



Therapist Lynne  
Cairns in the sanctuary

## Feeling Good

Visitors to Mersey Street any Thursday may be somewhat surprised by the smells emanating from the sanctuary. For almost a year, Lynne Cairns has been offering a variety of complimentary therapies to members of our community.

Thanks to our partnership with a local mental health users group, the Feelgood Factor and a generous grant from the Baptist Union Against the Stream fund, we are able to offer massage, aromatherapy, reflexology and counselling.

Facing poverty and the widescale demolition of the area around the church, anxiety and depression are common problems in Openshaw. Through this project, we are

able to demonstrate in a practical sense the love of God for our area and to enable local people to 'feel good' about themselves.

We are also now hosting the Feelgood Factor's Tuesday drop-in and in the New Year will be expanding our work by offering a gentle exercise class for older members of the community.

Integral to this holistic vision, we have ordered partitions to allow us to use half of the sanctuary as a prayerful space. In this Open Space we will invite the use of art, music and words to tell our spiritual stories in worship. Where possible we will publish this material at [www.openshawconnection.org.uk](http://www.openshawconnection.org.uk).

## God in the City?

Many Christians seem to be afraid of the inner city. Places like Openshaw appear in the headlines associated with drugs, violence and poverty.

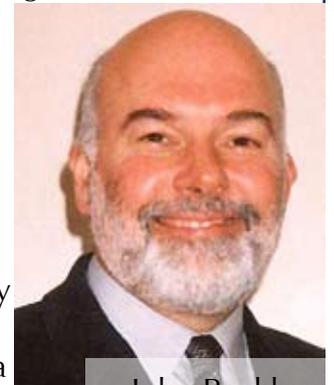
Can God really be present in such places and if so, how can we speak of a good - and active God?

Last year we challenged then-Baptist Union President, John Rackley about his involvement in the retreat movement. "Why is it that retreats are always in beautiful rural settings?"

To his credit, John took our teasing to heart and has now offered to come to Openshaw to lead an urban retreat in May 2005.

We are inviting friends from all over the country to join with us for a day exploring the presence of God in the inner city. What does God look like and what is God doing in a context of deprivation and ugliness?

We will be sending out details in the new year, but sadly we will have to limit numbers due to space restrictions. Why not contact us now to reserve a place?



John Rackley

## May 13-14 2005—God in the City?

# A Rotten Surprise

Anyone who gets above their station at Mersey Street is rapidly cut back down to size. A few years ago, it was Tim who fell through the floor. This time it was our Regional Minister, Andrew Funnell. Fortunately, Andrew was not seriously hurt, but the church building is now seriously affected by planning blight. We still have to use the existing building, but we are unwilling to spend the thousands of pounds it would cost to clear up the dry rot beneath the floor. Unfortunately, the rot is just inside the only ramped entrance to the building. We are, therefore, waiting to see whether the regeneration are able to put a ramp to one of the other doors so we can continue to expand the range of services we offer, particularly to elderly and disabled visitors. Hopefully by the next edition of Openshaw Connection we will have agreed a way forward with the city council.



## Once upon a time...

It is a truism to say that Jesus taught by telling stories, but somehow the church has forgotten the importance of storytelling. Openshaw Connection is one way in which we seek to tell the stories of Mersey Street. We were also given a grant by the Baptist Union Green Shoots fund to buy a camera and projector to complement our existing equipment. Some of the firstfruits of this project can be seen on the website. For example, Rachel and Samantha (both aged 11) have made and edited several videos. Some deal with topical issues such as war and terrorism, while another which can be seen at [www.openshawconnection.org.uk](http://www.openshawconnection.org.uk), gives a glimpse of what worship looks like in our little community.

We are also lending out the equipment to local schools and community groups so that they can tell their stories. The Toxteth Street Steering Group are beginning a local history project to help residents to cope with the stress of seeing the area re-developed.

## New Jobs

Increasingly, the remarkable nature of our ministry in Openshaw is being recognised.

Clare and Tim have been teaching both a first level and a third level/ masters course in Urban Theology with the Partnership for Theological Education. Both courses seek to encourage participants - both ministerial students and church-related community workers - to reflect upon the experience of being Christians in the inner city.

At the same time, both Clare and Tim have added new jobs to their ministry.

Clare has been appointed as chaplain to MANCAT—Manchester College of Arts and Technology. Based in Openshaw, the college has sought over a number of years to engage with the local community so the job is an exciting addition to our ministry.

Meanwhile, Tim, having stood down from the regeneration, has been appointed as chair of North Manchester Primary Care Trust. This role links in well with the health projects on the front page.

## Contact Details

The Openshaw Connection is a two-way process. Please get in touch with us to share your stories and reactions to our stories.

**website:** [www.openshawconnection.org.uk](http://www.openshawconnection.org.uk)

**email:** [info@openshawconnection.org.uk](mailto:info@openshawconnection.org.uk)

**tel:** 0796-641 7502

**mail:** 1421 Ashton Old Road, Openshaw, Manchester, M11 1HJ