

*Urban Expression is an urban mission agency that recruits, equips, deploys and networks self-financing teams pioneering creative and relevant expressions of the Christian Church in under-churched urban neighbourhoods.*

## Manchester

**Gary Serra di Migni** writes: *Church Without Walls* continues to reach out to those who will not set foot in a church building and provide discipleship and pastoral care to those who respond. We also continue to evolve, as we 'step into the wake of the Holy Spirit', capitalising on new opportunities he offers.

We give thanks to God for answered prayer in relation to R, who left CWW, and God, in a very sad and acrimonious manner about two years ago. He has returned and is about to participate in ministry to our housebound members. Please pray he will draw closer and closer to Christ.

We also thank God for the birth of A's baby boy. She and her husband have been trying for nine years. During a conversation about prayer, A told me that she believed that God wanted her to have a baby without medical intervention and that she was determined not to go down the IVF route. After two months of prayer, A confided that she was pregnant.

Last summer Jayne and I married a couple, John and Kirsty, in their pub. We were all devastated when John died from cancer recently, and Jayne and I conducted John's funeral a year after the wedding. Kirsty has been a tower of strength. She has a wonderful family, her pub community, and CWW for care and support. Please pray that she will grieve well, draw near to God, and enjoy that peace that passes all understanding.

Another of the people we love is CPR. He's one of the poorest of the poor, and has been

subjected to physical violence on a number of occasions. He desperately wants to change his lifestyle, but he can't see a way out. Jayne offered him a way out last week when she gave him a Betel leaflet. Betel is the Christian addiction treatment community that CWW has partnered with. Please pray that he'll take that brave step and make the 'phone call.

And we thank God for C, a police officer who has recently returned to church after many years in the wilderness.

Please pray for CWW in light of the above and, especially, that we will be the church God wants us to be.

## Brighton

**Sean Older** writes: We were recently stirred by an event that took place in a community here in Brighton. The event was based on 'Zocalo' (a public square/place of meeting), a Mexican festival that gathers and celebrates cultures with food. Inspired by the idea, we decided to apply it to the culturally diverse street that we live on in the Moulsecoomb council estate; inviting our neighbours to a 'braai' – a South African BBQ – held in the driveway.

The invitation gathered a variety of people from our street (and a few passers-by too!) and brought people together who would not have even spoken otherwise – no matter how close they live to each other. One neighbour said 'I have lived here for 9 years and never been invited to a neighbour's house.' Another neighbour commented: 'it needed someone

like you lot to make things like this happen... We heard you laughing trying to set up the gazebo in the wind!

And for us...well we began to see an example of Jesus' ways within our neighbours, as they hosted each other and a notable hunger (in a few) to know more about him. We found this encouraging and were inspired by seeing our neighbours (each in God's image) connect, share food together and laugh with each other – all in the simple act of an invitation to a South-African braai on a driveway in the British wind and rain!

## Glyncoch

**Keith & Susanne Lewis** moved to this estate just over a year ago. They report on their first year: We are getting to know people and are gradually becoming aware of the family links, rivalries and tensions. The anniversary of our move on to the estate coincided with a coach trip to the seaside organised by the community – an opportunity to strengthen relationships and have our faces more widely recognised.

A couple of weeks ago we were notified that the limestone quarry, which is immediately to the south of the estate, has reactivated its planning application to expand into an area to the west and to add an extra 25 years to its operating licence. People here have endured the noise, dust and health issues as a result of the proximity of the quarry since the estate was built and were looking forward to the prospect of it winding up in 2022. There is a widespread pessimism about the prospects of successfully fighting this. Please pray that the estate will rally together to oppose the plans and for the part that we will play in this.

We continue to volunteer in various roles on the estate – in the youth club, primary school governor, residents' and tenants' association, community centre cleaner, etc. We are glad of these connections with the life of the local community.

## Northern Ireland

**Gordon McDade** and **Karen Sethuraman** are leading a new initiative in Northern Ireland, the Down Community. They report here on recent developments and their hopes for the future: We are exploring setting up a new gathering from the Down Community in the Portadown/Tandragee area where we have three members, who would be interested in doing something in that area, which is about forty minutes' drive from us. We may have to give some leadership in the early stages but these are able guys and there is real potential to do something.

We have also had a conversation with a girl in East Belfast who used to attend DC but moved with her new job. She is interested in starting something in Belfast, although it is early days. We hope to keep the conversation going. We have been talking about the many marginal places and places around the city and the potential to have a new expression of community in some of them.

With regards to the Down Community, we feel very much at home in Drumaness, which is a marginal community with no church presence, so there are many opportunities to influence and befriend. We are taking a step of faith in renting the Dan Rice Hall for two more hours on a Monday morning so that we can have the beginnings of a footprint in the town. Our greatest need as a community is to have a place to be in the community. There is currently nowhere to get even a coffee in Drumaness. We are in conversation with the council about a gardening project in the local play park and hope to do some litter lifts in weeks to come. A home is what we really need, so we continue to pray and explore.

