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ANNUAL REPORT

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The Black Country Urban Industrial Mission is a partnership between:

The Anglican Dioceses of Lichfield and Worcester

The Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury Methodist District

The Birmingham Methodist District

The United Reformed Church West Midlands Synod

The Heart of England Baptist Association

Supported by:

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham

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**A TEAM OF
WORKPLACE CHAPLAINS IN THE BLACK COUNTRY**

Mr Ivor Anderson
Revd Steve Bentham
Revd Christine Browne (until March 14)
Mr Peter Carmody-Heaton
Revd John Cotterill (until July 13)
Ms Karen Duncan (from September 2013)
Mr Chris Green
Mrs Sandra Joynes (Administrator)
Revd Andrew Mann-Ray (until April 14)
Revd Bill Mash (Team Leader)
Revd Roberta Maxfield
Revd Sue Oliver
Revd Jeremy Parkes
Revd Ruth Reynolds-Tyson
Revd Dr Tony Stone

Ms Joy Wells

Mrs Sandra Woodall

Optimism and Prosperity – for some

A drive from Brierley Hill to Aldridge by way of Amblecote, Penn, Wolverhampton and Walsall passes through some of the different communities which make up the Black Country. There may not be the extremes of inequality present in other parts of the country, but the differences are clear. The Express and Star newspaper reported that life expectancy for a man in Bilston was around seven years less than in Tettenhall. Low life expectancy is one of the social consequences of income inequality identified by Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett in their ground breaking book, "The Spirit Level." Figures for other indicators such as infant death, diabetes and childhood obesity are significantly worse in the Black Country than for the UK as a whole.



The country is showing a welcome return to sustained economic growth. In the course of the year there was a 3,000 rise in the workforce across Wolverhampton, Walsall, Dudley and Sandwell. Indeed, some 9,000 new jobs were created in the private sector but 6,000 public sector jobs were lost as Government spending cuts constrained local authorities and other state-funded organisations. All too many of those in employment are on zero hours contracts or other casual bases which do not guarantee a regular income.

The Black Country shares in the economic optimism of the country. Developments such as those on the i54 site will stimulate supply chains and require services from local businesses. We look forward to further expansion in employment, based on the region's reputation for high value manufacturing industry, but it is important that the benefits should be shared widely, especially with the less well off. The area's schools and colleges must play a major part in encouraging aspiration and upward social mobility and providing the skills that businesses need.

The Christian faith has at its centre a message of reconciliation with God, bringing reconciliation between people. Founded on God's grace, and welcoming anyone who would respond in faith, the early church quickly came to include men and women, slaves and free people, Jews and Greeks.

These people would inevitably have had differing economic circumstances, but they found a place in the first truly inclusive group the world had ever seen. It was a fellowship where the needs of the poor were cared for, where richer churches sent money to poorer ones and where the wealthy were not given the most important places in their gatherings.

The Old Testament revealed a God whose laws required people to care for the poor. The Year of Jubilee provisions in Leviticus would have ensured that inequality of wealth did not increase beyond a couple of generations. The early church saw something of that as people sold and shared land and possessions.

Chaplains visit workplaces and engage with the people without exception or distinction. We are there for people of all faiths and none. A chaplain may well speak to both the cleaners and the managing director during the course of a single visit. Chaplains represent the God before whom we are all equal, for we all stand on level ground before the cross.

Jesus recognised that poor people would always be present in a community, but this is not an encouragement to complacency. Wilkinson and Pickett show how more equal societies are better for everyone in them, both rich and poor.

Chaplains of all disciplines are at the cutting edge of the church's mission, and bring to the church an informed understanding of what is happening in society and the economy. Churches involved in running local food banks see many people coming to them as a result of benefit changes and sanctions. Church members will be aware of the real struggle which they or their neighbours may be facing to afford basic necessities, or of young people who face unemployment with all the consequences that has for their long term well-being.

