

Christway Baptist Church



Christway Baptist Church is located in the heart of the city of Salford, 100 metres from the precinct and across the road from the University of Salford. Christway is reaching students and drawing those with African heritage. Pastor Olanre Banwo shares about the church's recent initiative 'The Big Welcome' as a way of connecting with the local community...

" 'The Big Welcome' program is about inviting friends and neighbours as guests to a free meal, organised by the local church. Church members are expected to build friendship with the guests who come along that have been invited by people in the church. We build friendship through interaction during eating and drinking and trust God to open the door to share the gospel with whoever we are privileged to have conversations with. We do not force sharing the gospel message with the guest. Ensuring peace, comfort and confidence in us as a loving and caring church is paramount during our interaction and building relationship with those who have joined us.

We planned and executed 'the Big Welcome' through quite a careful and thought through process: Firstly, in the preceding two and half months and particularly in the weeks building up to the mission week, we encouraged church members to prayerfully engage in intentional conversations with one or two friends or neighbours through social interactions or chatting. We gave out invitations to those we hoped would be our guests and prayed for them as we did so.

On the day of the program, we kicked off with short prayers and blessing the meal, the choir sang for fifteen minutes while we invited the guests to serve themselves (buffet) and eat, while assorted drinks were already served on the table. During the meal, there was a 10-minute talk about the significance of friendship, entitled "let nothing divides." During this talks our members were already seated with the guest on their tables to reflect over the talk with the guests. We ensured our members were sensitive to the direction that the discussion was going, and were trusting God that there would be an avenue to share the gospel without giving room for suspicion or arguments and a tense environment. The meeting lasted for three hours and guests were free to leave when they felt comfortable to do so.

After the program the church continues to pray for all the attendees, that they will be touched by the spirit of God for their Salvation and for more open to doors of friendship to the church that would glorify God. As a result of this outreach, three people have started to attend the church service on a regular basis.

"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk, without money and without cost.

Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labour on what does not satisfy?

Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare.

Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live." Is 55: 1-3

For your thoughts and prayers:

- What activities could your church provide as a means of connecting with the local community?

- How could your church use hospitality to connect with those on the fringe of church life? What does hospitality look like in your church context?

