


# BRINGING HOPE



Churches  
respond  
to **Drugs,**  
**Guns, &**  
**Gangs**

**Conference Report**

**26th May 2004**

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## Steering Group

Revd Carver Anderson	Chair
Bishop Dr. Joe Aldred	Council of Black-Led Churches
John Bleazard	Community Regeneration, Diocese of Birmingham
Beresford Dawkins	Birmingham Community Safety Partnership
Revd Mark Fisher	Birmingham Churches Together
Robin Thompson	Birmingham Drug Action Team

## From the steering group chair:

### Acknowledgements

The Bringing Hope steering group would like to thank all the delegates who attended the conference in May, also for those projects and agencies who had stalls on the day.

We thank our guest speakers, Lin Homer, Chief Executive of Birmingham City Council, the Chief Constable, Paul Scott-Lee, the Anglican Bishop for Birmingham, John Sentamu, and Martin Glynn, and those who supported by facilitating workshops. We also thank young Dominique Smith for his inspirational singing, and Lloyd and Paulette for their real life testimonies.

Finally we thank the Community Safety Team for their financial support for the event.

### Introduction

The Bringing Hope steering group emerged in late 2003 with a partnership between Birmingham Drug Action Team, the Community Safety Team, Council of Black -Led Churches, Birmingham Churches Together and the Community Regeneration Dept of the Diocese Of Birmingham.

The group acknowledged the fact that drugs are a key issue for our community and indeed society, manifesting their evil in a great variety of ways including crime (sometimes involving firearms). As the partnership developed it was agreed that the time had come for the churches to own a strategic response surrounding the issues of drugs, gangs and guns and so, consequently, a conference was agreed to facilitate this process.

### Target group

It was clear from discussions that our target group must be those who have responsibility in our churches for shaping and inputting in the lives of people. They would therefore also be involved in lives that may be affected by gang and gun violence. Discussion also took place about those church leaders who are not in areas or wards that are affected immediately by gangs and guns.

The steering group agreed that all church leaders would be alerted about the conference in the first instance, but emphasis would be placed on those leaders who minister in the areas and places most affected by gangs and guns.

Given the aim for wider partnerships with the city, it was also agreed to invite key individuals and services (eg, probation, youth, education) involved in tackling the above issues.

It was subsequently agreed that the conference date would be 26/05/04, and that the morning would focus on being informative, with responses via workshops in the afternoon.

### **Follow-up**

Following the conference the steering group continued planning how to move the project forward given the very positive inputs and recommendations received. A project coordinator brief was agreed and has been included with this report.

An offer of £30,000 was received to enable the post to be advertised, and a worker was successfully recruited in December 2004.

We are grateful to Nikki Tapper for taking the trouble to set up a discussion on her Sunday night Gospel Show on Radio WM with Martin Glynn, Paulette Boney-Carty and Lloyd McCormack to reflect on the conference and for their permission to include a transcript of their conversation.

The steering group is very clear that the Bringing Hope conference on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2004 was just the start of an ongoing process where church, community and the city can work together.

*The Revd Carver Anderson - chair of steering group*

December 2004

### **Contact details from 1.2.05**

Bringing Hope Office  
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# BRINGING HOPE

## Programme

- 09.15 Registration and Coffee
- 10.00 Prayer, Domestics, (Rev Carver Anderson, Rev Mark Fisher), Aims of the day - Bishop Joe Aldred
- 10.15 Robin Thompson / Setting the scene/Testimonies,
- 10.30 Dominique Smith (Song Greatest Love of all)
- 10.45 Lin Homer Chief Executive
- 11.15 BREAK
- 11.35 'D' Line Report (Martin Glynn)
- 11.50 Paul Scott Lee West Midlands Police
- 12.15 Drama by Young People
- 12.30 Bishop for Birmingham John Sentamu
- 12.50 Prayer
- 13.00 **LUNCH**
- 14.00 Taking Action/ Break into work shops
- 15.30 Coordinating our action Strategy for the Future
- 16.00 Closing Remarks
- 16.30 Close



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*A Joint Project with the Council of Black-led Churches*

**BRINGING HOPE**

**Churches Respond to Drugs, Guns and Gangs**

**WEDNESDAY 26<sup>th</sup> MAY 2004**

**9.30am – 4.30pm Aston Villa Conference Centre**

Dear All,

None of us can avoid the fact that drugs are a key issue for our society and our city, manifesting their evil in a great variety of ways including crime (sometimes involving firearms) and gang activity. Many of us would rather keep these things at arms length, but in reality need to own the part that local churches might play in counteracting both the issue and its underlying causes.

The Council of Black-led Churches have been actively involved in responses over the years and especially since the shootings in Aston over 12 months ago. Now, in partnership with the Birmingham Churches Together constituency, the aim is to ensure that local church leaders are informed and are inspired to share in a city-wide strategy for the churches.

One key aim of the conference is to highlight the issues as needing to be addressed city-wide and not just by particular neighbourhoods or sections of the community.

**You are invited to this major conference, along with any others from your church/fellowship who might appropriately be involved.**

The morning will focus on being informative, with keynote speeches from The Chief Constable, Paul Scott-Lee, The City Council Chief Executive, Lin Homer. The Bishop of Birmingham, John Sentamu, will help us identify the particular and significant ways in which the Christian churches might respond. There will also be some stories from the streets including music.

The afternoon will be given over to workshop groups and drawing together some practical conclusions for future action.

We do hope that you will wish to attend and contribute to the day and look forward to welcoming you at Aston Villa. Please use the enclosed flyers to interest others as you are able.

If you have examples of good practice in responding to these issues and would like to offer a small display, please contact us.

The cost of the day is being heavily subsidised enabling the cost to you to be only £5. A buffet lunch is being provided.

Please complete the attached Booking Form and return with payment (payable to Birmingham Churches Together).

With best wishes

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Fisher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Revd. Mark Fisher  
General Secretary

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Most Revd. Vincent Nichols

PRESIDENTS  
Revd. Brian Nicholls  
Charity No. 243931

Rt.Revd. John Sentamu

## Aims for the Day

## Bishop Joe Aldred

### Bringing Hope: Churches Respond to Drugs, Gangs and Guns

Why is the church involved?

- ✓ Jesus: 'you are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world...' (Matt 5.6&7)
- ✓ We have a divine mandate
- ✓ These are our children too
- ✓ This our community too
- ✓ Its our future at stake too

### Bringing Hope: Churches Respond to Drugs, Gangs and Guns

Aims:

- ✓ To listen to church leaders' views
- ✓ Establish shared ownership of issues across city and across churches
- ✓ Develop strategic partnerships between churches, statutory organisations and community groups
- ✓ Identify training needs of churches to engage with disaffected young people
- ✓ Begin to develop resource directory
- ✓ Identify emerging work for further action

### Bringing Hope: Churches Respond to Drugs, Gangs and Guns

Who's involved?