Churches, as inclusive groups present in every community, are well placed to both alleviate need, to set an example and to urge policies which make for a more equal distribution of wealth, opportunity, education and resources. Next year we will each have the opportunity to vote.

In "The Price of Inequality", the economist Joseph Stiglitz offered as a conclusion, "Paying attention to everyone else's self-interest – in other words the common welfare – is in fact a precondition for one's own ultimate well-being." The Apostle Paul was there first: "In humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests, but each of you to the interests of others." (Philippians 2: 3,4)

We should have confidence in our Christian principles, praying and working together for a world and for a Black Country where the fruits of prosperity are more equally shared.

Be alongside people at work and those without

Aldridge Industrial Areas – Ivor Anderson

A ministry to the extensive industrial estates in the Aldridge area is being developed, building on contacts made through the local church.

The Metal Centre and Wednesbury Automotive Park – Steve Bentham

Another year has passed by and many exciting opportunities have been presented across the work that I cover.

It has been a challenge over the past year to keep up with developing contacts in just a day and half a week; this is great to be able to say because it shows that the work that is being undertaken is developing.

As in previous years much of my time is taken on the Wednesbury Automotive Park with, The Metal Centre and other small businesses on the estate. Work with Ring and Ride is still ongoing and has been very much in the news recently with reduced grants and increased costs to the end user.

The Metal Centre has continued to develop and has seen a number of changes within the business leading to greater efficiency; investment continues which gives confidence to the staff for the future of the business.



During the early part of the year one of the Security Staff who had just moved on to pastures new, died and I was able to be alongside some of the staff, many of whom had been close to him and found this time difficult. I was able to attend the funeral and this has itself built relationships with employees that previously had not engaged. Also I have found it very rewarding to see that new staff are being introduced to me by colleagues. A recent starter had been in the Army and so was very open to the work of Chaplains having felt benefit whilst serving in some of our current war zones.

As in previous years it has been my privilege to lead a Carol Service in the Canteen taking with me a number of my local congregation to support the singing. This is great for them as it gives an opportunity to see something of this part of my work. Also over the past year I have been able to come alongside others to offer pray and support.

In concluding, with the changes that are evident all around us I believe that people are seeking and exploring faith and religion as part of a need for peace and hope and security in a world which seems to offer none.

Some words from Tim Chester's book, "A Meal with Jesus":

Can you reach your neighbourhood with the gospel? Can you pluck up the courage to tell your friends about Jesus?.... Can you feed 5,000 with 5 loaves?

"We could never do that; we don't have the money, or the people."

Jesus says, "What do you have? Offer that to me, and let me use it for my glory."

I pray that God will continue to use the little that I have to offer and through it bring blessing and glory to His name.

Merry Hill Shopping Centre –Christine Browne

When I first came to Dudley a little over nine years ago to take up the Chaplaincy at the Merry Hill Centre, it was owned by Chelsfield who had just sold the Centre to Westfield.



Much of the time for the next six months was spent with those who were facing redundancy and uncertainty about their jobs as many roles were redefined. Since then, Westfield has changed the basis on which the chaplaincy had previously functioned and it is ironic that, as I leave, the next changeover has been announced. The new owners are Intu, the company owning various complexes, amongst them the Trafford Centre in Manchester. So, there are hopes that new life will be breathed into Merry Hill, parts of which are now showing their age and the good news is that there are chaplains at Intu's Metro and Watford centres. Once more, there is the challenge of supporting staff in management, cleaning and security whose jobs may be affected by the proposals.

Westfield is currently too busy with the changeover to comment officially, although many kind comments have been paid to the support given individually by the Chaplain, and the way ahead will have to wait until Intu is ready to discuss it. Bill Mash, as team leader, will keep the chaplaincy profile visible until the new arrangements are agreed with Intu and the Diocese of Worcester.

