

THIS MONTH'S PRAYER FOCUS

CARE CENTRE

To be thankful for:

- The **new shower room** installed for the use of guests and a large donation of bath towels.
- The Wednesday afternoon **Care Centre Bible Class** is attended by around seven people, four of whom are volunteers who used to be guests and are interested in finding out more about God. One of these has given their life to Jesus recently and another was baptised last month (*Andy, below*).
- The **Birmingham Churches Winter Night Shelter** which, with the help of 18 churches (including the Care Centre) and around 400 volunteers, has provided emergency accommodation to 12 rough sleepers since December.
- The **'read-through' of Mark's gospel** at the Monday evening Care Centre. Each week after the meal 20 verses are read and discussed by guests, staff and volunteers and it has been a blessing to all.
- The **Care Centre nurse**, Wendy, running a clinic for guests during the Wednesday evening session.

To pray for:

- The Care Centre's **opening hours** are gradually increasing, but we would like to see these increase further. In order to achieve that we need more staff and volunteers available during the afternoons.
- The **night shelter co-ordinator** and a couple who speak Polish have been helping to communicate with guests, as they try to address guests' issues and see them move on to better situations.
- **Care Centre guests** with their often complex and chaotic lives - that there would be practical solutions found and hope in the darkest of circumstances.



Andy first came to BCM as a volunteer helping at the food bank. Since then he has been a regular and faithful Resource Centre volunteer and 'drinks manager' at the Care Centre. Over the years he has come to trust in the Lord and a large group of BCM staff and volunteers were delighted and blessed to witness his baptism at Yardley Wood Baptist Church at the end of February.

ELDERLINK

Rachel, Sue, Linda, Stan and their team of volunteers provide food, comfort and friendship to the elderly of Hodge Hill and Acocks Green. Pray that God will bless this important work as they care for our more mature guests, and that some will come to faith in their later years.



EVANGELISM

Ask the Lord to bless our missionaries, that they will see fruit for their labours. Pray that the Lord will send us more missionaries with a burden to reach the people in our city. Pray for their necessary financial support.

RESOURCE CENTRE

Give thanks that our stolen van has been recovered and is back in service. Pray for the safety of staff and volunteers as they travel many miles every week.

The food bank is very low on coffee, sugar and tinned meat. If you are able, please bring supplies to the Clock Tower and help restock the shelves.

SHOP

Hazel's article in the middle page reminds us that the BCM Shop is not just about selling clothes and books but also about reaching people with the gospel. Pray for our staff in the shop every day, that they will have sensitivity and boldness.

'OPEN THE BOOK'

Praise God for another successful training day equipping Birmingham churches to lead 'Open the Book' assemblies across the city. Several teams are now registered and at least three have already delivered assemblies. Pray that many more people will come forward to be trained.

Future training dates:

Weds 21st March; Mon 10th April;
Tues 1st May; & Weds 23rd May.

Book your place: childrensteam@birminghamcitymission.co.uk



Birmingham City Mission

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

birminghamcitymission.co.uk

Telephone: 0121 766 6603

Email: office@birminghamcitymission.co.uk

BCM MONTHLY



A new creation

Who would have thought that yesterday, the first day of meteorological spring, most of us would have struggled home through cold, snow and ice! My journey of three hours forty minutes was probably pretty average; and then I had to park my car at the bottom of the hill and walk! As I was slowly edging behind the car in front along Manor Way, a dual carriageway heading into Halesowen, I couldn't help but look right at the small tent pitched amongst the trees. For many years two identical brothers had lived there, until one sadly passed away. The tent reminded me of the many people across our cities who are homeless every night...

This morning I had a call from our Care Centre Manager, Jon. He said that last night the Emergency Night Shelter, which is based at our Care Centre on Thursdays for a month, had gone well. He went on to say that due to the inclement weather he had been talking to the co-ordinator of the project and had offered to host the 12 guests again tonight, Friday 2nd March. This was agreed and so our two staff, Jon and Steve, along with three volunteers, decided not to go home but to stay another night!

The centre provides important services to the homeless and we are grateful to those who regularly give their support. It was great to have 103 people take part in our sponsored Sleepout on Friday 16th February. The money raised helps to support the services that Jon and Steve deliver most weeks of the year. It was a privilege to have the Lord Mayor of Birmingham open the event and no-one was short of generously donated cakes, or sausage and bacon in the morning. People look so different after a night in a box..!

Of course, as Missionaries to our city, we want to help people in any way we can, whether it is by serving food, offering a bed, giving a new set of clothes or providing a 'starter pack' for those moving into their own accommodation. All of these things, and much more, can be vital for someone in dire straits and in need. At the same time, BCM's aim is also to help people spiritually by introducing them to the living Lord Jesus and through Him, to find salvation. We can put a new set of clothes on a man or a woman, which is a

good thing to do, but the reality is they will often be back for another set. If a person becomes a 'new person' in Christ, then their lives change for the better because their aspirations and value systems also change.

