

EAST BELFAST MISSION

People helping people

1. Last year at Conference we highlighted our plans for a redevelopment of our site of two acres. The Skainos project and the work to allow this to happen continues. It is hoped to have detailed plans and funding in place by the spring or summer of 2005. The Skainos project aims to build on the existing work of EBM, which continues to grow and get stronger. In this year's report we want to highlight a couple of aspects of the ongoing work to allow a further snapshot into the work of EBM.

2. To put the report in context the Mission operates in an area of considerable deprivation. Under Professor Noble's Multiple Deprivation Measure index the electoral ward of Ballymacarrett is the 5th most deprived out of the 566 wards in Northern Ireland. The ward has the 4th worst record on unemployment and on health related issues. 86% of the population live in accommodation rented from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

3. In response to such need East Belfast Mission has developed a range of services helping to meet the needs of children, young people, people who are homeless and/or unemployed, the elderly and families. Some of the various services and programmes offered include:

4. **Day Centre:** The ERM Day Centre serves approximately 20,000 meals a year, including over 9,000 meals on wheels delivered to the elderly and housebound in the area. The main clientele of the day centre are elderly or single men whose marriages have broken up or who have been widowed. The meal they receive at the day centre tends to be the only nourishing food of the day. The centre has also developed a community life of its own. People attend every day and there are always staff and volunteers who will provide human contact.

5. **Meals on Wheels:** On average, forty meals are delivered in the area each day, by a team of volunteers. The average total journey distance is approximately nine miles, indicating the proximity of the need. We estimate that given a commensurate increase in resources we could double the numbers of meals delivered.

6. **Youth Work:** In a research project conducted by East Belfast Community Development Agency in fourteen electoral wards in East Belfast, the provision of safe play areas for children and suitable youth facilities were the top priority improvements required by residents. Approximately 300 young people and children per week participate in youth programmes at EBM. This work is led by one staff member and up to twenty volunteers. Work ranges from activity based programmes to personal, emotional, social and spiritual development programmes.

7. **Luk4 Centre:** In the summer of 2001 and 2002 the Newtownards Road/Ballymacarrett district was in the news due to the rioting in the Madrid Street/Woodstock Link area/Cluan Place. In the main, this has been carried out by young people, sometimes as young as eight or nine years of age, and often orchestrated by various paramilitary groups in the area. There is also a significant substance abuse problem in the area. Oaklee Housing Association, our partner organisation in Hosford House, purchased a former pub, called the Westbourne Club, on the same block as the Mission. The purchase of the club meant it did not fall into the hands of local paramilitary groups who were seeking to obtain it. It was handed over to the Mission at nil rent to use as a detached youth work centre. This

strategic transformation of a pub into a nonalcoholic, alternative venue for youth culture enables the Mission to make a positive contribution to the lives of young and old in the Ballymacarrett area of Belfast. The new club has a series of uses:

- A centre for life skills training for young people;
- An alternative night club/pub with no beer;
- A family centre.

8. Inner East Forum: Since May 2001 the Mission has co-ordinated a forum of Protestant, Unionist and Loyalist groups in the inner east area. This group was established by the Mission in response to the inter-community street violence. Forum members represent all shades of opinion in the Protestant, Unionist and Loyalist community and it has been able to re-establish communication with the Nationalist/ Republican community of Short Strand after the breakdown in the summer of 2001.

9. Community Projects: EBM's Community and Family Worker seeks to build bridges into the community by building relationships with community organisations and individuals, particularly single mothers, and by developing programmes and services for families.

10. East Belfast Mission Shops: Our charity shops, "The New Deal" and "The Helping Hand" provide nearly new clothing and furniture at an extremely low cost to the people in an area of high deprivation and poverty. All profits from the shops are used by the Mission to subsidise the social programme. The shops also enable us to provide full-time employment for two people who were formerly on a Job Skills programme with the Mission. It also engages a number of people from all over Belfast in volunteer service. The shops have also offered volunteer opportunities for those with problems, e.g. mental health problems, and has been a form of therapy for them.

11. Transforming Communities: Despite the years of post-agreement developments in Northern Ireland, the drive to solve disagreements through violence continues to have a strong attraction for many. Furthermore many former activists have struggled to find acceptance of their new direction within their own communities.

In May 2004 EBM led a small study group of trusted facilitators and former combatants in the NI conflict to visit sites in Germany associated with the anti-semitism of World War II.

The aim of the study group was to allow former combatants in NI's sectarian conflict to explore the legacy of violence in post-war Germany by examining:

- The rise of Nazism;
- The growth of anti-semitism;
- The emergence of the holocaust;
- The lasting impact on German society.

As a result of this process the participants will be equipped;

- for a personal examination of attitudes to those who are different;
- to analyse the lasting impact of violence on the community;
- to lead their communities away from violence towards lasting peace.

The study tour began in Munich, Germany, tracing the rise of Nazism and how it developed from a small movement to grip the hearts and the minds of the German populace. The group visited sites/museums/ academics relevant to the issue of WWII anti-semitism. The group then went to Berchtesgaden to look in more detail at the grip that Nazism had on what was classed as the Southern HQ.

12. Connexions: The work of Connexions has been a useful tool as we consider the role of the church in relation to Skainos. Overall in the last four years we have seen around sixty new members come into full membership at EBM and we are grateful for this growth in the heart of the inner city. The profile of Connexions has been a useful tool as we move through a process of change and growth.

AGENDA

1. The Conference adopts the report.
2. Dates of Committee Meetings: 27th September 2004, 28th February 2005 and 20th June 2005.