

ONE MISSION MATTERS

Spring 2018 • No 50

Mission at work

The response of local churches and other members of the faith community to the Grenfell Tower fire disaster last June demonstrated mission at work in the darkest of times. It was, of course, an unprecedented event that no one expected: 71 people died, hundreds were made homeless and thousands traumatised by a horrific experience.

In the midst of this, churches and other faith centres (including ours) became centres of information, support and a massive relief operation. Key features of this work were not only the provision of space for the community, but a partnership with organisations and large numbers of local volunteers who shared the sense of anger, horror and compassion for the fire's victims. Here, our mission became a partnership in a common cause, in which the Church did not exercise control but rather acted as a catalyst, enabling the 'come-unity' to come together and express itself. In so doing, the kingdom of God became more visible.

Our experience suggests that one model for mission in action is not wishing to control the agenda but bring solidarity. It is about being on the boundaries, of not necessarily knowing the outcomes.

“Enabling the
'come-unity'
to come
together”

We find this same thread in articles in this edition of *One Mission Matters*, from Bladon Methodist Church's budding youth ministry (see pages 4-5) to the Signpost Centre in the Lake District (see page 8). A strong characteristic



that each story shares is a passion for engagement in the day-to-day lives of those they encounter. Indeed, to be the Church is to be involved in mission.

**Revd Mike Long, Minister,
Notting Hill Methodist Church**

Churches helping people get out of debt

‘M’ was at a very low point when his mortgage failed and his building society referred him to the Christians Against Poverty (CAP) Debt Centre in Welwyn Garden City.

Photo: Annie Ragless



Volunteers prepared and distributed hampers for 34 CAP clients last Christmas.

“He’s a highly educated, intelligent man,” recalls Phil Green, the centre’s manager, “but due to mental health issues he was living in a flat not fit for human habitation. It was full of broken furniture. It hadn’t been cleaned for years. The kitchen was completely unusable. There was no working bathroom, no heating and not one working lightbulb. The flat had been in this state for years.”

With the help of volunteers from local churches, CAP helped give M’s flat a complete overhaul. He is also now part of the local CAP Job Club and recently had his first interview for the first time in many years (a positive experience, even though he didn’t get the job). He is now integrated and active in a community group in Welwyn Garden City and feels like a new man. Last September, M was officially declared debt-free.



Since opening in 2012, the CAP Debt Centre has helped more than 200 people like M get their finances in order. Thirty-five of those people are now debt-free. The centre is run by Panshanger Church – an ecumenical church made up of a network of denominations including the Methodist Church in Britain, the Church of England, the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the United Reformed Church. It runs in partnership with CAP, which is supported by many churches in Welwyn Garden City.

“The service CAP offers is free and inclusive,” says Phil. “Our debt centre is funded by grants and donations from individuals and local churches. Our main grant is from the Methodist Church: £15,000 per year for 3 years. We’ve also received a grant from Comic Relief of £8,000 spread over 3 years from 2015 to 2017.

“Our biggest challenge is to get more churches spiritually, practically, and financially involved in supporting this ministry. We’re also seeing more clients with severe mental health issues, which means that the level of support they need when dealing with their finances is huge. The centre and debt coaches rely on support workers, called ‘befrienders’, who are often volunteers from local churches, to help give clients the additional support they need.

“The debt centre and job club both work to free local people from the burden of debt and poverty, whilst actively promoting the Christian faith and the good news of the gospel.”

THANK YOU

Thanks to your generosity, the Connexional Grants Committee was able to award £2.2 million worth of grants to 38 projects last year. To find out more, visit www.methodist.org.uk/whathavewefunded



Internally displaced children
in Northern Nigeria

Small grant, BIG impact

A World Mission Fund grant of £10,000 is helping to bring poverty relief to internally displaced communities in northern Nigeria.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), ongoing violence in northern Nigeria has caused more than two million people to flee their homes since 2009. Conflicts between different ethnicities continue to escalate, leading to deaths and destruction of property in Kano, Kaduna and Plateau States. Young people, both boys and girls, are particularly vulnerable to recruitment by Boko Haram, a militant terror group in Northern Nigeria. Security is extremely fragile; bombings and attacks are a constant threat.

The Methodist Church in Nigeria (MCN) works closely with the Programme for Christian-Muslim Relations in Africa (PROCMURA), providing relief and assistance to orphans and internally displaced people in northern Nigeria who have lost their land, homes and properties.

The World Mission Fund recently gave MCN a solidarity grant of

£10,000 (4,500,000 Nigerian Naira) towards its work with PROCMURA. Refugee camps in Chibok, Gombe, Yola, Maiduguri, Niger, Zonkwa, Nasarawa, Kuje, Askira, Godogodo, Damboa and Kaduna have benefited from this.

The grant money has been a lifeline to hundreds of displaced people. Widows and young secondary school leavers received seed money to start small market trading businesses. Some widowers used their money to buy fertilizer to increase the amount of food they can produce for their families.