This is because this Diocese has had to reduce posts and the Dudley Group of Anglican Churches is being reorganised. Locals have always had reservations about Merry Hill as it is widely perceived to have had negative consequences for shops in Dudley, although it is clear that the town centre was in economic difficulties before this due to the closure of Round Oak Steelworks and Marsh and Baxter's. All this means that the basis for chaplaincy is being reconsidered: amongst the various possibilities is a voluntary or house for duty chaplain.

I hope that this could be extended to a wider role. Now that the Crossways Project in Brierley Hill will not proceed, it seems to me that there is scope for a Chaplaincy for Merry Hill, Brierley Hill, Dudley MBC and the Black Country Consortium, where BCUIM already has links.

The area is being redeveloped and there are many possible links for someone who is local or experienced in the issues to build upon. The Dudley Town Centre Chaplaincy is doing excellent work in the local shops and, as links have been established in the training I have done with them, I hope that this could also be a fruitful source of ministry particularly as many of the Chaplains have come from Churches Together in Dudley. There has been support for links with the Merry Hill Chaplaincy in Brierley Hill, but this nosedived as the Dudley Proposals and the Crossways project began to be a greater focus. Now that the outcomes of both initiatives have been decided, a good opportunity exists to develop a strategy uniting all those who have some input into the area and to make links with the Waterfront and the economic redevelopment officers and planners of Dudley MBC, who have been open to this. As there are four Industrial Chaplains in the South of the Diocese, I trust that the needs and opportunities of the redevelopment of its urban North will still be considered.

As I reflect on my time as Chaplain, it has been a real privilege to be able to function in this way and I have been very impressed with the dedication and care that goes into managing outlets such as Merry Hill. These centres receive much criticism in the changing times in which we live and it is true that sometimes local businesses can be adversely affected. However, shoppers also have a choice and the internet is affecting the big outlets as well as the smaller. A battle is being waged in retail and, given that the word means a tally or account, in these changing times all of us are accountable to the God we serve and in whose grace, freely won at such cost by his Son, we trust.

Brockhouse Forge, The Public, West Bromwich YMCA and Learn Play Foundation – Peter Carmody Heaton

I took on the Chaplaincy at the forge in February 2013. I have felt very welcomed by all that I have met. Although it took a while to get used to having conversations in such a noisy and busy environment I now feel very much at home. As Chaplain I visit every other week and have tried to adapt my pattern of visits to the changing needs of the business.



Due to the nature of its business relying on the mining industry Brockhouse took longer to be affected by the economic crisis. However they also saw the benefits of economic growth at a later stage than the rest of the economy. The impact on the morale of staff and the work at the forge was

noticeable, with many staff working reduced hours, often being in two or three days a week rather than their normal patterns. This provided more opportunity for conversations as people had time to chat and often sought me out to talk about their concerns. On at least two occasions I saw people outside of the forge who stopped to chat about their work.

Fortunately things have picked up considerably and the change is once again very noticeable, the company is investing heavily in improving efficiency and in installing new equipment and have taken on some younger staff. Morale has improved and the number of times staff are laid off has reduced significantly.

The relationships built during the times of difficulty are still there and a lot of staff will chat if they are able to. I'm glad that such a traditional business is not only surviving but is growing.

As part of my work at the Public I began working as a Chaplain in May 2013 and continued until its closure in November 2013. Although the closure of the Public was a disappointment, once again adversity provided some opportunities. As Chaplain I met a variety of people from staff and tenants to members of the general public. Before the official announcement of the closure there was a lot of uncertainty about what was happening. Understandably many people were worried and concerned about what might happen. In my role as Chaplain a lot of people sought me out to talk about their concerns and worries. On a number of occasions I helped people to think through their options.

After the Public closed I approached Learn Play Foundation- which was established in 2007-*'to engage the hard to reach into education, communality and personal development'*. LPF offers over 200 apprenticeships in film production, editing, computer game programming, design, distribution, direct marketing, promotional activities and implementation. As a result I continue to offer Chaplaincy support to their apprentices.

