

Rosehill Baptist Church, Burnley,

Rosehill Baptist Church is located in the Lancashire mill town of Burnley. Last year we shared their story of a community packed Fun Day put on by the church. Once again this year, the congregation at Rosehill have been using this as a way of connecting with friends and neighbours, and showing that the church is very much alive and on the move. Leroy Bowtell, Rosehill's minister, explains....

"Following on from the success of last year's event, we wanted to build on that and do even more, having built good relationships with partners who've been happy to help fund a community event (I meet regularly with the Community Action team from Calico Housing, and have a good working relationship with the person responsible for communities at Lancashire County Council). This year's fun day included a Hog Roast, donkey rides, inflatables and a birds of prey display / handling session. While our Funday was only on for around 4 hours, we served around 300 people with the Hog Roast and saw around 500 people come along and interact with us through the course of the afternoon." One person attending commented, "With five children, it's really hard to pay for rides when you go out, even at £1 each...it's absolutely brilliant that everything here is free," while another observed, "we really value all the amazing work the church is doing for the community."



Beyond the success of the community funday, the church has seen some significant growth in the work it is doing in partnership with The Basement Project, working with young people at risk of exclusion. Leroy explains, "Schools place young people with the project, for anywhere up to 3 sessions a week, for one to one work doing alternative curriculum, which includes cooking, music production, IT, woodwork gardening and decorating. Through these very practical activities the youngsters gain skills in maths, computing and English without the resistance and boredom there would be to traditional lessons. The results have been amazing; schools send their most challenging pupils and find them growing in confidence and achieving AQA qualifications in various skills. One pupil has achieved an AQA in kitchen design because the Basement Project involved him in planning a new kitchen they were fitting. Schools often ask the question 'How do you manage to do what you do?'"

It's been a wonderful way of getting alongside young people who wouldn't normally step inside a church building. Adrian, who is part of the church and runs the project, had a vision to establish a community garden as part of this work, with our building set in 1.75 acres of woodland grounds we have opportunities that other churches don't. Last year Adrian brought the Princes Trust in for a week to clear some ground and then with some funding from Burnley Borough Council raised beds and a poly-tunnel was built. We have now had the first crops from the garden served at the over 50s lunch club and there are plans to expand the amount of ground brought under cultivation. The church has also benefited from our partnership with the Basement Project because of resources that they have made available to us. We can now rent out a fully equipped recording studio and through funding gained by the project we have a new kitchen and double glazing in the upstairs of our building."

It has been wonderful to see Rosehill Baptist Church continue in connecting with its local community in so many ways - from free Fun Days to regular engagement with more challenging young people, the church is being mobilised to share their lives and the love of God with those around them.

For your thoughts and prayers:

- In what ways could your church connect with its local community?
- How does your congregation respond to the thought of intentionally engaging with 'the more challenging people in your community'? Who are 'the more challenging people' within your local context? And how could you connect with them?

