

Hedge of hope

Having our doors closed forced us to think outwards, writes Rashell Beya, minister of **Broadway Baptist Church** in Derby.



As part of the major building project in 2012-14, we really wanted to bring down the hedge that bordered our land. It wasn't high but it felt like a barrier. However, we were told it was protected and there was nothing we could do.

During lockdown when people couldn't go far, suddenly we had visitors as families enjoyed using the carpark for skate and cycling practice, and occasionally people would enjoy the sun seated on the grass. Conversations started.

Christmas: another lockdown. A group got together with an idea: rather than the hedge being a blockage, let's make it a feature. And so the 'hedge of hope' was born and a nativity scene made of enormous lengths of chicken wire was shaped by individuals and families. At night it was lit up.

We wondered how it would go down. Word soon spread and families and friends would come out to look at the hedge and have their photo taken with the figures, while cars slowed down to look. There were many comments of appreciation of the joy it brought people on this particular Christmas. We would later create displays for Valentine's Day, Easter, even COP26. It has helped the church to see the potential of all our space, not just what happens inside. It is a small thing that we have done at one level - but we have made more impact by a light-hearted presence than when we are busy with activities inside.



Photos courtesy of Broadway Baptist Church