Work with the YMCA is constantly evolving and changing. As Chaplain I have provided support to a number of people staff, residents and members of the general public alike. Activities have included:

- Supporting the running of resident breakfast clubs.
- A fortnightly film club,
- Easter display -a series of interactive prayer/ thought stations to encourage people to engage with the Easter story.
- Participating in promotional events such as launch of Health 4 life and 125 year celebration day.
- Christian mediation sessions - based around the Lectio Divina and the work of John Main.
- Values in Action project- building the confidence of workers and young people to explore values and faith in a global social justice context.

The YMCA has undergone changes with residents and staff being moved in preparation for some building work. Prior to the move some time was spent providing pastoral support to residents and staff who were feeling unsettled by the uncertainty around the planned refurbishment. After the moves I was asked to lead short prayer sessions and blessings of rooms and the projects in general. Some residents engaged with this, leading to discussions and further requests for prayer.

Victoria Halls – Karen Duncan

Victoria Halls is a residence mainly for students from Wolverhampton University. The manager was concerned about young people away from home for the first time and contacted us through a Chamber of Commerce. We are in partnership with the University Chaplaincy. Initial progress has been slow, but Karen's presence has been helpful to at least one student.

Wolverhampton Science Park - Chris Green

There is growing a rapport with a number of businesspeople in the Creative Industries Centre. Chris also explores opportunities for Christians in business to glorify God in their work.

National Express Buses and Brierley Hill – Andrew Mann-Ray

The chaplaincy with National Express has continued to grow and develop and in the summer of 2013 the service expanded to include Birmingham as well as the Black Country. Three volunteer chaplains were appointed by CIGB to cover the main Birmingham garages and together we have supported drivers, managers and other employees of National Express. National Express has continued to be open to what we have been offering and at a recent meeting with the regional finance director who helped us set up the chaplaincy, he told me that the "chaplaincy was his proudest achievement in his 34 years with the company". He even mentioned this in his retirement speech on Wednesday 30th April 2014.



I have continued my involvement with the Brierley Hill Project and have been privileged to support many of its clients with a whole variety of different issues including helping to overturn several benefit sanctions metered out by the Job Centre Plus to individuals, helping people to conduct their job search and CV writing, contacting the housing department of Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council to sort out housing benefits and many other personal issues. One encounter stands out for me and that is of working with a man who had been out of work for 30 years. When he came to the project he was socially awkward and would talk to few people. Through his contact with the project and in particular his one to one support from me, he has been transformed as an individual and has been able to deal with many of the personal issues he has been facing.

I have continued to support churches around fund raising and have extended that support beyond the Black Country into the wider United Reformed Church Synod. This has involved conducting mission and community audits, consulting on business plans and helping with fund raising. To date I have raised in excess of £40K for various projects and supported 9 churches. I have also been doing fund raising for the Brierley Hill Project.

In the summer of 2013 Dudley Council invited me to consider leading another community service for the life of Round Oak Steelworks. I wasn't sure that such an event was needed as no significant anniversary for that industry would be taking place in the coming year so instead I decided I would lead a celebration event for the life of Brierley Hill as a whole. In March 2014 this service took place and around 35 members of the community gathered together to celebrate the past and present and to look forward to the future. The council had wanted to take part in the service but unfortunately dates clashed with one of their area committees. Nevertheless, the lead councillor for regeneration

wrote a prayer for Brierley Hill that was used in the service and will be used by churches in future events.

This year has been a rollercoaster of emotion for me. In October 2013 Churches Together in Brierley Hill decided to end their involvement in the “Crossways Project” – the sacred space project. And although a group of leaders and myself who wished to continue exploration of the project continued to meet even this came to an end in February 2014. I move to Kidderminster URC in May 2014. May God bless the work of BCUIM in the future.

Marston’s Brewery – Bill Mash

Is anyone else paid by the church to walk round a brewery? My role at Marston’s, regularly at Wolverhampton and with occasional visits to Burton-on-Trent, is probably unique.