- ✓ Council of Black Led Churches
- ✓ Birmingham Churches Together
- ✓ Birmingham City Council (DAT & Community Safety Team)
- ✓ C of E Diocese of Birmingham
- ✓ Planning Team, Revd Carver Anderson, Chair
- ✓ Others


### Bringing Hope: Churches Respond to Drugs, Gangs and Guns

Key Resource

- ✓ 'D' Line Report by Martin Glynn
- ✓ Enough is Enough by Beresford Dawkins
- ✓ God and the Gangs by Dr Robert Beckford
- ✓ YOU
- ✓ Hope of a better future
- ✓ Our trust in God!

**Keynote speech**

**Lin Homer**



**Bringing Hope Conference**

**26th May 2004**

**Lin Homer**



**The challenges for Birmingham**

- 977,000 population
- 229,000 under 16 yrs population
- 142,000 over 65 years population
- Education and Skills
- Diversity



**The challenges for Birmingham**

- Governance in Birmingham
- The localisation of services
- Social inclusion
- Partnership agenda




**The Corporate Plan**

**Themes:**

- Flourishing Neighbourhoods
- Improving services







### The Corporate Priorities

Developing Birmingham as a city of clean, safe and flourishing neighbourhoods

**Priority 1: Going local: Building stronger and sustainable communities**

**Priority 2: Making neighbourhoods clean & safe**







**Priority 2: Making neighbourhoods clean & safe**

Community Safety Partnership:

- Guns and gangs
- Offender Management & Drug Treatment
- Flourishing Neighbourhoods
- Violence
- Youth







**Priority 3: Investing in our children and young people**

**Priority 4: Preparing our city for the future**

**Priority 5: Closing the gaps: tackling inequality**



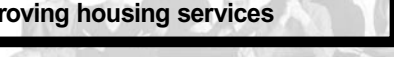



Improving services & serving Birmingham people well

**Priority 6: Putting citizens and customers at the heart of all we do**

**Priority 7: Improving Social Care**  
- services for vulnerable children and families  
- services for older people

**Priority 8: Improving housing services**






How we will deliver: using our resources wisely

**Priority 9: Continue to use resources well**

**Priority 10: Valuing staff and building on success**



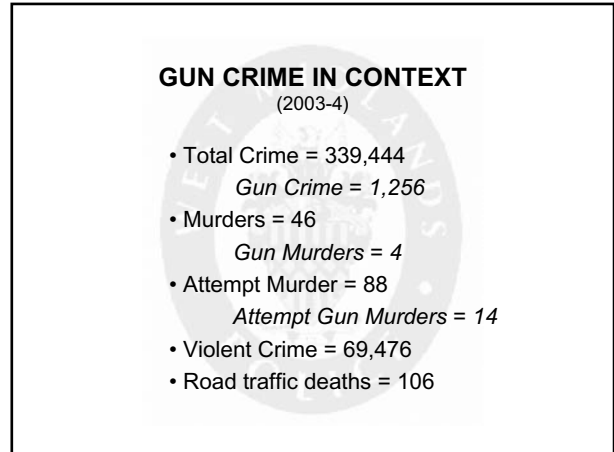
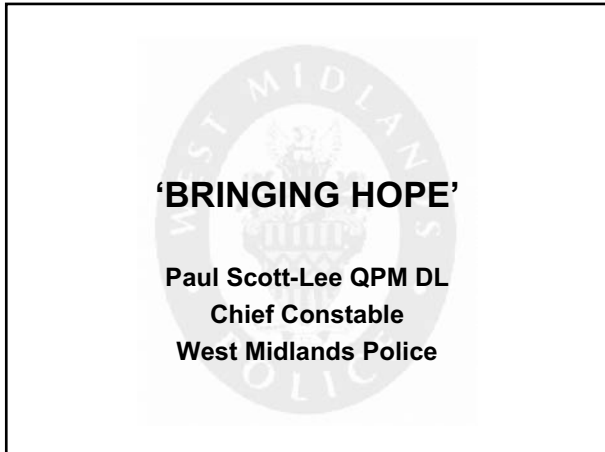
### Looking Forward

- The role of faith groups
- Collaboration & Partnership working
- City Council commitment to your agenda

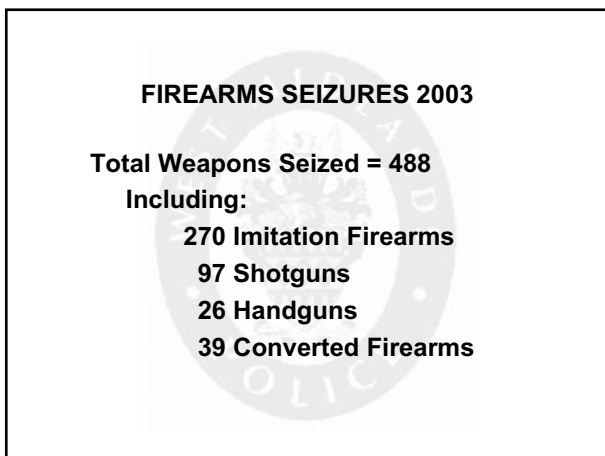


**Keynote speech**

**Paul Scott-Lee**



*“Not all gang members have access to a gun - in fact very few do - and, in terms of hard core dangerous people, we assess there are less than 100 across the entire West Midlands.”*



*“The reality of gang life for most young people is violence and beatings, forced to do the criminal bidding of others and a life constantly looking over their shoulder. There is nothing cool about associating with ruthless and hardened criminals.”*

*“The gang scene is the ‘shop floor of the drug industry.’ Young men and women become trapped in this environment, used as couriers, enforcers and armourers, for the benefit of others and their extravagant lifestyle.”*

## Quotes from Keynote speech by Paul Scott-Lee

*“Violence blights our lives, makes us feel unsafe and uncertain, destroys and undermines confidence in the will of persons to visit, invest and live in our communities. Violence also generates media headlines which fuel moral panic among our citizens, fearing that the traditional fabric of society is disintegrating before their very eyes. It is not surprising that on occasions we are all left wondering from where such hope will come.*”

*But there is hope - and it is right that we should balance the difficulties we face with the success we are building, the potential of our young people and our common purpose to make the communities we live and work in, flourishing and safe environments.”*

“The problem is often portrayed as a black issue, when in fact we know that all sections of our community are becoming involved. We also know that some of the crime I have described is carried out in co-operation with criminals from outside the UK.”

*“All of us must work towards community support structures which offer more than the gangs; which hold out opportunities for young people to do what they want to do and to see making a positive contribution as ‘cool.’*”

*Absent parents - often fathers - deny youngsters a role model, someone to look up to and believe in, a mentor when guidance is needed. Far too often our young men in particular turn to the wrong role models - especially during adolescence.*

*We have to continue to find positive role models for our young men and women and this must begin, at an early age, within the family.”*

“Difficult as this problem is we can and will overcome it. It will take time, effort, belief and commitment. We cannot allow our unity and sense of purpose to be undermined or sidetracked.

Over the autumn period, we have arrested and imprisoned many of the hardened gunmen you have heard me talk about. Indeed of our top 50 most dangerous gang members we have either imprisoned or remanded in custody 16.”