I am sure that you will be encouraged as you read Andy's story on the back page. He, like many others, is now a volunteer at our Resource Centre and is regularly helping to give food and clothes to those in need in our city. Like me, Andy is not perfect, but he has become a 'new man' in Christ. As Paul said, **'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.'**

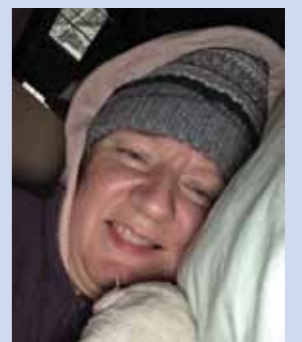
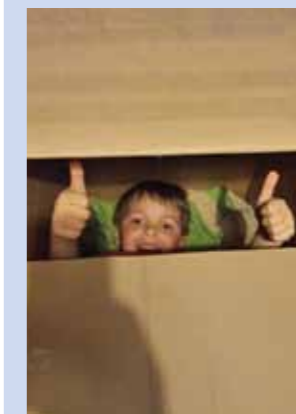
May God give us all **'the compassion to care; and the will to act'** during this month. Thank you so much for your prayers and support.

Wesley

Wes Erpen, Chief Executive

Thank you to so many

103 hardy Sleepouters ■ the Lord Mayor of Birmingham ■ Greggs and Bookers ■ kitchen servers and security guards ■ Amanda who shared her story ■ Micah (aged 6) who spent the night in a cardboard box in his lounge!



'It was a real eye-opener!' Joanne Miles

'All of the young people had a great time and came away from the event achieving something great for the homeless in Birmingham.' Josh Deeks



MARCH 2018



Is there hope?

As the winter deepened at the end of February, temperatures plunging below freezing and arctic winds bringing snow, the thoughts of many turned to those sleeping on the streets. The media was asking the question, 'How is it that, in modern day Britain, people are homeless?' According to the latest statistics, published this January, 4,751 people are estimated to be sleeping rough on any one night in England, an increase of 15% from the previous year and 73% over the last three years. 295 of those people are in the West Midlands and 57 in Birmingham. In 2011 there were just 7.*

The reality is that every homeless person has their own story that has brought them to living on the streets. Why are people homeless? There could be an infinite number of answers: the breakdown of a relationship, a cut in benefits, losing a job, learning difficulties, alcoholism, drug addiction, mental health problems, a bereavement. After taking part in BCM's Sponsored Sleepout in February, one participant asked a different question, 'Is there hope?' I put the question to Care Centre Manager, Jon Tiley.

'Yes, there's always hope. Our biggest problem is changing people's thinking and how they perceive themselves. I've known one guy since 2007 when he came to the Washington Court hostel. He was in his forties then. His daughter had died, causing his marriage to break up, while he turned to drink

You're invited
Birmingham City Mission
Care Centre
 Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday nights
 5.30pm to 7.30pm
 Please drop in and join us for dinner
 Turn over for details →

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

Please keep these enclosed Care Centre invitations and pass them on to someone on the streets in need of support and a hot meal

and ended up sleeping rough. For 10 years he was in and out of rehab until, in September last year, he came to us and asked for help. We got him a place in the Emmaus community in Coventry, a long-term accommodation project, but after three weeks he left. He said it was everything he wanted, but it was too good; he didn't deserve it. In November he came back to the Care Centre very upset, saying he had made a mistake. His place at Emmaus was still there for him and he's back there today.

Another guest has been in and out of prison and sleeps rough every night. We've tried to bring him inside, but he doesn't want a hostel. He's clean now but has struggled with alcohol and drugs and the hostel network is dangerous for that. He'd like to go to Emmaus and we're working with him towards that goal.

For some, living on the streets is what they know – it's a comfort zone

– and they can't think of moving on to the next stage; they don't think they can. There are facilities to give people hope but, for the majority, it doesn't happen overnight. Care Centre clients have chaotic lifestyles. The main thing is to keep in communication with them and help get them ready to move on.'

At the Care Centre the 'main event' has always been a hot evening meal (on Mondays to Wednesdays), offered with friendship, support and an opportunity to find out more about the Christian faith. It is now open on Monday afternoons as well, and on Thursdays until the end of March, for the Birmingham Churches Winter Night Shelter. I asked Support Worker, Steve Bagnall, how it is all going.