Through its network of pubs around the country, the company plays an important part in many communities, and makes a real contribution to the economy, not least through various taxes. The scrapping of the alcohol duty escalator and the 1p a pint cut in beer duty in the March budget were welcome measures.

Some church groups were vociferous in opposing these, but they are most unlikely to result in increased alcohol consumption because of reduced prices. They simply reduce the heavy tax burden which is born by this sector.

Company results are generally positive, despite a poor summer in 2013. Whilst there are occasional redundancies as the company restructures, employment prospects remain good, and people on the sites are generally positive. Pastoral opportunities arise, as no one is immune from health and family concerns, either their own or people they care about.

Grand Theatre Wolverhampton – Roberta Maxfield

There have been a lot of changes with quite a few redundancies this last year, which has obviously put more work onto those left. However, they seem to be coping overall. I am officiating at the marriage of one of the managers there later this year, which I feel very privileged to be doing.



Dudley Town Centre – Jeremy Parkes (Team Leader)

This team was trained by Christine Browne. Four people continue to visit businesses in the town centre.

Pensnett Industrial Estate – Sue Oliver

This is the largest enclosed estate in Europe, with a wide range of industrial units. Contacts there are developing. It was included in our 2013 Induction Course Coach tour, with a commentary by one of the directors of the management company.

West Midlands Ambulance and Asda, Brierley Hill – Tony Stone

The Chaplaincy work with the West Midlands Ambulance Service continues on a regular basis. The larger part is visiting the Office staff in the three main central offices in Brierley Hill. It is a blessing that the Chairman of WMAS shows much support to the Chaplaincy role and a personal interest in all that is happening. Further time is spent at the Hub in Dudley where the Ambulance crews make their base and from where they go out to calls all over the West Midlands.

There are always opportunities to meet with the crews in between calls and an opportunity to build friendship and contact with them. Occasional visits are made to the main training Centre at Himley as well.

The Chaplaincy at Asda, Brierley Hill involves regular visits to both the offices and the shop floor. There are numerous opportunities to engage in conversation with the many shop workers who are constantly re-stocking the shelves or serving in various sections of the store.

Friendships are built up over the year and although the multitude of different shift times is quite a challenge it is pleasing to discover how constant the contacts are.

Beatties and Asda, Wolverhampton – Ruth Reynolds-Tyson

I cannot believe that another year has gone by, time goes so quickly when enjoying oneself, and yes, even after six years, I am still enjoying the privileged work God has called me to.

My regular chaplaincies continue, with subtle changes: House of Frazer has gone under huge changes to my astonishment, and especially to the staff that have remained loyal to the company for many years. Morale is at an all-time low, and of course there is the possibility of new owners, with a bid from the Chinese to take over HOF.



There have been several redundancies this year with more to come in June. Wolverhampton City Centre is becoming increasingly depressed with shops closing, and without investment by the City Council, the footfall is decreasing at an alarming rate. This of course has a huge effect on HOF.

Asda continues as ever. I can never keep up with the managers, so I just keep going every Tuesday, and pray that God enables some form of conversation with the staff. God is faithful, and each week is a blessing.

The Methodist District Chaplaincy work continues to grow, with the supervision of the District Lay Workers Chaplains Co-ordinator. We have been setting up and running Chaplaincy Everywhere course, and Chaplaincy Roadshows, to any Church that will have us. We also facilitated a day conference called 'Facing the Storm', a bereavement counselling course.

I am continuing to work with Pioneer Ministries in Wolverhampton, working closely with Deborah Walton and the trainee chaplains, offering support and supervision for when they are fully trained.

Marks and Spencer, Wolverhampton – Joy Wells

Staff are generally under considerable pressure in this busy city centre store, but they appreciate the time which the chaplain is able to give them.

Sandwell Council – Sandra Woodall

After a chaplaincy training course in summer 2013, the Team Leader and I met the HR Director at Sandwell Council. He was so helpful. We set up a plan for an introduction to the Council and agreed some things together. I was able to meet with the Chief Executive and talked about the wellbeing and support to all Staff. He kindly blogs about the Chaplain to remind people that I am around.