*“In concluding what I have to say I trust I have left you with some hope. Hope that through our efforts both short term and long, we have the will, the commitment and resilience to win the war against gangs, guns and drugs. Indeed, I have provided compelling evidence today that we have already made some significant inroads in this fight. I acknowledge that there is a long way to go, there are still many dangerous people who threaten the quality and stability of life in our communities. But you have my solemn promise that we shall not cease our efforts until we have won.”*

## Keynote speech

## Bishop Sentamu

### *Address by the Rt. Revd Dr John Sentamu, Bishop for Birmingham*

The problem of guns, drugs and gangs is not a problem limited to the black community in Aston - the causes and effects touch all areas of the city. Drug use is commonplace in many outer estates and leafy suburbs and the drugs are moved around from one area to another.

I know that people from disadvantaged areas of the city have seen too much talk and consultation and too little action in response - they (you) are fed up with nothing changing.

What practically can the church do? This afternoon you will be talking in small groups about actions at various different levels - individual, congregational and denominational.

I want to encourage you by saying that money (funding of projects) is not necessarily the problem - networking, trust and partnership building are the most important things for any successful project, and that is free, if time consuming!

As an example, I have met a couple of times recently with representatives from the Aston Pride board and with Sue Battle from the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Industry to discuss the issues raised by the rise of guns, drugs and gangs in the city.

Following these meetings we want to identify a sustainable response that brings together some of the key players in the city from education, business, community and faith groups. We need a Birmingham-wide approach. Everybody benefits when we involve everyone. We must stand together or hang separately. As the African proverb says, **'It takes the whole village to raise and educate a child'**.

And so we have an idea to encourage young people to take up legitimate business ideas and get a buzz from entrepreneurial activity that contributes to the economic and civic life of the city, instead of getting a rush from selling drugs or handling guns.

Diversionary activities that don't compete with this adrenalin rush on the streets will always struggle to make an impact. We need a three-pronged approach: **Education; Equality; Policing.**

If my idea is going to turn things around on our streets we need our young people to get

- Exposure in schools to business practices through enterprise lessons and work experience or visits
- Opportunities to run micro-businesses in school time- if the curriculum needs to change, so be it!
- Investment funds to enable these businesses to start up
- Mentoring support and business training that overlaps school and the post-16 world of work
- Youth workers in contact with hard to reach groups and individuals that might show entrepreneurial talent and yet struggle with mainstream education

After all, successful entrepreneurs and business people share the same characteristics as many of our disaffected youth - **risk taking, persistence, energy, focus and competitiveness.**

So we hope to get some funding to appoint a facilitator who can develop the idea over the rest of this year into a workable project and continue talking and building a partnership among the interested parties.

Then we'd be ready to launch the full project in 2005 - and coincidentally this is the Centenary Year of the Anglican Diocese of Birmingham. As the first bishop of Birmingham, Charles Gore, joined forces with all to campaign for the elimination of child alcoholism in Birmingham - resulting in the Licensing Laws, so must we follow his good example in bringing hope to Birmingham as we overcome guns, drugs and gangs by our three-pronged approach: **Education; Equality; Policing.**

And thereby **increase community intelligence; increase community confidence; increase a can-do culture; and increase a respect for life and law.**

Because:

**Crack-Cocaine is killing my community**

**Guns are killing my community**

**Gangs are destroying my community**

## **A Prayer For The City**

THERE IS HOPE FOR BIRMINGHAM!!!

### **IT STARTS WITH ME**

- LORD HELP ME TO SEE AND UNDERSTAND WHERE I NEED TO BE.
- GIVE ME THE COURAGE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.
- REMOVE FEAR FROM ME.
- LET MY LIFE BE AN EXAMPLE ALWAYS.

### **FAMILIES MATTER**

- LET OUR FAMILIES SEE THE NEED TO SUPPORT EACH OTHER.
- LET LOVE AND CARE BE ESTABLISHED.
- LET OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE HOPE
- THANK YOU FOR LIFE

### **OUR COMMUNITY**

- GRANT US COURAGE TO BE PEOPLE THAT EMPOWER & REGENERATE
- HELP US NOT TO BE AN HINDERANCE WHERE HOPE SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED
- GIVE US WISDOM & INSIGHT INTO DEALING WITH COMMUNITY HELPLESSNESS AND HOPELESSNESS

### **CHURCHES WORKING TOGETHER**

- GRANT US THE COURAGE TO BE VULNERABLE TO EACH OTHER
- LET YOUR GRACE BE ESTABLISHED IN OUR HEARTS
- GRANT US THE VISION TOGETHER OF A COMMUNITY WITH HOPE
- LET THERE BE A WILLINGNESS FOR US TO WORK TOGETHER TO FIGHT THE EVILS WE SEE AND EXPERIENCE IN OUR COMMUNITIES.

### **WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHERS**

LORD GRANT US THE COURAGE TO INITIATE PARTNERSHIPS IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

- COMMUNITY SAFETY
- POLICE AND PROBATION
- SOCIAL CARE & HEALTH
- HOUSING
- PRISON
- YOUTH OFFENDING TEAMS
- EDUCATION
- OTHER FAITH GROUPS
- CITY COUNCIL
- OTHER COMMUNITY GROUPS

## **LIFE TRANSFORMATION**

- LORD BRING HOPE TO THOSE INVOLVED IN CRIMINAL ACTIVITIES AND THOSE WHO ARE THE VICTIMS.
- CHANGE LIVES FROM GUN GANG AND DRUG ABUSE TO PEOPLE OF HOPE AND REGENERATION.

**THANK YOU LORD FOR THIS CHANCE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!**

## **NOW IT'S MY MOVE**

- SO LORD GIVE ME THE COURAGE TO MOVE FROM THIS DAY WITH A VISION OF HOPE THAT WILL BE REFLECTED IN WHAT I DO.

**AMEN !!!!!!!!**

## Workshop responses

Workshop groups were asked to consider the church response to the issues of guns, drugs and gangs at four levels: individual, congregational, denominational, and citywide partnerships.

We have grouped the responses at each level, and according to key themes that emerge - but they remain the un-edited words as fed back via flip-chart summaries from all seven workshops.

### Individual

- 1 understand the issues  
identify the problems  
understand difference between perception and reality  
awareness raising training  
put my self in their shoes
- 2 consult and communicate with young people  
listen to the youth  
listening - open door  
break down barriers by talking  
see the value of every life - worthiness  
talk to young people, not just listen, but hear  
communicate honestly  
let young people show you what to do
- 3 build relationships  
build relationships with young people in church first, then the community  
compassion, non judgemental  
show respect and care to young people  
show love regardless  
mentors/role models  
move/live in areas of disadvantage
- 4 invest in youth work  
support talented people (youth workers?)  
enable/equip those who can relate  
support people
- 5 start with me  
be there - where they are  
acknowledge our fears  
unconditional love  
identify my own gifting  
be vulnerable  
start by showing our own commitment - say hello, not cross the street  
start at home - be a good parent

community problem is my problem  
not always professionals first  
be a role model - reflect hope in being a part of the community  
youth mentoring  
do unto others like you'd have them do unto you  
come out of our comfort zone  
show love (visit sick, in prison)  
personal affirmation - identify own life-purpose  
get help for ourselves - deal with our own baggage  
be good parents and role models  
live an example that young people can follow  
change my attitude as a white male

