

BCM UPDATE



A new season, the same gospel

As I begin serving as Chief Executive of Birmingham City Mission, I have found myself returning to some of the Apostle Paul's words at the beginning of his letter to the Romans: "For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'"

At the heart of the Christian message is not what we can achieve for God, but what God has graciously done for us. None of us can make ourselves righteous before him. Yet through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, God offers forgiveness and a right relationship with himself as a gift. It is not something we earn, but something we receive by faith.

This gospel of undeserved grace has always been at the heart of Birmingham City Mission. For nearly 60 years, BCM has sought to share the good news of Jesus Christ with the people of our city, both through the message we proclaim and through practical expressions of his love.

During his many years of faithful service, Wes has worked tirelessly to ensure that this gospel has remained central to the Mission. Under his leadership, countless people across Birmingham have heard about Christ and experienced compassionate help in his name. As Wes prepares to complete his time as Chief Executive, we give thanks to God for him, for his faithfulness and for the lasting contribution he has made to BCM. As I take up the responsibility of

A new day over Birmingham. Please pray that BCM will continue to make the unchanging gospel known throughout our changing city.

leading the Mission into its next season, the city around us continues to change. New needs and new opportunities are constantly emerging. Yet the message entrusted to us does not change. My vision is that BCM will continue to make Christ known clearly, faithfully, and compassionately throughout Birmingham.

We cannot undertake this work alone. BCM has always depended upon the prayers, generosity and practical partnership of Christians and churches. You are an essential part of this continuing work.

As this new season begins, please pray that we will remain faithful to the gospel. Pray for wisdom for me, our trustees and our staff as we consider the opportunities ahead. Pray that God will open doors across Birmingham, and that through every department of the Mission, many more people will encounter the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Thank you for standing with us as, together, we continue sharing the unchanging gospel with our changing city.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'G. Coghlan'.

Giles Coghlan, Chief Executive Officer

OCTOBER 2026

From schoolboy to CEO

Wes Erpen grew up in Kingshurst, on the east side of Birmingham. In the 1960s, he attended Kingshurst High School for Boys where BCM's founder and my father, Edwin Orton, was a teacher of RE.

In addition to teaching, Edwin was eager to provide opportunities for children in the local community to engage in extra-curricular activities and soon a Christian Covenanters' club for teenagers was started. Wes was one of the first boys to attend.



Wes (right) at Kingshurst in the late 1960s

Wes became a Christian at a Billy Graham rally in Birmingham in 1966, the year BCM was officially founded. Even as a teenager, Wes was involved in the planting of Kingshurst Evangelical Church.

In his book *Steps into the City*, Edwin wrote, 'At a Parents' Day, Wesley's mother and father came to see me. They were concerned that their 14-year-old son was interested in becoming a missionary. I encouraged them by saying that he had a long way to go but he could do a lot worse than that. God only then knew just how far he would go.'

At the same time as the church at Kingshurst was established, BCM was founded. The official inauguration took place on 22nd October 1966. By the early 1970s, Wes had already begun to pursue his interest in missionary work. He became involved at BCM when a group of young people from churches in the city got together to transform a space at their headquarters in Bromsgrove Street. They ran an outreach coffee bar inviting young people off the streets to come in and hear the gospel.



Wes (left) helping dig the foundations for Kingshurst Evangelical Church in 1971

After working at a butcher's shop, Wes went to France with Operation Mobilisation, initially for a month, then longer. He then joined BCM in 1975. He had met his wife Jackie when they were in their early teens, and they eventually married in 1977. After that, they went to Berwick-on-Tweed to Bible College, later to return to Birmingham to be more involved in BCM and at Fatherless Barn Church, Halesowen, where they are still serving today. When Edwin retired as Executive Director of BCM in March 1997, Wes was appointed as his successor.

Despite his immense experience, heavy workload and responsibilities, Wes is the most open and approachable person one could ever meet. He is never too busy to find time to chat and to show an interest in other people's lives.

He has always been 'hands on' in his work. He loves to engage with people, and he has served on many occasions in soup kitchens, caring for the elderly, visiting the sick at home or in hospital, comforting the bereaved, officiating at funerals,

He has always embodied the ethos of the outstretched hands of BCM.