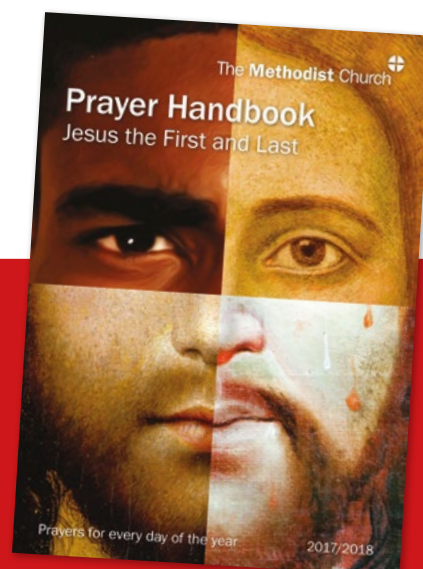
Many orphans had dropped out of school because they did not have money for school fees. They were able to return, as the grant paid for a year's tuition.

"The advantage of working with PROCMURA has been their credibility and fairness in serving all victims," says Dr Olubunmi Olayisade, the Methodist Church's Partnership Coordinator for Africa.

PRAY

Our 2018 *Prayer Handbook* features prayers for peace in communities right across the Connexion, and for churches around the world.

To order your copy, visit bit.ly/prayerhandbook1718



A church for the twenty-first century

Bladon Methodist Church is a small Christian community in the village of Bladon, Oxfordshire. It is home to Bladon Junior Church, one of the county's largest junior churches.

The members of Bladon Methodist Church have managed to raise more than £400,000 to give their church a complete makeover.

"We're a village church in a rural community," explains Philip Rumsby, a church member. "Most similar Methodist churches in neighbouring villages have closed. But for us, while the traditional adult congregation got smaller, the junior church continued and grew in size. Several years ago, we reached a point where children outnumbered adults in the church. Each Sunday, we had at least 30 children aged from 4 to 19 attending.

"Drama is one of the things we use to encourage young people to attend church. Some young people come initially because they want to be in one of our shows. Once they start attending, they make friends and find they really enjoy being part of the church family."

As the young congregation grew, the church building really began to show its age.

"The church was built in 1843 and had not had any development for over 100 years," says Philip. "The roof was leaking, the ceilings and floors were collapsing in places and the single outside toilet was damp, cold and not appropriate for modern-day use. The building also had very limited disabled access and a desperate lack of space."

In 2010, West Oxfordshire District Council granted the church planning permission for a massive renovation project. Bladon received Methodist Church grants of £24,800 in 2010 and 2011. The Oxford Circuit pledged £50,000 towards the scheme, and many of the other churches in the circuit made numerous donations. Funding came from grants, donations and local fundraising, with over 50 grants ranging from £100 to £50,000.

The first phase of the renovation work started in September 2016 and was completed in July 2017.



Images on pages 4-5:

- 1 Property Steward Philip Rumsby checks the sub-structure work
- 2 Roof off!



Photos: Philip Rumsby

The cast of their latest production of *Matilda*

“Now the work has been completed and we have the facilities to cope with larger numbers, we are actively encouraging more children to attend Junior Church,” says Philip. “The numbers attending now average at least 40 children each Sunday!”

Phase 2 of the rebuild is planned for 2019. This will involve making better use of the main church to provide a larger performing and worship area, more space for the congregation, audiences and improved technical facilities. “We’re looking forward to it!” says Philip.

GIVE

We want to continue to champion inspiring Methodist projects such as the work being done at Bladon Methodist Church. Please support our funds by visiting www.justgiving.com/missioninbritain and giving generously.



- Images on pages 4-5:
- 3 Bladon Junior Church's first service back in the renovated building
 - 4 Methodist Youth President Michael Pryke and Junior Church members Sophie, Heidi and Oliver officially open the new building
 - 5 Some of the Junior Church members in the new building

The Hope Journey

In schools across the north-west of England, the Hope Journey is contributing to the Religious Education syllabus in an exciting, engaging way. The project aims to provide a positive experience of church and the Christian faith to schoolchildren.

The Hope Journey is the brainchild of Nicola Langton-Miller, who is employed by the Wirral Methodist Circuit to build, create and sustain work with schools. The project started 10 years ago at Hope Farm Methodist Church in Ellesmere Port. Today, it is an ecumenical project and has spread to more than 43 churches in the Liverpool and Chester & Stoke-On-Trent Districts.