- 6 tackle our prejudice  
avoid tarring all with the same brush - have a balanced approach (they are not all the same)  
break down barriers  
be transparent and honest about our prejudices  
face our fears (do it scared)
  
- 7 citizenship and media images  
more awareness of local politics  
older generation pass on skills to younger  
be bold and speak up when things are not right  
break stereotypes  
emphasise the importance of "family"  
use media positively  
encourage citizenship  
start with children (and immature adults) - prevention and intervention  
be informed - correct media hype  
educate our young people carefully  
challenge TV, media and film about portrayal of guns as status symbols  
encourage black people to be school governors  
challenge the status quo and suggest alternatives
  
- 8 don't do it alone  
volunteer  
be committed - voluntary work?  
take the message of today and promote it in my church  
get others to work alongside what I do  
swap and exchange skills with others  
prayer  
match your skills to the task - training  
be part of decision making processes  
be persistent - don't give up at rejection - racism etc  
know your own ministry - some go out, others stay and pray  
signpost to help available

## Church/congregation

- 1 funding and use of resources esp buildings  
find extra resources  
develop funding knowledge  
recognise limits of what we can do - fundraise for others rather than do it ourselves  
invest time with people  
use buildings for community benefit  
unlock skills in congregations
  
- 2 know their world  
know their world and issues  
outreach to the streets  
research and understand the local area  
reality sessions in churches/ear to the ground  
know the community needs  
find out how to impact on young people  
go out in small groups (3, 12, 72)
  
- 3 be relevant  
keep it real - youth in church being heard and listened to  
valuing the family - bringing the ages together  
culturally relevant events  
be there- faith presence  
relevance to circumstances, people and needs  
male role models needed
  
- 4 show love and belief in families and young people  
follow up families and children  
give children and young people responsibility  
channel creativity  
display/show unconditional love  
form a pool of mentors/supporters  
give young people roles and responsibilities  
be radical, be positive, believe in young people  
display love and compassion  
stand in the gap and provide support  
fear = false evidence appearing real  
care  
work with children and follow through  
non-judgemental  
work with young mothers/support single parents  
offer a positive alternative to old lifestyle  
show positive and negative life-choices

- 5 vision, targets and outcomes
  - don't give up on a vision
  - complementary and holistic developments, not piecemeal
  - long term process
  - have a heavenly strategy
  - be consistent and stick with the plan
  - have targets and goals
  - get a vision and strategy
  - valuing the church's role in community - don't measure success by community numbers in church
  
- 6 partnerships
  - don't re-invent the wheel - get behind what's already happening
  - build partnerships and networks
  - learn from each other - network together
  - tap into different skills in the congregation
  - support others in youth work - not just about "you"
  - include everyone - those who are not xian
  - network with other congregations
  - be proactive - build links with schools, social services, prisons etc
  
- 7 teaching and prayer
  - change starts with individuals - promote training programmes
  - training/awareness/sermons
  - get a church message on the issue to the media
  - identify positive alternatives
  - relevant biblical interpretation
  - disability awareness - basic skills
  - not a black problem - re-educate the whole of Birmingham
  - pray for individuals, and the area
  - publicise the work that already goes on
  
- 8 get outside the four walls
  - get outside the four walls - be a faith presence
  - engagement in community outside church is more important than promoting religion
  - liquid church - create church in your own context
  - flexibility
  - move outside the boundaries of the church
  - get out at night
  - offer counselling service at accessible venue
  - outreach
  - create safe houses

## Denomination

- 1 challenge prejudice  
challenge the way people oppress young people  
recognise it may just be not happening in my area YET
- 2 vision and leadership  
get congregations to have a clear vision  
grapple with tension between evangelism and social action  
recognise the capacity of congregations to respond  
need lead and support roles  
raise profile of political and social issues  
catch the vision  
offer a greater range of skills
- 3 the big gang  
church groups are the glue in some communities - the big gang??  
develop joint strategy  
develop a political voice  
give awards for good practice and positive contributions
- 4 what is really our priority  
issues larger than the church alone  
leaders get out of their ivory towers  
take risks  
challenge unimportant denominational demands  
challenge the way we do things
- 5 joint projects and partnership  
support between/across different types of area  
build interdependencies - faith!  
join formal structures - plan and share the work  
recognise faith ethos/roots of secular agencies  
set up a call centre for anonymous reporting  
street evangelism/street pastors (Is 61:4)  
get older people involved
- 6 learn the language of youth  
avoid church jargon

## Citywide

- 1 mutual learning  
regular meeting points  
learn from each other esp good practice  
prayer concerts pray and fast  
intergenerational involvement  
pulpit exchange
- 2 community focus added to churches together networks  
get senior leaders more involved in the issue  
link church and community at all levels  
get involved in political decisions  
re-ignite "faith in the city" or other think tank  
integration - act together as well as worship together  
make the city more accountable
- 3 respect and understanding across denominations  
be accountable to one another -not tokenistic  
networking/build relationships/communicate  
BME groups need to be treated as equals  
less emphasis on denomination, more on coming together  
emphasise not a black issue  
collective responsibility to be taken by all  
respect and understand each other  
no segregation  
build trust
- 4 undertake joint projects  
dialogue with other faiths - common problem  
more joint ventures  
campaign to bring back school assemblies
- 5 know what resources can be shared  
mapping and directory info needed  
education and training  
pool knowledge/resources/research  
share information  
capacity building  
city wide survey and needs assessment - identify what church can offer - youth /outreach workers?
- 6 present a common message  
make today a starting point - leadership group to emerge?  
get all churches together  
work together around a common interest  
future of church is with young people  
generate a relevant church message (love, soul)  
pray across denominations  
improve our language

## Evaluation form responses

The 300 conference delegates were invited to fill in an evaluation form regarding their experience of the event. The response to questions such as: "To what extent do you feel the aims of the day have been achieved? To what extent has your understanding of the issues churches respond to drugs, guns and gangs has improved or increased as a result of today?" was overwhelmingly positive.

We list below some of the replies, in their own words to the final question: **"How would you like to see us take today's work and conclusions forward?"**

1. Get an action plan together, prioritise tasks and inform churches.
2. Something has to be set up practical to reach the people trapped in these circumstances so that I can come board and be part of the solution.
3. A conference report to be written but within that it would need brave action points. The report will need to look at setting up the future. If this is not the end then you need to keep us informed.
4. Integration and parallel with local strategic partnerships and have local compact initiatives.
5. With courage prayer strength and action.
6. To provide a directory of resources, organisations and individuals that could be used by all churches.
7. Meet from each church to discuss how best to take forward. Also share the outputs from the group sessions.
8. Form focus groups to bring those together who work in similar professions across the churches.
9. Churches need to encourage others. The event should be an annual event.
10. I would like to see the plan been done.
11. Should hold a follow up.
12. Go away - think about what was said and let the Lord lead you in the next directions and let thing happen.
13. Maintain a regular dialogue with the fellowships.
14. I would like to see more publicity in the schools.
15. I long for action - putting the talk into action lets not forget as Christians we have the most powerful weapons of all against Drugs, Gangs and Guns: prayer and the power of God.
16. The church needs to recognise its valuable role and resource in itself. Also how to use this to ensure the church does not become exclusive. I hope some great outcomes can come from this.
17. Maybe continue to improve things across the city lets not finish what we have just started. This needs to be ongoing and a long-term thing.
18. Develop clear statements around support system and exit for those involved.
19. Recruit youth workers who relate to the youngsters on the street to work with them.