BCM staff team in the 1970s with Wes and Jackie on the back row

weddings, baptisms and other important events. He has always embodied the ethos of the outstretched hands of BCM as it seeks to reach out to those in need around the city.

Wes understands how to relate to all kinds of people – from children and young people, the poor, the homeless, the elderly, those with drug and alcohol addictions, to professionals and business people – he treats all with equal respect and care. He also has a great sense of humour.

Thank you, Wes,
for your leadership
and faithful service
over so many years.

Wes has led BCM through many challenges along the way. He led the Mission as it managed three hostels for the homeless until 2010, and in the expansion of the work of the Care Centre and Resource Centre. He also led the Mission in acquiring and refurbishing the new BCM headquarters at The Clock Tower in Langdon Street. For many years, he has overseen in-service training programmes, giving people opportunities to serve and develop skills in caring for others and sharing the gospel in an urban environment.

Under Wes's leadership at BCM, countless people have received food, clothing, furniture, toiletries and more. At Christmas time every year, thousands of children receive toys donated to BCM via schools and churches around the city. He has succeeded in expanding this ministry over the years and has engaged the support of companies such as Jaguar Land Rover in distributing the toys. Wes has also enhanced BCM's excellent reputation in the city and has continued to foster strong links with other City Missions around the UK and the world.

On behalf of all connected with BCM, thank you, Wes, for your leadership and faithful service over so many years. From Kingshurst schoolboy to CEO of BCM, pastor and faithful servant of our city, you have always been a good and faithful servant of God. One day you will hear those words directly from Him, our heavenly Father. Why not hear it from us too? Well done, good and faithful servant. Now enjoy the well-earned opportunity to put your feet up and take it a little easier!

Thank you and may God bless you richly.

Martyn Orton



Wes preaching in the city centre in 1982



Wes helping at BCM's soup kitchen in the late 1970s or early 80s



Wes hosting BCM's 60th anniversary banquet

CHRISTMAS TOYLINK

Each Christmas BCM gives gifts to thousands of children whose families struggle to make ends meet.

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.

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

For more on how and what to give visit:

birminghamcitymission.org.uk/christmas-toys

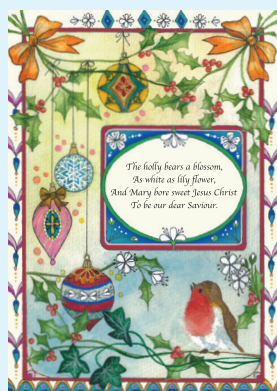
Financial donations to the project are much appreciated at:
birminghamcitymission.org.uk/donate

Note 'ToyLink' in the project box.

Please bring or send food and 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.**

BCM CHRISTMAS CARDS NEW DESIGNS COMING SOON!

£5 for a pack of 10 cards
+P&P for mail order



View the full range at birminghamcitymission.org.uk

BIRD BOXES

A fabulous Christmas gift

Made at BCM's Care Centre workshop
Recommended minimum donation £15

Personalise with your choice of text

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



To order, call 0121 766 6603 or email office@birminghamcitymission.co.uk
Also available at BCM's shop in Kingstanding

HARVEST APPEAL

Please donate

Please help up 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

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JESSICA

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AT



TRINITY WORSHIP

COLLECTIVE

NAKED TRUTH

TRINITY CHRISTIAN CENTRE

Essentially online

Birmingham City Council has awarded BCM's Care Centre a certificate 'in recognition of contributions to our digital community working together'.



The recognition is for the Care Centre's work in digital inclusion, helping people experiencing homelessness and severe hardship access essential online services such as benefits, housing and healthcare. BCM is part of the city council's pilot scheme to provide Wi-Fi access and refurbished devices, alongside practical support, to help clients develop greater digital independence.

Care Centre Manager, Alec Petson, said, 'We will be provided with 3 laptops and 2 data boxes for WiFi set-up in the main room. Clients will have access to these to sort out benefits, housing, create email accounts, search for jobs, do online courses, sort out IDs and other documents, and more. They will be guided and helped by staff and volunteers. At least 3 members of staff will take a digital skills training course, enabling them to give training to clients. The digital inclusion project will also provide corporate groups, experienced in digital skills, to come in during the year to give advice and training. In addition we will be given 2 high spec phones for staff to use to contact clients and other agencies on a client's behalf.'

