

THE CAIRN, KNOWLE WEST



Called to incarnational living in one of the most deprived communities in the UK

My wife, Alice, and I have had a long-term calling to incarnational ministry in South Bristol.

Having felt led by God to move to Upper Knowle, in South Bristol, in 1991, we remained there for 20 years. In all the time we lived in Upper Knowle we had been challenged by the presence of a large, predominantly white, urban estate, Knowle West, in close proximity to the area we resided in, but across the divide of the A37 Wells Road.

This interest was provoked by a growing relationship with Mike Pears, a Baptist minister who had himself been led to move from North Bristol to the Knowle West estate, and a growing sympathy for the values of Urban Expression, which seeks to embody Christ through incarnational living in the most deprived 5% of communities in the UK.

With the support of Home Mission, I was one of three students who was able to embark on the new urban mission track at Bristol Baptist College for ministerial formation. I was formally ordained and commissioned as a Baptist minister in Knowle West in July

2014, having attained a Graduate Diploma and MA in Theology.

For my family and I, this has been, and continues to be, an exciting and challenging journey into a deeper experience of incarnational living. [Our daughters Sarah, Anna, and Esther are now 24, 22 and 19 respectively. The oldest, Sarah, is married to Jonny and living in Brighton. Anna and Esther are still living with us].

We left our spacious (and recently much improved!) Victorian terraced home in February 2011, and moved into the former Baptist manse in Knowle West, which was a typical 3-bed estate house. This became home for almost three years, during which time we negotiated



with the Anglican Diocese for the purchase of a derelict vicarage in Inns Court.

Inns Court has had the reputation of being one of the most deprived parts of the estate. The vicarage had sadly been abandoned by the Diocese in the late 1990s due to the social problems being experienced at that time, and had been shuttered up ever since. My wife and I have long held a vision for developing a residential Christian community, and this derelict property seemed to present an ideal opportunity.



Phil and Alice with their daughters: L-R - Esther, Anna, Phil, Alice and Sarah

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By the grace of God, the support of many in the Christian community, and an amazing architect and builders, we were able to move into the fully restored (main part of) the house, renamed The Cairn, in December 2013.

The name, The Cairn, is representative of the fact that we invested pretty much all our own resources in this first phase of the project (the first stone). Our hope, belief and prayer is that God will add stone by stone to the work that has been begun here in order to see a work of considerable significance, all to the glory of God.

We are grateful that Home Mission is continuing to support the work of The Cairn as we look to build on the good foundation of missional work accomplished by Knowle West Baptist Church since its inception until its more recent sad decline, alongside the positive partnering with the Anglican Church that has already taken place. It is of particular poignancy to me that the first ever minister of Knowle West Baptist Church, Vivian Evans, was the grandfather of my best friend at college (Jolyon Evans) in Plymouth back in the 1980s.

Phil Lawrence
Minister, The Cairn



Please pray:

- » For Phil and Alice as they live out their calling to Knowle West day by day
- » Give thanks for the provision of The Cairn and the amazing transformation which has taken place in its restoration
- » That this house will be used by God to bring about transformation and restoration to the community in which it is situated
- » For Christians in the community to support and pray with Phil and Alice in this new venture