# **BRINGING HOPE**

## **Useful numbers**

**Community Safety Partnership - 303 3160**

**National Probation Service - 248 6666**

**Birmingham Anti-Social Behaviour Unit - 464 8822**

**Birmingham Partnership Against Racial Harassment - 507 1444**

**Birmingham Racial Attacks Monitoring Unit - 622 4981**

**Victim Support Witness Service - 233 9832**

**West Midlands Police (Non-Emergency) - 0845 113 5000**

**Crimestoppers - 0800 555 111**

## Reflection

Six months after the conference, we felt it was important to have an opportunity to reflect on the event - we were blessed to have input that day from Martin, Paulette and Lloyd.

There follows a transcription of a discussion on the Nikki Tapper Gospel Show on Radio WM (21.11.04) with Martin Glynn, Paulette Boney-Carty and Lloyd McCormack:

*N: I'm very pleased to have on the show tonight Martin Glynn, who's a poet, a researcher, a writer, a workshop coordinator, a deliverer of workshops.*

M: Good evening.

*N: How are you?*

M: I'm all right thank you.

*N: The other guests are arriving, so I'll talk to Martin for a minute. Martin, as I said, this is about the Bringing Hope conference that took place in May this year: Guns, Drugs and Gangs, a church's response. And it was great to see so many organisations coming out.*

*Martin, as I was saying, you delivered one of the workshops. What I found interesting about yours, which was the one I went to on the particular day, was that you were looking at the way you actually have to deal with criminals or prisoners and the way they deal with life. And in a sense, a church's response can't be this sanctimonious 'you know, you need the lord, all you need to do is change you're ways, and God will work it out for you...' Give us some background into what you've done and why that response from the church is never going to work with your bored hard man etc.*

M: Well, to put it in context, I've worked in prisons for the past nearly twenty years, and it's very evident in terms of the people I've worked with, that one of the most important things is to develop a sense of purpose, meaning to your life, and understanding of that reality. Which means for me, that with a lot of men in prisons, specifically black men, that there's a need to develop a strong perspective around spiritual development.

One of the biggest problems I've encountered over the years, from prison ministry or the role of the Christian church in prison, is that there's a lack of clarity sometimes about whether it's about making more Christians out of disaffected people, or whether it's about intervening on people's souls. Now some people would argue that's one and the same thing, but in practice, it's very different.

When we did the Bringing Hope conference, there was a lot of rhetoric and dialogue spoken about the need for what the church should be doing - and in some respects, with prison ministry and street pastors, you've got a range of initiatives taking place. But it's negligible in terms of how this impacts on everything from offending behaviour, schools where an intervention process, making sure that the young people aren't influenced by the older people out there doing all kinds of stuff.

So from my point of view, trying to combine spirituality and criminology, I'm starting to investigate a theological approach to criminology, because it can't just be explained away by well-meaning, well-intentioned thoughts and ideas, because the problem is actually a lot bigger than the people who can deliver the programs that are being delivered. So from my point of view, it's frustrating as a practitioner, despite all the things going on.

But for me, I think the church, or rather the power structure or management of the church needs to sometimes come off the fence and decide what its position is, and to make no apology for that. So I suppose, what I'm looking for is a sociological response rooted in the Christian church so that people like me feel more supported. And not just supported in a conference or a church on a Sunday.

*N: So, I mean, that from the one hand is quite interesting and thought provoking, and I do hope that those in a position to do something about it, like you've mentioned in management of the church, really do reflect on how they deal with prison ministry or prisoners, or people whose lifestyles are not 'the norm' as they want them to be.*

*Your experience of actual prisoners, when they are in prison, or even if they've never gone to prison but are on that road of doing the drugs and they're really caught up in the gang culture. What is it that a) makes them get want to there and b) when they start realising they want to make a change, what is it that you're seeing may trigger them off into saying, yeah, I'm going to move away from this lifestyle.*

M: I think that first, to put it into a context, that for many black men, and most of the men I deal with, the social reality of it is such that the rewards offered by society are not open to everyone. Which means that those who cannot satisfy through education or conventional routes, they'll find an alternative route.

I was at a prison last week, called Full Sutton - a maximum security prison. We had a random group turn up, about 100 men. That's 100 fathers, 100 sons, 100 uncles, that's 100 people who are not in the community over the Christmas period. So the impact of those 100 affects literally hundreds in terms of the victims, it affects their families. So when we started talking to them the other day, and we said about where you're at right now, a lot of them would argue that they're victims of circumstance, history, social exclusion and so on. But from my point of view, the starting point is once they are there, what do you want to do about it.

Most of the men I talk to and work with are desperate to reframe who they are and to add meaning and purpose requires a process that starts with searching your soul. Now for me as a non-Christian who has a spiritual belief, you need a lot of support; you can't just leave it to psychologists and educationalists, you have to start with the basis of what's in your heart. For a lot of these guys who've got 25, 30 years, they're ultimately going to come back into the community at some stage. If the community is not prepared to receive them, and if the men themselves are not prepared in terms of their development to go back, then we have a problem.

There are a lot of criminologist processes from restorative justice that the church can become involved with, and a lot of therapeutic counselling that the church can become more involved in. So for me, starting from that perspective, we know a lot of

the social reasons why men commit crime. What we have to address is a lot of the factors that internally continue to create that kind of distress.

One thing I will say to your listeners, is when we went there the other day and saw these hundred guys with minimum about 20-25 year sentences, I'd say out of the hundred there were about 25 of them who were under the age of 25, in a room with men over 50+. So what you have is fathers and sons sharing the same environment. Now if those fathers or sons also have children, you have children or grandchildren who are without those men. You know, all the evidence would suggest that with the amount of men going to prison, and also the amount of women, because women's offending is going up at a rate of 25% a year, something is going wrong.

And I just feel that in my work as a non-Christian, I feel the church is one of the few agencies that has a moral framework to at least begin to start to address some of the distress. Because for me it's like a science-fiction scenario, it's an epidemic. There are nearly 80,000 prisoners, and if you look at the percentage of black men in prison, it's about 22-23% and actually percentage wise, there's more black women in prison. Then if you cast that ten years in advance, what you're looking at is a catastrophic, nightmare scenario.

And the other thing is that if you look at gang affiliation, with nihilistic tendencies, fatalistic values, you've got a generation who somewhere along the line in the last 15-20 years have lost a sense of value and purpose and meaning. Which means we have to address that as a community, not just as an individual. And agencies like the church have to ask themselves what is their position on this? And they need to act on it accordingly; it cannot just be about your soul when you've departed and gone to somewhere else. And it may be that there needs to be a radical reassessment of spirituality in relationship to the Christian faith.