Over the next few weeks I was set up with an Intranet/Photo blog. Here I have been able to send an introduction about myself and, "Why have a Chaplain in the Workplace?" I send a Christian message out every few weeks. I obtained a mobile phone and Gmail address so that staff can contact me. There is also a link via the intranet to book an appointment with me, a room has been allocated for me to use for appointments. I have had a few appointments with staff members.

Posters have been placed around the building and cards for me to give out have been produced.

I am really thankful to have had people to help me get started. I go into the offices on Monday afternoons. The Council have around 8000 staff. I walk around the different areas and must admit I have different feelings about doing this. Most people are really friendly. I have only been attending for a few weeks but feel encouraged with the response.

I wouldn't have believed that I would be a Chaplain for Sandwell Council. God is amazing how he places his people where he wants them. I believe God went before me and opened the way for it to happen.

Fire Service Chaplains

The nine chaplains cover ten stations with two more in prospect. They have proved more permanent than most station commanders who are regularly moved to new posts. Station administrators have been moved to central hubs and a few have been made redundant, although some posts are returning on limited hours. Thanks to fire prevention work, the number of fire calls continues to fall, though chaplains were able to be alongside fire crews during their "downtime" at major incidents in the Smethwick area. The industrial dispute over pension provisions and increased retirement age continues with little sign of resolution. Chaplains help the Service maintain community links, and crews are involved with local church events.

Vitalise, the Wolverhampton Pioneer Ministry sponsored by the Methodist and Anglican churches, is now led by Deborah Walton. One of her priorities is to help young people face issues of work and worklessness, and a group are being trained to offer a chaplaincy – "Blue Fish Chaplaincy" - role in shops and other places frequented by the young. Ruth has worked with them offering support and supervision, and we have linked them with KicFm, a radio station at Wolverhampton College which trains young people in broadcasting skills.

Two church based Job Clubs continue to function following our initiative, but this is not being continued. It has proved difficult to engage with local churches in the Black Country. Capable church members are already fully occupied in rolls within the church.

Promoting Faith for Work

Our chaplaincy ministry will increasingly rely on volunteers. This offers a number of opportunities. The scope of our work may increase, and local churches whose members volunteer will be able to share in our work, supporting them and gaining a greater appreciation of the place of faith in the working world. We encourage our chaplains and their clergy colleagues to take workplace issues seriously and address them in their preaching.

The Christian life begins with personal commitment to Christ, but it does not end there. All too many Christians have a view which Bishop N T Wright likens to that of the sun going round the earth: Jesus is there for their salvation. In fact, a Christian becomes part of God's great plan, accomplished in Christ, for the redemption and transformation of the world – even the cosmos. The earth goes round the sun. Seen in this way, our work, the people we meet or serve and the things we produce, become opportunities to participate in God's ongoing work of creation and recreation.

We look for the active support of church leaders to help effect a change in thinking and emphasis while there are still significant numbers of working age people in our churches.

A number of para-church organisations, such as the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity, (LICC), Transform Work UK (TWUK), HOPE and After Sunday focus on this. We support their work and encourage the use of their resources. A single session "Faith at Work Taster" is available on the BCUIM and Lichfield Diocesan web sites.

Transforming Local Communities

The annual induction course aims to give new clergy an opportunity to appreciate the history, potential and problems of the communities in which they will minister. Of the 12 participants, 6 were Methodists, 2 were from Lichfield Diocese, 3 from Worcester Diocese and 1 from the United Reformed Church. We thank church leaders who encouraged their new ministers to sign up and are especially grateful to the Black Country Living Museum, the Black Country Consortium and to the industries and local authorities who contributed to the programme.

Jeremy Vanes, Director of Wolverhampton CAB, gave a challenging overview of the government's welfare reforms, measures which will affect people in every community in the country. Churches are well placed to respond to local needs, but we must ask questions about our society's priorities. It is good to organise a food bank, but why are they necessary in twenty-first century Britain?