“Schools are increasingly pressed for time within their curriculum, with many teachers lacking confidence in delivering areas of the RE syllabus, particularly if they have no faith connection themselves,” Nicola says. “The Hope Journey provides materials to empower churches in supporting schools



Team members and volunteers wait for the children to arrive for 'Remembering WW2'



Team members (left to right: Nicola Langton-Miller, Emma Sofayo and Rachel Gray) during 'Remembering WW2'

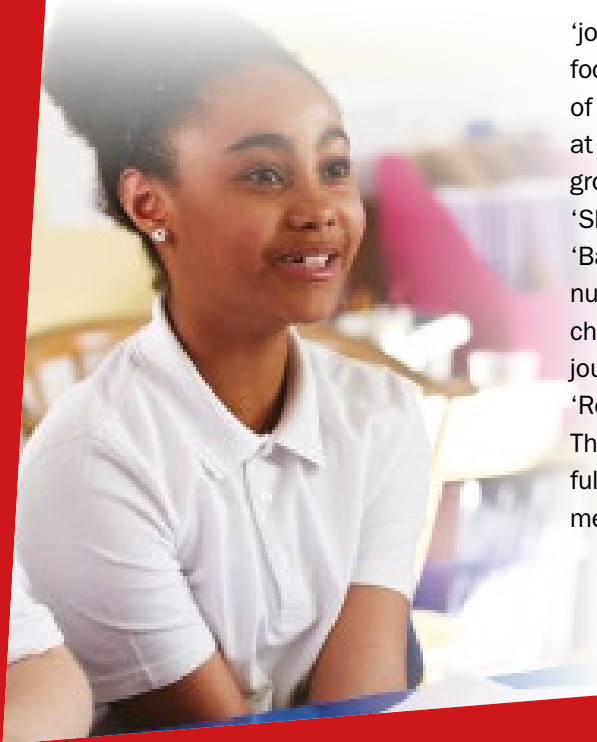
in areas of their RE teaching and provide relevant experience of Christianity to children in their communities. We're reaching thousands of children each year.”

There are 12 different ‘journeys’ available, each focusing on a different aspect of Christianity and aimed at a specific academic year group. The journeys include ‘Sharing Parables’ and ‘Baptism’ journeys offered to nursery and reception-aged children respectively. Other journeys include ‘Christmas’, ‘Remembrance’ and ‘Easter’. The project team has two full-time and two part-time members, and benefits from

a five-year grant from the Mission in Britain Fund.

“Schools appreciate this project as it allows children to experience a church environment,” says Nicola. “It enables them to encounter Christian beliefs first hand and to gain experience of inter-generational working.

“The ways that churches traditionally engaged with children are no longer working, because of the way society is changing. We need to be developing new ways of reaching out to the wider society.”



Photos: Nicola Langton-Miller



'Meet the Characters' at Penketh Methodist Church



Heather Staniland leads a 'Cross Factor' workshop



The Revd Gill stanning (CofE) leads a 'Cross Factor' workshop



The last supper from 'Cross Factor' for year 5 pupils



'Meet the Characters' - a shepherd at Broomhall and Sound Methodist Church



An Anderson shelter as part of 'Remembering WW2'



A display from 'Remembering WW2'

SUPPORT

You can help projects like this and bring the Christian story to children in schools by giving to the Mission in Britain Fund. Visit www.methodist.org.uk/missioninbritainfund for details.



Signposting people to God

The Signpost Centre is a beacon of hope reaching out to people in a deprived area with the love of God.

Solway Circuit is made up of the former Maryport and Solway Circuits, covering approximately 10 miles along the west coast of Cumbria. This is an area that doesn't quite fit the popular image of Cumbria as being the Lake District. It has always been an industrial region, and is made up of a number of communities that are designated as 'areas of deprivation'. Many of these are in Maryport – and right on the main street in Maryport's town centre is where you will find Signpost, the drop-in centre Solway Circuit set up in 2012. Solway Circuit received a £91,505 Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice grant (formerly Mission Alongside the Poor) towards running the centre.

"The idea was to rent a premises on the main street in Maryport, as the Methodist churches were in rather obscure parts of the town,"

says the Revd Nicola Reynolds. "We want to ensure everyone in Cumbria has a meaningful, relevant and life-changing encounter of the love of God in Christ."

The coffee mornings the centre hosts on Tuesdays and Thursdays have 35 to 40 regular attendees. Four local agencies use the premises on other days of the week and there is a parent and toddler group on Monday mornings. "People have said that when they come on a Tuesday, they are coming to church," says Nicola. "The Maryport Methodist Church congregation has grown and people who had never been part of a church before have started coming to services regularly. Through the use of our premises, other agencies have been able to have a prominent position in the town, bringing with them a range of support services to those in need.

"People need to know that even though this community is in a county that most regard as beautiful and very expensive to live in, there still are areas of deprivation and poverty that are hidden behind the beauty of the Fells, Lakes and the Romantic Poets. We would like to tell the Methodist people and the friends of Methodism that they need to look behind the facades and see the reality of people who live on the fringes."

PRAY

Gifts to the Mission in Britain Fund help relieve poverty across the Connexion. Please continue to pray for projects like the Signpost Centre to flourish.

**ONE MISSION
MATTERS**

Spring 2018 • No 50

One Mission Matters is designed and produced by Methodist Publishing on behalf of the Methodist Church in Britain. Published by the Methodist Church in Britain. © Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP) 2018. Registered charity no. 1132208.

The Methodist Church
Methodist Church House
25 Marylebone Road
London NW1 5JR
Tel: 020 7486 5502
Email: enquiries@methodistchurch.org.uk
Web: www.methodist.org.uk