*N: Thank you very much for that Martin - some deep thoughts and deep words there, that's really made me think about how we view others in society, particularly those in prison or those affiliated with crime. As you were hearing me saying before, two other guests who were part of Bringing Hope have joined us. Paulette Boney-Carty was with me last week with regards to Grenada and the hurricane island appeal, which probably demonstrates some of the change that's happened in your life. And also Lloyd McCormack - aka Benji - who I now recognise.*

*So I'm glad to have you both here this evening. I want to share, and ask you really, about why the conference was important, why it took place, and also just your own stories of where you've come from, and why, listening to what Martin has to say, why you find that important, and where you can probably (as I saw you nodding in agreement Paulette) say that's what we need. So Paulette can you tell me some more about yourself and your story.*

P: Well, I'd like to say I've never met Martin before, but I agree with some of what he was saying. As for the ministers changing the church here, they need to do that, and I believe as a born-again believer, and as a Christian, I believe that God has imparted that information in the pastors and believers, because church is changing.

I grew up until probably the age of 12, 13 years old in church, and then I went to school and peer pressure and I was out of church. But I didn't know God, it was just

a church to me. Sunday school back in those days was very hard, and strict, and children never really enjoyed going to church, you get what I mean, it was more like “you’re going to church” and I rebelled.

I now have, although my life’s changed, I have a criminal record that I can’t even remember half the things I got arrested for anyway. You know, I probably been arrested by the age of 17, 18 maybe 15-20 times. How I escaped going to prison is another story, but I’ll say this; I don’t know how Lloyd feels about this, but I felt like I was a prototype underworld person at the church. They used to say, like, ‘you’ve been in the underworld’ and I’m like, I’m just a normal, everyday girl that got a bit lost, and all I can say to the listeners out there, and people who aren’t Christians right now, or are going through a hard time, is that it isn’t about church, it’s about you getting to know God for yourself.

Wherever you are, even if you’re not in church, God can call you. It’s just like them man says, it’s about searching your heart. He says he has his belief, I have mine, God came knocking at my door through a guy who now runs, I think, a part of Birmingham city council drug agency, Robin (aka Assassin) who knocked my door one day to see my then boyfriend. I says ‘who’s this’ he says ‘oh my name’s assassin’ and came in. I was there selling my weed as usual, doing my stuff.

He came into my house and I thought, ok, his name’s assassin, and I carried on doing what I was doing. And he came and sat and talked to my then boyfriend and I soon realised he wasn’t quite who he said he was, but I carried on doing what I was doing, cause with a name like assassin you just assume he’s one of the guys off the road. You know, he saw me doing what I was doing and when one of the people had gone he said what are you doing? I said, selling weed basically, because that was the truth - I say ‘why, do you want some?’ and he says no, he says ‘I don’t, I’m a Christian, I’m here to tell you that, you know, God loves you, and I believe he sent me here tonight to talk to you, to tell you you need to change your ways.’

At that time, I didn’t really know what to do, I didn’t have an education, I left school at fifteen without education, at 16, 17 had a child, you know I was just going round doing my thing lost in life. I believe that you know like he said people have to search their heart, I think I’d started searching already but hadn’t realised it. When he came and told me to stop, I stopped. He spoke with such authority.

This is where the church is changing; people like Robin are Christians and are now in church, who have been out there with a nickname like assassin, he’s been out there and knows what’s going on round the streets. He’s now a Christian. I’m telling you, a lot of young Christians coming in have been out there, they know the score a lot deeper than people realise in church, who much they’ve been around, what they’ve done.

Church is learning to adjust - my church is at least. I felt like I was the prototype, I was prodded and poked a bit, they didn’t know what to do with me, pastors I felt didn’t understand me. The younger people in the church didn’t know where I was coming from. But I stuck in there, and they started coming round, and people started speaking to me and encouraging me.

*N: That's interesting what you say there about people not accepting you, because you're just displaying a lot of what, especially from a black-majority based church, experience of this superiority, 'we're better than you', and even if you come through the doors, if you've come from a particular lifestyle, we'll only address you as Paulette and if you show willing and all the signs, you become Sister Paulette, and then you said, despite all those isms and schisms, and legalisms, and all the cultural lack of understanding in the black majority church, you still wanted to find Christ because of one particular person speaking directly to you.*

P: Yes

*N: And you've also mentioned there that you always knew something was going on in your heart.*

P: That's right.

*N: For those who are listening, everyone gets very intrigued by saying 'how did you really get hooked into that life of drug selling, hanging about, the nightclubs, the blues parties?' And was there any time in that life where you thought, this is actually brilliant, so I don't know what the big deal is about wanting to change my lifestyle, or were you never that fully happy anyway?*

P: I don't think I was ever fully happy anyway. I went out, yeah, I enjoyed it, it was fast, and I could say I came from a broken childhood, which I did, my parents had problems, but they brought me up the best way they knew how, and they were good parents. It's just that tragedy hit our lives at a very young age.

But I'm not going to blame my past on my parents - I'm looking to my future now. When I did get into church, the pastors were very supportive. A lot of people were supportive, quite a few weren't, but you know what, they've come round, and I think God is starting to place people like me, Lloyd, Robin and other young people I know off the streets that are now Christians to let them know that Jesus came to save sinners.

You know he didn't go round preaching in churches, although he spoke to them, he was out on the street amongst the people, which is why I think street pastors is a good thing. If they can reach the youth, good.

*N: I'll come back to you Paulette, I'll turn to Lloyd, aka benji, known as much to me more as a DJ and an MC and a toaster. Again, we've heard some of Paulette's testimony there. A little bit of yours now, because it sounds like you've walked similar roads.*

L: My testimony - I'll cut it short as possible, it's quite long. I used to be out there selling drugs, doing frauds, basically everything you can think of. I wouldn't say I was a classic ex-offender, but I've been to prison three times for different things. The point I do want to get to is, like Martin's not a Christian, but I agree with 99.9% of what he says. The fact that you come off street and you're not accepted for who you are, what you are.

Churches talk about forgiveness, but churches don't forgive. It's about trying to find your faith in God. We as Christians need to be more proactive, more socially aware. As Martin says, a lot of churches are like, you're saved now, you're baptised and that's the end of it, there's no follow-through. Myself, I got saved in prison, there was no one there for me.

*N: Explain that to us,*

L: How I got saved?

*N: Yeah, because, again, what Martin alluded to earlier on, that there you are, there's 100 of you, you could be there 10 years, 5 years, 2 years. In all that, people say you're bound to become a Christian because you want to get off early. But tell us about your experience of what really happened to you.*

L: My experience, basically, was I was in prison; I used to do a lot of things for a lot of people out on the street, all kinds of things. When I got to prison, no one came to visit me really, including the girls I had, my friends. Through certain circumstances, I found out it's just me, one.

I've always had faith, a belief, I always knew there was a higher dimension to what we're living in. I know it sounds corny and everything, but I did start to read. I was reading a lot in prison anyway, and I started to read the bible. And everything made sense, you know the bible talks about peace of god that surpasses all understanding, and that's the only way I can explain it. And I became saved in prison.

