

Hattersley Baptist Church, Manchester



Michael Foreman is the new minister at Hattersley Baptist Church, a smaller church community in an overspill estate on the on the Eastern edge of Greater Manchester, part of Tameside. The estate was built in the 1960s and was in the news recently with the distressing story of two police officers murdered on a routine investigation. Michael's ministry is supported through a Home Mission grant, as he and the church seek to share God's comfort hope and presence to the community here in practical ways, as he explains...

"One of the significant things we have developed recently here in Hattersley is the food bank, which is located in the church building. The purpose of the food bank is to relieve and support members of the local community, who are living in conditions of poverty, need or distress.



Distribution has grown significantly in the last few months, with distribution levels going up five times over. Between 3 and 7 households are coming to us every day we are open, and we estimate that at our current rate of distribution we will help over 150 households in the area."

The food bank has proved to make a real difference in the community, helping families who have experienced benefit cuts or delays in payments, debt problems, low income or lack of income through sickness, following the heart of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 25: ***"I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.... Truly I tell you whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."***

Michael continues, "Hattersley is an area of poverty and people might be in need while waiting for a social security crisis loan, they may have been made redundant and it takes a few weeks for their benefits to start up. They may be women suffering domestic violence whose partner has drunk away the money that was meant for food. They might have been in hospital and come home to a bare cupboard, or someone whose fridge has broken down, with a whole load of food that has gone off and without the finances to fix the fridge or replace the food." These are the stories and context that Hattersley Baptist Church is ministering in, and it's a real joy to see that it's the church here that is responding to the needs of its local community, amidst the turmoil and sadness that has surrounded the estate in recent months.

The local Anglican minister James comments on this Gospel call to Hattersley, reflecting on recent events, "I first spotted the police cordon as I was trying to deliver donations to the food bank, an initiative set up by the community for the community. That's the right image for this neighbourhood, not a wanted man murdering two young women going about their daily work.

On the day of the shootings themselves, there were many interviews in TV studios, opinions et al, but the only organisation I could spot being pictured on the scene was the church... In these times of grief, fear and uncertainty, it is appropriate to defend the community against shaming accusations, provide comfort and hope to those affected, and to speak of the gracious work of God in the Lord Jesus Christ to redeem a broken and sin-infected world. Let's be the church, show we care, defend our neighbours and hold out the hope that can only be found in Jesus." Through supporting Home Mission, you are enabling Gospel presence and practical demonstrations of the good news of Jesus, in estates such as the one here in Hattersley.

John 6: 35 "Jesus declared, 'I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.'"

- What practical demonstrations of the good news of Jesus could you share with your local community?

- As communities begin to feel the weight of cutbacks and service Reductions, could your church step up to make a difference to the lives of those affected, at this time?

