sleepers. In the 12 months from May 2025 to April 2026, 124 sleeping bags were given and 68 people were found their own accommodation. Many more have been supported to move forward in life, retain their tenancy and stay off the streets.

'When clients are focussed on the work, it takes their minds off what is going on in their lives.'



Care Centre Manager, Alec Petson said, 'We have recently made great connections with two housing providers, BHX and Citadel. They have been going above and beyond to support those we have referred to them, helping with moving furniture, GP appointments, benefits and much more. They have donated food regularly to the Care Centre, and once even brought in a professional barber for the day to cut hair and beards for free.'

The Care Centre hosts drop-in sessions from a number of other partnering organisations. During the year, 108 guests accessed the DWP's services, and 54 received health care from MIND, the Hepatitis C Trust and optician Ophthalmic Clarity.

Support Worker, Matt Buttery and clients have been hard at work making bird boxes. Alec said, 'Those who get involved really enjoy doing something practical like this as they get to see the end result of their efforts and, when they are focussed on the work, it takes their minds off what is going on in their lives. They have made over 150 boxes and all the money raised goes to helping BCM.'

At BCM's Care Centre God's love is offered to all in a very real way. Please pray it would continue to play an effective part in combatting homelessness in Birmingham.

SEPTEMBER'S PRAYER FOCUS

SUNDAY - YOUTH TEAM

Thank God for the young people on BCM's Youth Camp and Junction 1 Church's weekend away (when the team led the teaching). Pray that God would be at work in their lives.

Pray for the team and their church partners as they prepare and deliver assemblies, lessons and clubs this term - for much interest from secondary schools and students as they listen.

MONDAY - CITY MISSIONARIES

Thank God for Summer Outreach (see *From city centre to Northfield* inside this BCM Update) and pray for all who heard about Jesus. Pray particularly for Francis Williamson, the Masefield estate church and the local residents there. Pray too for all our City Missionaries working across Birmingham, that they would have fruitful partnerships with local churches.

TUESDAY - CARE CENTRE



Pray for Care Centre clients - those who have no home, and those dealing with other difficult life issues (see *Let's do this together* inside this BCM Update). Pray for the Bible discussion group meeting each week to learn more about God.

WEDNESDAY - A NEW YEAR

Please pray for all BCM staff as the new ministry year begins, that we would serve with renewed strength, wisdom and dependence upon God. Above all, pray that people across Birmingham would encounter the love of Jesus Christ through BCM's work and respond to his offer of salvation.

THURSDAY - LEADERSHIP & FINANCE



As Wes Erpen retires in October and BCM's new CEO, Giles Coghlan (*pictured left*) settles into the role, please pray for the leadership transition, that God would give wisdom, unity and a clear direction for the future.

Pray too for God's continued financial provision and for care in using the resources entrusted to the Mission.

FRIDAY - CHRISTMAS TOYLINK

Pray for the preparations for ToyLink and for the volunteers, churches and donors who will make the project possible.

SATURDAY - CHILDREN'S TEAM



At BCM we will very much miss the energy and creativity of Children's Team Worker, Pete Mallett (*pictured above at June's Junior Camp*). Please pray for Pete as he moves on from the Mission to begin training as a primary school teacher.

Pray for the Children's Team as the new academic year begins, that schools' doors would remain open and many children would hear the Bible's good news.



BIRD BOXES

Made at BCM's Care Centre

**A fabulous Christmas gift
Recommended minimum
donation £15**

Personalise with your text

**Bread boards also available
£20**

**For collection at the Care Centre in the city centre or
the Clock Tower in Bordesley Green**

Birmingham City Mission

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

Too early for Christmas? BCM's ToyLink is already underway to help hundreds of families through the festive season.

Please help by buying a **NEW (not second hand)** gift for a child or organise a toy collection. **Family referrals begin in November, so early donations are much appreciated. We have a good amount of toys for 3-5 year olds, but need toys for teens, 8 to 11-year-olds, babies and toddlers.**

You can do it all online. Choose a gift from an online store and have it delivered straight to the address below.

Bring or send toys to Birmingham City Mission at The Clock Tower, 2 Langdon Street, Birmingham B9 4BP (open Mon to Fri from 10am to 4pm). **We can pick up large collections - call 0121 766 6603. Thank you.**

birminghamcitymission.org.uk

Telephone: 0121 766 6603

Email: office@birminghamcitymission.co.uk