Andrew Mann-Ray's work with the Brierley Hill Project and its initiatives is covered in his report, and Ruth's work as District Economic Mission Enabler includes preaching and furthering the Methodist Chaplaincy Development work. The ongoing commitment of the Methodist Church to chaplaincy, recognised by a recent visit from Ruth Gee, President of Conference, is to be welcomed.

Bill Mash was on the board Trinity Training, a project inspired by a Christian vision to provide vocational training for young people, which closed at Easter. Changes in personnel, two break-ins and an Ofsted inspection at the worst possible time combined to make it impossible to continue. Its caring rather than commercial ethos will be missed.

He also maintains regular contact with local Chambers of Commerce, as an indication that God is interested in our commercial activities and in the people who carry them out. Some pastoral opportunities have arisen through this. He attends meetings of WVOne (formerly Wolverhampton City Centre Company) and a group called Partners in Progress which is committed to raising the profile of Wolverhampton.

Challenging the Church and the World with a prophetic voice

The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, has written, “Christian faith ... [is] not a matter of vague philosophy but of unrelenting challenge to what we think we know about human beings and their destiny. There is no reprieve from the task of working out how doctrine impacts on public life...”

His successor, Justin Welby, has met with “Pay Day Lenders” and has attracted headlines that he wants to “compete them out of business.”

Lending money at interest, especially at their high rates, is an efficient way of transferring money from those who need it to those who already have it, and increases levels of inequality (see the introduction to this report). Credit Unions offer a practical alternative and a local CU director spoke to an open team study meeting during the year. Churches are well placed to encourage their members to join them, to publicise them in the community and to offer their premises and volunteers to help.

TV programmes such as “Benefits Street” have reinforced negative stereotypes of people on benefits. We encourage Christians to be well informed and to speak out about these issues, whilst continuing to give the practical help that churches have always offered to those in need. The Joint Public Issues Team of the Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches published a report “The Lies We Tell Ourselves” which makes some important points about poverty in the UK.

Thanks

BCUIM depends upon the commitment of its chaplains, both lay and ordained, including the growing numbers of volunteers who are coming forward for this ministry. We are also grateful to our board members for their commitment, wisdom and guidance which come from immense experience both in the church and in industry. Our sponsoring churches have provided support throughout this year, and we hope that, even when their own resources are constrained, they will continue to support an outward looking ministry which provides them with points of engagement in the world which God created, loves and is redeeming.

We also thank several speakers who have given their time and shared their specialist experience on our Induction Course and in team study meetings.

Sandra Joynes has continued to serve the team with enthusiasm and good humour. Her experience and efficiency combine with her Christian faith, and mean that she has been an integral member of the team, helping us forward over the year. She is retiring at the beginning of July 2014 and will be a hard act to follow. We wish her and her husband Graham well as they move into a new phase of life.

Future Plans

Our chaplain for the new Jaguar Land Rover plant on the i54 site, Ian Host, has been introduced to management there and will begin visiting in July 2014. We hope to reintroduce a chaplain at Avery Weigh-Tronix and to commence a new chaplaincy at an engineering firm Bilston. Replacement chaplains have been found for three of our bus garages: Andrew will continue to visit Pensnett.

We have valued the support and involvement of Worcester Diocese and the United Reformed Church over many years and are in discussion with them about the future provision of posts in the Dudley area.

Postscript

In the New Statesman in June 2014, the respected economics author and commentator Paul Mason wrote:

In late liberalism, profit has become primarily rent. The art of making money has become the art of cornering the supply of something, repressing its workforce, rigging politics in your favour so that pleas for better regulation are blocked and registering your company in such a way as to avoid paying tax. Anybody who objects can be kicked.

We continue our work because we believe that God's standards are very different and that it is our duty to challenge with a prophetic voice based on his word. Ultimately it is his way which offers hope and opportunity for the communities of the Black Country, the UK and indeed the world.