But then I came out of prison, and started selling drugs again. I mean, there's a lot more in between, but yeah, I started selling drugs again and got in trouble again. Fortunately I didn't end up in prison, but I just decided enough is enough. Basically I went to church, got saved got baptised, but as Paulette says, I don't think the church really understands when you come in from a certain background, you've still got certain issues.

Like martin says, is it just like a football match scenario where we see how much people we can save and I'm going to go to heaven and that's it. The bible talks about faith without works is death - we're not just talking about saving people. My belief is that as Christians we have to be proactive to save people. If someone's begging for bread, it's no good saying I'll pray for you. You know what, here's the money to buy bread. If someone's in prison, it's no point just visiting them saying alright then, I'm from a church, I've come to visit you, it's alright, and when you come out I'm going to help you do this, do that, I'm going to take you here. So I believe that the church has to get a lot more proactive.

*N: I'll let you have a sip of water and talk to you again. We've got a caller that's come in here. "The church has made great advances in relation to offenders, especially with the advent of progressive churches like Rewa Pass and Christian Centre Prison. However, when ex-offenders are born again, there is a tendency for some churches to get forget that child protection rules and guidelines should apply" I suppose what he's trying to find out there is, you know, do churches have child protection and are they really that aware of how to deal with offenders?*

L: I think I can answer that, because now I'm a youth worker you see, and I work in Newtown. The majority of churches haven't got child protection procedures. I'd say the church I go to have- that's something we've addressed, but I wouldn't say that all churches have. The churches in this time we live in have to get, for want of a better word, professional in dealing with ex-offenders.

*N: Martin, you want to come back in there?*

M: Yeah, you know, I can't blame the church on this one. The thing is, this is about partnership. You have a range of social agencies entrusted with a responsibility, whether it's community safety, social services, and the youth service. If the church found itself in a social relationship, then what happens is, you would have all that kind of infrastructure.

From my point of view, Robin was the guy I went to prison with the other day. I have a very strong spiritual belief. What I don't believe is the kind of infrastructure that governs how people deal with their spiritual beliefs. As a primary example, if you take the prodigal son, I remember giving a talk in a church about three years ago, and if we take the prodigal son literally in terms of god's unconditional forgiveness, and compassion. My question was, in the context of returning sons, and as a symbol whether it's male or female, where is that compassion? Because there's a lot of bigotry. Because, yes, we have success, but that has to be also balanced against bigotry, and the attitudes that restrict people's confidence.

I think that we've got two examples here of people who have found confidence in their belief. A lot of the people I deal with don't have that confidence, because they may not look the part according to some people's perception. They may not have the capacity; some people leave prison, they can't read or write. So there's a kind of bigotry, some stigma attached. So from my point of view, if I'm going to take spiritual teachings seriously in the way it's practiced, I can't just look, as a researcher in particular, I can't look at two or three churches as successful. I have to look at the creed of the church as an agency in itself, and what is it saying.

For instance, street pastors are becoming a very important social context to theology and religion. What I'm interested in is how does the church intervene at primary school level in terms of issues around morality? I mean, second, where the massive dropout rate for black men in higher education. Statistically, there are now more young black men in this country in prison than there are in higher education. I feel that a lot of people's learning is affected because they too have a bad experience with state education, struggle with it, drop out, realise that society says that if you don't have the education backup, you can't go anywhere.

I feel that Christians in the business community need to be going to the youths and saying, look, you did your local things, here's a way you can take your entrepreneurial activity in a more spiritualised way.

*N: Which is quite interesting because I know Paulette, in a sense, you've taken some of that on. But Benji, you wanted to come back in while Martin was speaking there.*

L: I don't want it to sound like we're just running down all churches, like nothing positive is happening in churches, because there's a lot of positive things happening in churches. Everything is time, but there are things like Black Boys Can and there are other organisations that are beginning to do things, going into schools that are beginning to do things. By no means is it enough, but no means have we gone everywhere that we should - primary schools and so forth.

But there is definitely a wind of change, and I'm saying that the whole point of the Bringing Hope conference was to show that there's a lot of work going back a bit, because my particular field is youth, work in youth intervention, there's a lot of work in that area, but we mustn't leave out the spirituality out of it. It does get harder, for instance Christmas, you can't call it Christmas anymore, I think 'winter festival' now. So society is trying to take out all the spirituality, so it's harder for Christians, but that doesn't mean we should give up or that we've done enough by any means.

*N: I'm going to bring you back in there, but doesn't that come back to what martin was saying, that we as individuals who declare Christianity as our faith and, as the man says, our lifestyle thing. And I do genuinely believe it's about how you live your lifestyle. And it's up to a lot of the management and structures of the churches and the pastors and the leaders to start saying, how are you as individuals living your lifestyles?*

*And do you genuinely, as martin was saying there's a lot of bigotry, can you genuinely say that if someone came to your door or walked past you, how do you really deal with them, when they start saying they come from a prostitute background, or I've been doing drugs. What do we really say to that?*

*And it's interesting like you said there have been initiatives like street pastors and other organisations around the west midlands and beyond doing something like that. I want to come back to you, Paulette, because you, as martin was mentioning, the Christians in business, and thankfully there are one or two of them who are saying, yes, let's look at those who are good at knowing, say if I calculate if I spend 50 pounds on a bag of weed and change it for x amount of crack, I'm going to make two grand quickly, and you know, that tells me that you can have some basic mathematical skill that at school they won't acknowledge, because you're meant to say 50 pounds is two plus...*

*So you took some of that entrepreneurial skill that you were doing when you were doing the drugs and weed dealing and have now made that into a business for yourself, so tell us a bit about that.*

P: I don't want to sound like, a bible basher, well, or all deep. But for me, it's all spiritual, everything that martin just said, I cringed because I thought, I was dyslexic at school and I left school with no education and there are social entrepreneurs out there, but you know what, god gives you everything you need when you call out to him. If you just listen to what's in your heart, god speaks to everybody, so I don't care who you are.

I went to my pastor, they knew who I was, what I was in life. They did embrace me, though it was hard for one or two of the congregation to understand because they

had no understanding. But God's making a way by bringing us into the church to give those people understanding.

Whilst I was at church, a social entrepreneurial course came up that Aston Christian Centre said they'd be the receivers for the course, provide the facilities. I was the only Christian on that course, and I didn't want to fill in the form. I was dyslexic, but not to the extent that I couldn't read or write. So you know, I went to see my pastor, and pastor Sandra helped me fill in the form and prayed with me and said now go, hand it in, and I'll phone to see if you've got there. So they do support in some ways, they tried their best. If you don't know any better, but god is teaching the pastors now, and the congregations as well, and he's teaching them through us.

I went on the social school of entrepreneurs, I did it, I came through, and I believe god directed my path, because the steps of a righteous man are ordered. Even if the church didn't understand, god had a plan for my life and he still has.

