

A NOTE FROM THE MANAGER

We have been going through some unprecedented times at the Bristol Methodist Centre over the last few years and much of this has been around the longevity of the project and its financial situation.

We have been working hard to come up with a new vision for the centre which would incorporate the great work already taking place at the centre (and within the City) whilst also looking more closely at what we are able to do to make a significant change - and a lasting change - in the lives of our guests.

Since the beginning of the year, we have been working with a number of critical partners in the local Homelessness sector to see how we can work in partnership more and also how the Bristol Methodist Centre - which is strategically placed within this ecosystem - is able to help, first by identifying gaps in service provision for those most in need, and secondly, how we are able to fill these gaps.

If you have attended the recent Circuit Meeting you will be aware of our plans and deliberations, and it is a rather exciting time, but we are not out of the woods yet, we are still needing to prove our worth to the powers that be, showcasing that these grand plans for our future and for the futures of our guests are attainable and sustainable. So, we have been given a temporary extension to prove the worth of this plan, but if we fail to demonstrate how we will achieve some key areas in our business plan, there is the stark possibility that the BMC will cease to exist.

September 2023 is the proposed date for us to have demonstrated significant progress on these plans. If we are unable to prove its worth, the centre, which has been in Bristol for approaching 100 years in various forms, will, unfortunately, cease to exist and the staff will be made redundant and the centre will have to sadly close its doors on the many guests who have come to rely on our service provision and the help we offer.

It is not all doom and gloom though - although it has felt like that for staff over the last few years - because there is good news too in all this chaos.

Our charitable giving has been on the rise and I wanted to thank all of our supporters for providing for the centre's needs in this way (more on this below). We have also had a number of guests find accommodation recently with the hard and diligent work of our support workers and we have also seen deliverance for some of our guests from their many struggles - it is a long journey for them, but we will be with them every step of the way, for as long as we are able.

Please find here a letter from Teddy Kalongo, Superintendent, Bristol and South Gloucestershire Methodist Circuit which details the outcome of the meeting.

God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor 9.7)

At the Methodist Centre, we love cheerful givers too, and we're delighted to report that our latest financial update from the Circuit Office shows that there have been LOTS of them recently.

Readers of the BMC Newsletter are undoubtedly among them, so from all of us at the Methodist Centre, Thank You!

Giving, especially by individuals, has increased significantly over the last six months. This means that alongside cost savings which the Centre has made, and being able to turn the heating off with summer here, March to May has been a relatively healthy quarter - our income came fairly close to meeting expenditure. But yes, you read that right, we are still making a loss each month and cannot be complacent.

Please keep on praying, supporting, giving, and putting the word out to others. Your giving makes a daily difference in the lives of vulnerable people and those suffering from homelessness in Bristol and makes visible the love of Jesus.

Insight from a Volunteer - Hannah

Volunteering at BMC has been an extremely rewarding experience; I thank God for preparing and leading us to this good work for myself and other members of our small church. To be part of a service that provides essential care for those who are vulnerable and less fortunate is an important foundation of our Christian faith and values.

To know that through the work done at BMC, we are being a real part of the Lord's teaching in Matthew is humbling and so encouraging.

“For I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me a drink, I was a stranger and you took Me in. I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison and you came to Me.” Matthew 25:35-36 MEV

BMC has a true sense of community. There is no regimented divide between staff, volunteers and service users. Which I think is key to why so many feel safe and welcomed at the centre. To know that BMC is now the only day centre available to those in need really highlights the importance of keeping this centre alive and working, especially during a time in which high living costs and financial pressures are causing those most in need to become increasingly vulnerable. For them to be able to come to a place where the core beliefs and foundations are based on the love and teachings of Jesus Christ is immeasurably valuable.

Where so many churches have had to close their doors I believe it is of utmost importance this centre stays open.

A particularly rewarding experience of mine was with one of our service users (N), who whilst in our care became very unwell. During this time I sat with him as he lay on the floor, lifting his spirits, and he allowed me to pray for him. In the midst of his distress, he was still able to joke and banter with me which showed that our support, patience and love for him made him feel secure.

I truly love getting to know everyone, whether it's having a cup of tea with them or completing a mighty jigsaw many of our members have incredible stories to tell.

A Prayer from Richard

Risen Lord Jesus,

who goes before us into the unknown,

we pray for the Methodist Centre in this continuing time of uncertainty

and change;

sustain the Centre staff on the journey.

Inspiring Spirit,

who brings new life into being,

we pray that you will draw together and empower the Transition Group;

draw us onwards towards the promised land of a sustainable future.

God of mercy,

whose heart is for those who suffer,

we pray for all those who find themselves homeless and insecurely housed

in our city;

enable us - as your people in this city - to bring your presence and

help near.

Amen.

ITEMS OF NEED

It wouldn't be a newsletter without a request for items we are in need of, and I thank you all in advance for your help in answering these requests, as you have always done and continue to do.

Corned Beef | Tins of Minced Beef and Onion | Tins of Stewing Steak | Tinned Custard | Tinned New Potatoes | Tinned Rice Pudding | Tinned Fruit | Powdered Mash Potato | Herbs (mixed) | Sleeping Bags | L & XL Joggers | Men's trainers (8, 8.5, 10) | Backpacks (rucksacks) | Blackcurrant / Orange Squash | Crisps | Biscuits (lunch biscuits - KitKat etc) | Snack Bars | Women's knickers (8-12size)

Farewell

I hope you will all join me in wishing Richard Sharples a fond farewell.

Richard has been an amazing champion of the BMC but will be leaving his post in Bristol shortly and it is with a heavy heart that I have to say goodbye. If I could I'd keep him locked up in the centre's basement and call on him from time to time, I would - but alas there are rules against that type of thing.

I wish Richard all the best for his next venture and pray that he will settle into this new placement as quickly as possible and that his new congregation/congregations discover quickly how truly brilliant he is and that his heart beats to God's rhythm.

He will be missed in a number of ways, but I will certainly miss the man of God that he is (and the friend that he has become over our short time together) and his passion to see God's Kingdom come.

A truly passionate, dedicated, visionary man of God... the best of luck Richard, you will be missed!