

2006

SUMMER OUTREACH

It was a busy few weeks for several members of our congregation as they participated in various summer outreach activities. Here are their reports.

➤ **Helena Simmonds - NE1**

NE1 was a week of mission held across the North East of England in the last week of July 2006. Hosted by 'Youth for Christ', NE1 aimed to involve young people in practical community projects as a way of demonstrating God's love through service, pointing to Jesus as the ultimate servant and saviour. 3,000 young people (aged 11-18 years) camped in Sunderland and served in projects run by local churches. Local evening events across the region shared the gospel with communities using creative media - art, dance, music and sport. At DRBC, we hosted a team of nine young people who completed a range of outdoor environmental activities including litter-picking, graffiti cleaning, environmental conservation work, and gardening on a local estate.

*'Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;
his greatness no-one can fathom.
One generation will commend your works to
another; they will tell of your mighty acts.'*

Psalm 145:3-4

A week of sunshine and service-reflections about NE1.

We spent a week at the end of July sweeping, talking, litter-picking, listening, mowing, smiling, sweating, singing, eating, praying, laughing and loving...each other, the people we met and our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. As a group of people of different ages, different experiences, different skills and different weaknesses, we reflected the community with whom we shared Jesus. Throughout the week and sometimes at unexpected moments, as a team we made choices, asked questions, completed tasks and had conversations that pointed to Jesus and the difference he has made in our lives.

Leading the team, I was challenged by the practical impact that being outside the church building had upon our 'accessibility' to people. It really seems quite obvious, but spending time litter-picking in parks and along pavements creates many opportunities to chat and simply be with people. When we step outside our physical church building, we remove something that can be a barrier preventing people from feeling able to enquire. The next stage is being ready to

respond, as Jesus did, to people we meet who do not yet know and love him.

During our week of sunshine, we met people who were interested in what we were doing, people who asked about our motivation and our faith, people who told us of their own faith or beliefs, and people who mistrusted us or voiced anger towards God. As a team, with the help of the Holy Spirit we shared with and served each of these people. At times, we questioned ourselves and God about how we could best respond. For example, what were we ready to offer the person we met who was agoraphobic, grieving and using alcohol to enable her to leave her home? What did we say to the young man who was convinced that scientific fact and a belief in God were incompatible? How did our team of young people cope with a week without showers and a reliable water supply? Answer: very graciously!

I wonder if we are as ready as Jesus was to meet the needs of people who are seeking God in their lives. Do we recognise the many situations (some of them mysteries) through which God works? Do we use the wide range of gifts and skills God has given each one of us, or are we fearful of failure or inadequacy? As the week progressed, during the afternoon projects, I saw our team of young people become more confident and comfortable talking with people they met, speaking with gentleness and respect but also being bold, led by the Spirit.

During NE1, there was great success in breaking down some of the barriers that can deter people from investigating Jesus. However, to me there is still a big gap culturally in Gateshead between how we communicate the gospel and the diverse community with whom we share. We do not need to feel scared, or daunted by this, just ready to talk about the 'mighty acts' God has done in our lives - real life stories of the transforming and saving power of Jesus, which brings us back to God.....and all of us have these stories to tell.

➤ **Andrew Hunt – Iwerne camp**

During the summer, I was one of the leaders at a Christian camp for boys and girls who go to schools similar to the one at which I am now working. Camp life was busy and many fun activities were crammed into a short space of time. It was greatly encouraging to hear the Gospel presented so clearly to the children. Some became Christians and many were encouraged to serve Jesus in their school environment.

➤ **Richard Hunt – Cornhill Trust Summer School, Christians in Sport camp, IFES Belarus short-term mission team**

The *Cornhill Summer School* was a very helpful time for me to meet other Christians and receive teaching on how to tackle different genres of biblical writing. Having been on this short week I have picked up a few tips that will help me as I work for my church in Cambridge this year.

The *Christians in Sport Camp* was AMAZING! I spent my time filming the young people (13-17 year olds) for the nightly sports highlight videos that were shown each evening, as well as running the technical side of the meetings. The camp as a whole went really well. I've never seen young people having so much fun in a well-behaved maner, whilst also learning plenty from the Bible. We looked together at the book of Colossians, learning how Jesus was the greatest news in the world!

My trip to **Belarus** was split into two main parts. The first week was a cultural exchange with non-believing linguistics students from all over Belarus who were studying in the capital Minsk. The second half of my time there involved participation in a conference with members of the Belarusian Christian Unions.

Part of the cultural exchange work involved our team of nine teaching the 17 Belarusian students (18 girls, 1 boy!) about different aspects of British culture, such as 'Life as a British student' and 'Ten Things to See in the UK'. We were also able to run the simple English version of the *Christianity Explored* course with them, to which they responded very favourably. Many good conversations about the Gospel were had and the participants seemed to gain an understanding of true, biblical Christianity. The general level of English was very high, which enabled us to go into deep issues rather than just superficially scrape the surface. The Orthodox Church in Belarus seems to have a negative effect, with many put off by the traditions and regulations it imposes. Two of the girls, Ira and Lyda, came onto the conference with us the following week, though they hadn't made a decision for Christ by the time we left.

The conference was a hard week, not helped by one of our team breaking an arm - and food that one Belarusian guy said he 'wouldn't feed to my cat!' We ended up having to send someone back to Minsk to buy some fruit for fear of serious malnourishment! The English level of these students was much lower than the linguistics students, and so conversations were much shallower and through an interpreter. David, our team leader, gave four expositions from Romans, and the rest of us were able to contribute

with mimes and information on how we evangelise freshers (first year students) in the UK.

Please pray:

- for continued witness amongst the linguistics students; that they would keep in touch with the long-term missionaries through the 'Happy Mondays' English course, which runs during term times.
- for God to raise up Christian men in the country. There were only 3 men on the conference compared to around 30 women. This reflects the national situation.

➤ **Christopher Hunt, Philip Pearson, Thomas Johnson – Transmission SU Camp**

The Scripture Union camp this summer was very enjoyable for all of us who went on it from DRBC. Thomas and Philip both really enjoyed themselves, as did I, which was good. We were all in the same tent, which was good, so we could get to know each other better. Thomas, especially, found the camp very motivational and was keen to start coming to Church. We had many great highlights and so I thought I would mention a couple. Firstly, a fun activity: one hot afternoon we decided to get out a skid mat. This involves running very fast and jumping on your belly.☺ Coincidentally the official SU photographer visited on that day, so watch out for her pictures! On a spiritual note, we all went out to a bonfire and read our Bibles in a group. This was great. All in all, it was a great holiday and I would recommend it to anyone!

Dates for your diary

- **3rd-10th Sept:** *Annual Week of Prayer* – see programme sheet for details.
- **Sat 9th Sept:** *Heritage Open Day Coffee Morning and Lunchtime Drop-in, 10.30am – 2.00pm*
- **Tues 12th Sept:** *Fun and Food for all the Family – Games Night, 7.00-8.30pm*
- **Sun 24th Sept:** *Harvest All-age Service, 11.00am.*
- **Mon 25th Sept:** *Harvest Supper and Annual Thank Offering, 7.00pm.*
- **Fri 13th Oct:** *Geordie Evening Outreach event, with Jane Kitson and Derek Minto, 7.00-9.15pm*
- **Sat 25th Nov:** *Prom Praise at the Sage, 3.00pm and 7.30pm* – tickets available from David Hunt.
- **Sun 26th Nov:** *Guest Service with members of the Prom Praise orchestra, 11.00am*

David Hunt