

# BRISTOL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

## Trustees' Report for the year ended 5 April 2008

written by Neil Edbrooke for the Accounts report

### *Equipping Christians to build Churches to Change our world*

One of the core values of BCF is expressed through our definition of church: a group of friends, loyal to one another, committed to following Jesus. This summary, reworked in many different forms over the years, communicates the conviction that the church is a movement of people, not a static institution, nor a building where people meet. When we acknowledge that the real life of the church is expressed 24/7 through the activity of its members, then the limitations of an annual report become clear. Once again, this report can only sketch some of the contours of a community of faith who believe "we are the church, we don't go to church."

### Mission

The purpose of the church is to engage in the mission of Jesus, giving hope, resource, support, love wherever there is opportunity and influence, locally and abroad, at work and in the community. This year BCF leadership made a conscious decision to set mission at the heart of all the life and activity of the church. This has meant thinking about church culture, the accessibility of the church and the perception that a secular society has of Christianity. Encouragingly, eight people were baptised during the year and BCF gatherings have had an increasing number of visitors. BCF began 2008 with a week of 24/7 prayer - a foundation to the life of the church.

#### Far and Near

To illustrate overseas involvement: BCF members support the Love India Children's Home in Delhi. This has been long term, reflecting a friendship and partnership over thirty years with Christians in India. This year Lizy Jeyaseelan reported that three girls from the orphanage had gained scholarships at school, and two other girls had now moved on to university. In Zambia, partnership with the church in Chingola is ongoing, 50 children and young people are now housed at Mutende - the children's village for HIV/AIDS orphans - and the project has reached a mature and well managed status. Others from BCF work in different parts of the world inspired by a vision to make a positive difference, launching out to take risks of faith. This year Ruth Houghton moved to work in a project in Cambodia, rescuing girls from the sex industry, Terry and Mary Ball were invited into the leadership of the church they are serving in South Africa, musicians from BCF travelled to Korea to lead worship and run language schools.

### Mission cont .....

#### Far and Near cont

Other teams visited India to teach at the Annual Church Leaders' Conference, BCF raised enough support to cover the costs of the conference, enabling church pastors to travel long distances in order to attend. In addition, teams visited Sachibondu in Zambia and we have a continuing mission work in various part of the Indian Ocean. Leadership training was delivered in France and Madison, USA.

In Bristol there are diverse and imaginative initiatives:

**Social Justice:** BCF members remain committed to issues of justice and responsible living, both at home and throughout the world. Along with general support for national non-political campaigns aimed at government and international policy-makers, members of the church are actively involved in local projects in the poorest and most disadvantaged sectors of society, covering prison work, inner city drug rehabilitation, soup runs, housing projects and re-employment schemes. BCF members organised and funded the creation of a sensory garden for children with disabilities. Several members of the church work for international development and relief organisations - Christian Aid and The Red Cross.

**Grange meetings** continued on Sunday mornings, following a cycle of Celebrations (worship and teaching for the adult church); Creative worship; Seminars; Family meetings. As well as teaching from local leadership, we enjoyed a wide range of national and international ministry. (David Lawrence, Rob Scott-Cook, Ken McGreavy, Stuart Murray Williams, Noel Richards, Wayne Drain, Leontina Mulenga, Margaret Ellis.

**Seminars and Courses:** a home based alpha course specifically included the gay community. Other alpha variant courses have been run for friends and neighbours, and for international students at BISC (Bristol International Student Centre) Parenting courses have been run both in the church and in partnership with local children's play centres.

**Financial Support** Over the course of the year, gifts totalling £8,047 were given to individuals and families facing a wide range of difficulties: unemployment, sickness, bereavement etc.

Generous practical and financial support came from special offerings and private donations throughout the year.

*Harvest for the Hungry (Eurovangelism) £,1665*

*India flood appeal: £3,278*

*Bangladesh Crisis: £2,904*

*Kenya offering: £3,785*

*Mutende, Zambia: £29,456*

We are extremely grateful to a large number of very generous people in the church. Open hearted, joyful giving (whatever the literal amount) is a great grace

## International Work

BCF aspires to be an “Antioch” church: A strong local base reaching out to the different nations of the world. The church has been immeasurably enriched by the friendships and partnerships of Christians and churches overseas. During this year, members from BCF have worked in a number of different contexts and countries: education, health, relief and development, church planting and leadership development in *Zambia, South Africa, India, the USA, New Zealand, Korea, France,*

## Youth

Young people are integral to the whole church community so in one sense do not represent a different category. However, while all ages are important and the church values the expression of intergenerational community, BCF recognises that young people (at all stages) are a priority.

There are roughly 40 young people aged between 11-18 and 40 children under eleven in BCF who are involved in tribes/cells engaged at various levels of church life – Hullabaloo, Energise, Junction.

- 5 youth cells operating – with consistent impact.
- A Children’s Alpha course has been run during the year on Sunday mornings.
- Another “sell out” BCF youth weekend. Living Deeply, focussed on discipleship issues.
- Music and creative contribution has remained a core element, Youth represent a vibrant source of musicianship which has fed into the worship teams of the church over several years, helping us bridge between different generations and model in a visible way our commitment and desire for intergenerational church.
- 25 Young people attended Soul Survivor.
- BCF youth workers have coordinated CU’s in Castle School and run regular School assemblies at St Mary’s C-of-E School, Thornbury.
- Young people wrote and performed a unique musical - Dr Loo and the Saving of Santa Claus - to a packed audience at the Thornbury Baptist Church.

## Administration & Resources

BCF has a committed team of support staff and trustees who provide the logistical and practical help that the church requires. They cover the whole range of church administration, financial oversight and stewardship, the management of buildings, P.A. etc.

BCF Buildings are seen as resource centres for the vision and purpose of the church. The future plan will be to develop the Blackhorse site to accommodate gatherings of up to 300 people. An upgrade to the Ark building in partnership with St Matthew’s Parish Church is also being explored. Proceeds from the sale of the Soundwell building will go toward these developments. Currently;

- **The Ark:** houses a recording studio and is also used for regular young adult meetings (Aardv:ark) on Sunday evenings, Chinese student church mid-week, and other community usage.
- **Severn Ridge** houses the BCF offices, acts at a training/seminar base.
- **Café Oasis** has continued to serve the local population on the High Street of Staple Hill.
- **Blackhorse Centre** is used extensively by Crossways Pre-school

## National Network & City Church

- Pioneer - BCF is a part of the Pioneer Network of churches.
- The Fellowship also continues to participate in other church forums and teams. These include the Evangelical Alliance and the Bristol Celebration Churches network.

These relationships help ensure that we don’t become too marginalised in our thinking, and also provide a benchmark of good practice.