*N: The beauty about what you're saying is also that you genuinely as an individual, thankfully had felt as though you were hearing enough of god to have the individual strength to say I'm going to go for this, and be bold enough to ask for help. What I'm hearing and what I'm concerned about is probably what martin comes across, there are still a majority of people who don't have even that initial confidence, and what can the church be doing to instil it? Not a 'we can come together and hold hands and say god is good' but,*

P: no, it's through people like us,

M: and it's partnership as well. As I said, there's a huge amount of success. Over my 25 years working in prisons and in community and elsewhere, there is a huge amount documented out there, we've got people like you, a lot of people. What I'm dealing with statistically - and I'm not just dealing with statistics for the sake of it - if you look at young black men and suicide in this town, if you look at the rise in young black men and HIV. The social statistics of the problems that we're finding are getting to epidemic level. Whilst there's a huge amount of work going on, it has to be measured against the way we can intervene, stop certain types of behaviours.

My argument in prison is that being dyslexic, blind or whatever doesn't stop you from succeeding. But we're living in a society that creates structures that does block access to certain types of information that only people like I'm sitting with here have. What I'm suggesting is that with the resources the church has, it can develop anything from toolkits, interactive CDs, websites, because what it's about is information exchange. Because even today, we're sitting on the radio, there are a few thousand people listening to this program. But people listening need to ask themselves what small contribution they can make.

Ironically, I was watching Children in Need yesterday on TV. Every time there is a fundraising activity for children, famine, there's a lot of money raised. I've yet to see the television screen occupied on the basis of a black-led cause that could raise a significant amount of money. I've always said to guys when they are in prison, if I know a guy who's there for drugs and he's got his money, I say to myself, the court's going to take most of it away anyway, but what you could do is invest some of your profits and put somebody through college if that's what it's about.

So I agree with what most of the speakers are saying, but I'm also looking at the social institutions out there; if they embrace partnership, would the church and representatives of the church like I'm sitting with here, not only would the people here have a greater access, but the sphere of influence would not just be in the local community, it would be regional, nation, and hopefully international. Because we also need to remember that we are faced with the same social issues as in Africa, in America. And I'd also just like to advocate that the Christian communities in north

America, South America, the Caribbean, Europe, if they came together on one kind of agenda. I saw SOS, save our sons.

*N: Excellent, thank you very much for that martin, I'm afraid time is against us. But I do want to end with a short comment from Paulette and Lloyd. Lloyd, start with you first. A text has just come in, someone saying here, Nikki, I agree god does speak but Christians, we do need to be listening. A key thing, thanks for that Matt who sent that in.*

*But Lloyd a brief thought from you, on how you see the change that Christ has made in your life, and the reality of what you still deal with, and remembering your past, and how you're saying when i remember my past, this is how it's going to make my future, why I don't want to go back there.*

L: The past I'm coming from is single parent, young black kid growing up with no father influence. I'm now working with young kids in Newtown area, basically coming through the same path. I'm now working with them, my aim is to show them working with other parties, the government or social agencies, and affect a change in their life. I'm coming from the spiritual direction, but it takes all partners working together as martin just said, so I totally agree with what martin was saying.

It takes a partnership and the church can't look like we are the be all and end all. But at the same time, other agencies have to see that the church has an important part to play in society.

*N: Thank you very much for that. And Paulette, with you, because I wanted you to talk a little more about it, but you started by saying yes, you went on a social and entrepreneurial course, but you now have one of the leading catering businesses here in Birmingham, All Nations. That is a tremendous success, and as you would say, and I think, for god to have blessed you with the skill from when you were probably 12, 13 and for you not to have realised it, and for you to have seen it to fruition, it is a god-given thing, it is a blessing to see. What are your brief words as we finish this tonight?*

P: I'd just like to say I agree with a lot of what martin says, and I think the mere fact that we're here on this show, you're a Christian as I know, he's here talking about it. You've got two Christians who've been out in the world and are now in the church, things are changing in the church. You know, it might not be moving as fast as some people want, but what does in this life?

I hope conversations like this will be thought-provoking - pastors or ministers that are listening, people from congregations, people take it back to your churches and do try

to understand, you know Jesus walked around and he talked to prostitutes, he talked to murderers, and these are the people that we need to try to reach.

God has blessed me with a business and he'll do it for any one of you out there, I don't care if you're on drugs, if you're smoking right now, if you're a prostitute, god can reach all of you, all you've got to do is open your heart and he'll be there.

*N: Thank you very much for that Paulette, thanks Lloyd, and to Martin Glynn, thank you very much for coming in, taking time out. It's been a wonderful 40 minutes or so.*

## **Project Coordinator**

### **Salary**

£21,500 - £22,500

### **Hours of work**

37.5 per week (some flexibility will be needed for occasional evening or weekend working with time off in lieu).

The steering group are open to consider job-share or consultancy proposals.

### **Length of contract**

The post is initially funded for one year, but there is every expectation further funding will be secured to cover a three-year period.

### **Management**

The post holder will be responsible to a steering group that includes representatives from the city council's Community Safety and Drug Action teams, Birmingham Churches Together, and the Council of Black-Led Churches.

Line management will be provided jointly by the Community Regeneration Director for the Diocese of Birmingham and the steering group chair. The post holder will be employed by the Birmingham Diocesan Board of Finance.

### **Office base**

To be agreed

### **Overall aim of the role**

To build on the learning and actions suggested by delegates to the Bringing Hope conference in May 2004, by articulating, developing and implementing an action plan (Bringing Hope strategy). See background papers for more details.

### **Key tasks for the worker**

1. Networking
  - i. Contacting, building and maintaining relationships with key people, to include church leaders, young people and city officials
  - ii. Being proactive in developing partnerships and consortia around projects and issues
  - iii. Making contacts with partners from all sectors who can turn vision into action
2. Advocacy
  - i. Representing the churches views on the issue
  - ii. Offering a distinctive Christian voice to key agencies
3. Strategy and Project development
  - i. Being a critical friend to help tease out current vision and ideas
  - ii. Helping develop a coherent strategy and action plan
  - iii. Identifying possible funding sources, exploring the issues needed to make successful funding applications, and writing the funding bids

4. Project management
  - i. Planning and seeing through short and medium term actions that arise from the strategy
  - ii. Facilitating the work of the steering group, including servicing meetings

## **Outcomes**

We expect short, medium and long-term outcomes from having a dedicated worker resource to move things forward. The following are indicative only:

### Short term

- listening events for church people to hear the story of young people on the streets
- information visits to youth projects
- map of current church project activity
- action plan developed and refined
- follow-up seminars that bring together key practitioners

### Medium term

- teaching materials for house groups and Sunday services
- directory of relevant resources and projects

### Longer term

- change attitudes and knowledge within churches of the extent of the problem

## **The person we need**

### Skills

Interpersonal/verbal communication and networking  
Preparing presentations and public speaking  
Report writing and administration (self servicing for all ICT needs)

### Knowledge

Issues affecting those who live and work in a multi-ethnic, multi-faith city, particularly in regard to youth cultures  
Background to emergence of New and Black Majority churches

### Experience

Fundraising and project planning  
Working with groups and committees in the voluntary sector  
Project management

The co-ordinator will need to be a lateral and imaginative thinker able to explore the opportunities that arise from this innovative conference.

It will be essential that the person appointed can embrace the Christian ethos of the project and be comfortable representing the full spectrum of Birmingham churches at meetings.

AGREED 15.10.04

A partnership between the Council of Black Led Churches and Birmingham Churches Together