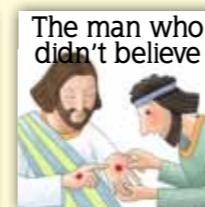
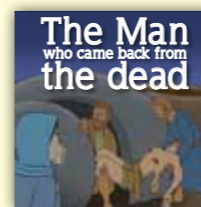
It's proving to be really great. On Monday afternoons we have time for good companionship, we play board games, table tennis and pool. It gives us the opportunity to offer practical advice. We can make calls and sort things out like GP appointments, setting up bank accounts, benefit queries and we're often asked for help with housing.

In addition, we have 12 guests attending the night shelter; none are British, the majority Eastern European. In our experience, the majority of rough sleepers in Birmingham are from Eastern Europe. In many cases this means they have no access to public funds and therefore there's no housing benefit available. If they have no ID, it's a really complicated scenario. The night shelter co-ordinator and volunteers help guests go to their embassy, get a passport and potentially get back home if they want. Of the guests we had at the night shelter last year, three went back home (to Poland and Romania), two are now on benefits and are therefore housed, two found work and one sadly died on the streets. Situations aren't always solved, but overall there is more success than not. There are solutions and we value your prayers for the work that happens at Care Centre.'

Hannah Noble

**Based on annual reports by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government providing information on a single night snapshot using street counts and intelligence driven estimates submitted by local authorities.*

Easter Booklets



For young children
 8-page full-colour booklets
 12p each plus P&P



For older children
 12-page booklet
 including intricate
 colouring-in
 20p each plus P&P

To view inside the booklets, visit
birminghamcitymission.co.uk

To order, call 0121 766 6603 or email
office@birminghamcitymission.co.uk

JOB VACANCY

Children's Evangelist

BCM is looking to appoint a new children's worker with a passion for outreach to join its existing Children's Team serving Birmingham children aged 5-11 years.

Closing date for applications:
 Friday 20th April

For more details visit
birminghamcitymission.co.uk

For an application pack:
 Contact Sue Fearon at
s.fearon@birminghamcitymission.co.uk or 0121 766 6603 (option 3)



FRIDAY JUNE 8, 7PM
 BIRMINGHAM CITY MISSION
BARN DANCE
 LIVE BAND & CALLER
PLOUGHMAN'S SUPPER
 HOME BAKED CAKES
 ☆ CHARITY AUCTION ☆
AT ROWHEATH PAVILION
 HEATH ROAD, BOURNVILLE B30 1HH
 TICKETS: ADULTS £10, CHILDREN £5
 FAMILY (UP TO 2 CHILDREN) £25
 FOR TICKETS CALL 0121 766 6603 OR EMAIL
OFFICE@BIRMINGHAMCITYMISSION.CO.UK
 ☆ A WARM WELCOME TO ALL! ☆

70K for 70 years



Long-standing BCM supporter, George O'Sullivan reaches his 70th birthday in June and will mark the occasion by completing

a 70km sponsored walk around Birmingham's Outer and Inner Circles to raise money for the Mission. He'll be taking up the challenge on 14th June, starting at 6.30am.

You can sponsor George through his online fundraising page at:
mydonate.bt.com/fundraisers/gos70
 Thank you, George!

DURING FEBRUARY HALF-TERM, 100 children came to the Solid Rock club led by BCM's Children's Team and volunteers. This is the 19th year that the club has been held in Small Heath. Not only was the club enjoyed by the children and leaders who were there all week, it was also much appreciated by the 50 parents who attended 'Showtime' on the last day. One mum in particular shook Sue's hand very warmly, as she attended Solid Rock with her brother and sister when they were children! Praise God for the opportunity to serve this community across two generations!

Witnessing a transformation

I was working in the BCM Charity Shop and it was getting near to the end of the day. A lady walked in to donate a few items and started to ask me questions about God and heaven and what happens to us when we die. I knew the lady a little because her partner had worked with my husband. He died five years before of lung cancer.

She had a few ideas about God, how she thought we needed to be, or things we needed to do to go to heaven. It was clear that she needed help to see Jesus. She had no Bible knowledge but said she believed there is a God. It was 5.00pm. I locked the door and asked her to stay so we could talk some more. She doesn't live far from me so we walked home together. On the way I found out more about her beliefs.

I asked her if she would like to come to Beeches Church, where I attend. We were about to start a Christianity Explored course. It was held on a Sunday evening for 7 weeks.

Lots of people prayed that she would come along and I really felt God was in it, as it had been so easy to ask her. The course follows the book of Mark, pointing the hearers to Jesus and helping them to understand the basic message of the gospel.

'Becoming a Christian has really helped me and I would love it if my story helps others as well.'

On 12th November 2017 she gave her heart to Jesus. She tried to say that I was the one who had got her there, but I know and told her that it was all Jesus, praise Him.

When I asked her if she minded her story being told in this prayer letter she said, "Becoming a Christian has really helped me and I would love it if my story helps others as well." Praise the Lord that He gave me the privilege to be a part of a transformation.

Hazel Wilkins
 Assistant Charity Shop Manager