

It's not for me

This way forward is not for everyone and that is why we want to move to a 'mixed economy'; the problem comes when the traditional way is put forward as the only way. Even more, when that way is patently failing to reach many thousands of people who understand less and less of the truths of Christianity and for whom Sunday is just another day! We can bemoan it all we like, but the fact remains, these people need to know Jesus, and this is a way of sharing him with them.

OK, be practical! What do I do?

Return the reply slip. If nothing else this will get you on our mailing list and keep you up to date on what's happening. Contact us with your ideas. The vision will develop as individuals and churches listen to God and share what he reveals to them. Jesus wept over the state of Jerusalem and then did something about it on the cross. If God has given us a heart for Bolton we need to do something about it, whatever the cost.

Can I pray for you?

Oh yes please! We are looking for as many as possible who are willing to pray for us. We also want people to offer themselves as 'Prayer Contacts' for churches, so that we can funnel prayer requests through to the churches and they can ask us to pray about events and activities that they are involved in. You'll find this on the return slip.

Want to know more?

If you want to know more, please look on our web site : www.boltonchurch.net

You'll find out more about us and it will also tell you about the next events we have planned. We use the web site a great deal and it always being updated, so you'll need to look at it at least fortnightly to keep up to date. See if your church or church leader is involved and offer your support. If you don't have access to the web just phone 01204 572334 for more information.



An Introduction to Bolton Network Church



Why this leaflet?

A number of people have been asking us what Bolton Network Church is all about.

What is Bolton Network Church?

Bolton Network Church (or BNC); is a network of existing churches across Bolton to

- Establish and promote new ways of being church in and through the networks of cultures and communities that make up our town.
- Resource these emerging churches and provide support and accountability.

Is it Church of England?

No, certainly not! There are churches from many denominations and 'para-church' organisations involved. Yes, there are quite a number of Anglican churches involved, but it is not just an Anglican initiative.

How did it begin?

A number of our church leaders here in Bolton went on a conference on "emerging churches" in Sheffield in January 2004. They came back excited at the way in which churches were finding new ways of being church that were more relevant to today's society. They shared their excitement with a variety of other church leaders, and began to meet to pray and seek God's vision for our town. Shortly afterwards a working party in the Church of England produced a report called 'Mission-shaped Church' which was commended by the Church of England; this encouraged churches and groups to look at being church in new ways, hence the renewed Anglican interest. It is out of this that BNC began.

It all sounds very vague!

It is not easy for those who want everything 'cut and dried', because things are constantly evolving and we will need to make these principles a reality for us here in Bolton.

If it's 'new' is it a threat to our churches?

Not at all! We are looking at a 'mixed economy church' i.e. a church which is both old and new, neighbourhood and network, established and emerging, all working alongside one another. We hope that it will release and free church members to do what God is calling them to. Many of our members have felt God's call for years without being able to see it fulfilled, either because they were the only one in the congregation with a particular vision, or because they thought it was so radical that the church could not cope with it. This is a chance to release these people, not to denude our churches, but to strengthen, deepen and enrich them.

So will we all have to leave our churches?

Certainly not! Our prayer is that it will feed new life into the churches, not sap it away. Some will be stepping out into new things and joining Christians from other churches in mission. That may become for them the key focus for their life and ministry.

I've heard that churches won't meet on Sundays!

That's missing the point; it would be better to think about what we are hoping will happen.

Mission-shaped or Missionary Cells

We are looking for small groups of Christians to become mini-mission societies across Bolton. Each "missionary cell" will have a common vision to share Jesus with a specific group, network, culture or area, examples of which are in the supplement to this leaflet. These cells will meet regularly in places and ways which are accessible in terms of culture, style and ethos to the individuals they are coming alongside.

The cell will provide a seamless access point for them to meet the Jesus who comes to them where they are. These cells will be "church" in their own right, in ways which are relevant to their client group, and not just stepping stones into our existing churches. They will be accountable to leaders from our existing churches but will remain free to develop their own forms and ways of being "church".

I have a vision

Maybe you've been praying for years and this sounds just like what you are after; we praise God for that - already there are 30 or 40 who have said just the same thing. You will find a list of the things that have already been mentioned on the attached sheet, but we are open to new things as well, and this list is by no means exhaustive. Fill in the return slip and get it back to us so that we can begin to draw together people with a similar vision. Please bear with us; this is not an easy task and if you are willing to help on the admin side or in any other way - that's good too!

I'm behind it 100% but haven't a clue!

Don't worry, we want your support and your prayers, and as BNC begins to take shape we're sure that God will enable you to play some part, whatever that might be. In the meantime simply be open to what God wants from you.

It all Seems very 'New Age'

It is trying to bring the timeless and unchanging gospel to a new and different generation - if that is 'new age' so be it!

It is not our intention to water down, change or detract from that simple and eternal message, but rather to bring it to today's generation with a new power and relevance. We want to obey the imperative to go! For too long we have expected people to come to us on our terms, to use our language and our culture. We want to follow Jesus, who meets us where we are, and enters into our lives.