This will help people get back into better living situations and, ultimately, back into work.

This project will be very helpful for those we serve as most do not have access to digital devices or data, and many would not know how to use the devices if they did have them. The more access and training they can have, the less reliant on services they will be, and we believe this will help people get back into better living situations and, ultimately, back into work.'

The council's Project Lead, Sally Roche, said, 'I've really enjoyed working with Alec, who has so much enthusiasm to take the pilot forward. Connectivity is where we start, and we've had some great ideas for future sessions at the Care Centre. Once we've seen how the project will work there, we are looking to roll it out in other BCM departments.'

Thank you to Sally and the council, doing a lot of good work in the city. We are delighted to be a part of this valuable project.

A circular poster for Birmingham City Mission's Diamond Anniversary Celebration. The text reads: "Birmingham City Mission's DIAMOND ANNIVERSARY Celebration SAT 17 OCT 2 to 3.45pm at St Martin in the Bull Ring". It also mentions "with speaker PAUL MALLARD and THE CHOIR WITH NO NAME". A list of activities includes: worship, meet new staff, project updates, and induction of new CEO. A circular logo on the right says "BIRMINGHAM CITY MISSION 60 years BCM 1966 - 2026".

A poster for Birmingham City Mission's sponsored Sleepout. The text reads: "BIRMINGHAM CITY MISSION'S sponsored SLEEPOUT FRIDAY FEBRUARY 2027 26". The background shows a cityscape at night with a cardboard box on a rooftop. A red banner at the bottom says "REGISTER NOW TO HELP THE HOMELESS". Below this is the website "BIRMINGHAMCITYMISSION.ORG.UK" and the phone number "0121 766 6603". A circular logo on the right says "BIRMINGHAM BCM CITY MISSION".

OCTOBER'S PRAYER FOCUS

SUNDAY - CARE CENTRE



Please pray for the Care Centre guests, that through the digital inclusion project they would be enabled to access the services they need to improve their situations and get back into work (see *Essentially online* inside this BCM Update). Pray too for the carpentry workshop project engaging guests in making bird boxes and 60th anniversary coasters (pictured above), that they would grow in confidence and skill.

MONDAY - ELDERLINK

Please pray for a male volunteer to join the befriending team. Thank God for new referrals to the scheme coming in, and pray that visitors would be a blessing to them.

Pray for Catherine Tresham and Zoe Buttery as they start a new term's series of services in care homes from Mark's gospel. Pray for strength, wisdom and faithfulness.

TUESDAY - YOUTH TEAM

Pray that the team's October assemblies would fall on fertile ground. Thank the Lord for the students that attend two school lunch clubs in Streetly and pray they would grow in understanding. Pray too that more clubs like this would be developed in other schools.

Please pray for more lesson and assembly bookings and partnerships with churches and volunteers.

WEDNESDAY - CHILDREN'S TEAM

Please pray that, as the team presents in schools the story of the manna, quail and water from the rock, God's generosity would be clearly seen. Pray too for Harvest and Christmas lessons, that God would be at work through these.

Pray for the growth of a team of BCM volunteers and church partners to reach every primary school in Birmingham.

THURSDAY - RESOURCE CENTRE

Pray for those who come for food, furniture and clothing, that they would be supported and helped through difficult times. Pray too that the centre would receive sufficient donations to meet clients' needs, and that the Harvest season would bring in much-needed food and toiletries to be distributed. Pray for health and safety for a busy team of staff and volunteers.

FRIDAY - CHRISTMAS TOYLINK

Please pray as preparations for BCM's ToyLink ramp up - for good management and sufficient donations for this huge project. Pray that this provision to families in need would be a help to them, and that through it many might discover and believe God's plan of salvation.

SATURDAY - BCM SHOP



Thank God for new and regular customers, a happy one pictured above with a handbag she has just purchased. Pray for more good quality furniture and electric heaters as winter is approaching. Please pray for more volunteers for the shop and for eBay as Keith Webb steps down in November. We thank God for all the years Keith has led the sale of items on eBay, raising thousands for the Mission.

Check out our eBay shop. Search online for 'Birmingham City Mission eBay for charity' or scan the QR code. From collectables to clothes to books, you will find hundreds of great and interesting items for sale.



Birmingham City Mission
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