

Dukinfield Baptist Church, Tameside



Dukinfield Baptist Church is located in Tameside, East Manchester, and Jonny Hirst, the minister there, shares something of the church's outreach over the summer months, that sees the church actively engage with its local community. He explains, "Each July for the last three years, the church has hosted a day to celebrate being a part of its community and given an opportunity to share a message of hope with friends, families and neighbours. July is a great time for this as, so far, the sun has always shone and the church also get the opportunity to meet the families of their resident pre-school before they leave for the summer. It's basically a big summer bash!

Traditionally, the church, as many of our churches have, has held Christmas and summer fairs, but our experience has been that we end up bringing the same old things to sell to the same few people until the whole thing has become introverted, aimless and tiresome. So when we initially suggested holding a summer party for the community a few years ago, some people immediately thought this was going to be a lot more hard work for very little return. Thankfully, it didn't turn out that way.

Through these events, the church has managed to connect with people we've never met before, some of whom we've seen again frequently, and others who have just attended these events. But either way it has helped us to turn our focus outwards again into our community.

We've involved the resident pre-school staff in running activities and face painting, we've asked our resident choir (not a church choir) to perform for us, persuaded someone to run a BBQ, and we've called on friends with puppets to entertain the families and help us share the gospel. Yes, it has involved some preparation, a bit of advertising, cake baking, clearing up, and calling on a few favours from friends, but when the church decides to pull together and not just rely on a few to do everything, We've found that this is a manageable and worthwhile project. The key has been to encourage different people to bring different gifts and ideas to the table. As a result we've seen more people involved and even more people attend.



We've actively made these times fundraising events too. Although the event is free, and the church don't seek to make any money out what we do, we've intentionally sought to support local charities throughout the year. These are not necessarily Christian charities, but ones that we know are close to the heart of our community and which we believe are doing good (perhaps even gospel-centred) work. By doing so we've wanted to show our community that we aren't just interested in what's happening in the Christian world, but that what matters to our community, matters to us too.

So we have been supporting a local charity who work in Greater Manchester called Threshold, who support vulnerable people to achieve greater independence and wellbeing, through rehousing, providing refuge in safe

houses, and rehabilitation programmes. We think this is good news for our local area, and believe the work that they do correlates with Biblical principles and values of caring for the last, the lost and the least. So as well as helping to raise funds for and awareness of for their work, we've also been able to show people how God cares for people in much the same way, and therefore so do we. Previously we've also supported The Christie hospital. Some people have come to our summer party simply because they have seen the charities we are supporting.

When we were supporting The Christie, I remember chatting to a man I didn't recognise about how he was enjoying his day. He was full of joy even though as it turned out he was very ill. He said that he'd only come in because he saw 'The Christie' sign at the front of the building. His health wasn't good, but The Christie had been a lifeline for him. He'd never been in the church before, but he was so pleased to see our support for something so close to his heart that came in, stayed and heard a message of hope. We've seen a few hundred come through our small church during these events, but it is worth running them just for stories and encounters like this one.

For your thoughts and prayers:

- Are there things going on in your community outside of 'the church' that are 'gospel-centred' that you could support / encourage? How might your church engage with the community 'outside the building'?