## Bristol

The goal of all UE teams is to develop fresh expressions of Christian community and to become independent of UE – although still

remaining friends! So we celebrate people leaving as well as joining. This month we say farewell to **Phil & Alice Lawrence**, who write about what they are involved with in Bristol:

*The Cairn* is a new expression of church in Inns Court, one of the most deprived areas in Bristol (among the top 1% nationally). We are developing an embryonic (now Baptist) ministry from a renovated vicarage in the heart of Knowle West in South Bristol; and were very much emboldened in this pursuit by a strong connection with UE.



The vicarage was abandoned in the 1990s, during a time of severe social unrest on the estate, and remained so until our purchase of the site in 2013. The renovated property includes a medieval tower, and the potential for development in quarter of an acre of land.

Our vision is for a Christian residential community, and spin-off specialist housing, with a mixture of people, those in need of support and those supporting, but being community together. As Alice explains: 'we wanted to make *The Cairn* our home so that other people could feel at home here'.

We have so far hosted three residents, which has led to a baptism and wedding blessing in the garden. Future residents may include ex-offenders, care leavers, those in recovery from addictions, or disabled people. Strong partnerships will be key to this.

Our broader aim is to pursue God's vision for human flourishing in Inns Court and beyond, through faithful presence and incremental change, seeking the transformation of both people and place.

At present, opportunities for people to gather include: breakfasts, lunches, mens' groups, a

guitar club, and links to gardening and fishing clubs. Belonging and acceptance are important starting points, but these take time to establish.

## New People

We are delighted to welcome into the Urban Expression community this month: **David & Kate Blower** – team leaders in Balsall Heath, our third team in Birmingham. We continue to be in conversation with several others, some of whom came to our recent annual Community Weekend, about joining a team or forming a new team.

## UE Youth

Over the past couple of years we have begun to organize events for young people involved in UE teams. Many of them have grown up in urban and marginal communities and in the context of pioneering expressions of church. We want to learn from their experiences and help them reflect on their journeys.

As well as organising youth activities at our Community Weekends and teams' days, we have also hosted youth weekends. The next of these will be in Derbyshire in March. We are very grateful for these young people and we look forward to seeing how they grow in their faith and draw on their rich experiences in diverse and marginal communities.

## Crucible

The eleventh year of the *Crucible* course begins on 12-13 November. Over 550 people have participated in the course and we look forward to welcoming new people this year. Please do pass this information on to anyone who might be interested.

A new development this year is a series of webinars following up each weekend, giving

an opportunity to explore some subjects in greater depth. These are free and open to all, so please let us know if you'd like details.

Another new development is an extra stream at the November weekend run by our partner organization, CURBS (resourcing children in urban situations). This stream is entitled *Through their Eyes*: an exploration of what it means to be a child made in God's image and how that shapes us growing together, understanding each other and living life in community.

## Urban Life

Urban Life has negotiated with a publisher to produce a series of books entitled 'Mission in Marginal Places.' The first two books are now out and were launched at the UE Community Weekend in October.



More information on these books (which are available for £12.00 plus £2.50 p&p from Urban Life) and other projects can be found by visiting the website at [www.urbanlife.org](http://www.urbanlife.org)

## Other News

UE Netherlands continues to thrive. Stuart Murray Williams spent time in October with two of the eleven teams now operating in various cities. They have just published a 'pioneer survival guide', which we hope to translate into English.

Juliet Kilpin continues to be involved in the constantly changing and increasingly dire refugee situation in and around Calais as she and colleagues develop 'Peaceful Borders'.

## Prayer

Please pray for the ongoing work of all of our teams and especially for:

- The teams in Northern Ireland, Glyncoch, Brighton and Manchester, mentioned above.
- The ongoing development of ministry at *The Cairn* in Bristol.
- Those who have recently joined Urban Expression, and for more team members to join new and existing teams.
- Those who are studying with Urban Life or on the *Crucible* course.
- The young people growing up in UE contexts and their development.

Four times a year we set aside a day to pray especially for our teams and other matters. If you would like to join us and would value some information, please let us know.

## Further information

To follow what is happening across the teams and to read their reflections on urban mission and ministry, have a look at the UE blog: <http://urbanexpressionreflections.tumblr.com>

For further information about anything you have read, to enquire about joining a team, or to contribute financially, please contact:

**Urban Expression: PO Box 16991,  
Birmingham B32 9HX  
[enquiries@urbanexpression.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@urbanexpression.org.uk)  
[www.urbanexpression.org.uk](http://www.urbanexpression.org.uk)**

Urban Expression is a registered charity (no. 1090734)