

Embodying the Good News in marginalised coastal communities

Barney Barron introduces Coastal Expression, a response to the often-unrecognised deprivation and spiritual needs of many coastal neighbourhoods



When I was commissioned by Urban Expression to carry out some research into coastal towns, images of summer holidays, golden sands and a paddle in the clear blue sea came to mind. It therefore came as a bit of a surprise to learn that coastal towns are among some of our most deprived communities in the UK, and places where local churches are often in terminal decline.

In fact, the most deprived ward in England is a seaside village called Jaywick, in Essex. The next eight slots in the top ten list of deprivation statistics are all wards in Blackpool.

Following the research, I relocated to Cornwall, famous for its long sandy beaches and picturesque fishing villages.

However, Cornwall is one of the poorest regions in Britain and northern Europe. Fifteen constituencies in the county rank among the most deprived areas in Britain, according to national statistics.

Having benefitted from the connections and support of Urban Expression for 16 years, I discovered there was no such agency supporting coastal pioneers. As I connected with other pioneers in coastal communities, I discovered that there was a general isolation and lack of connection with others who could resonate with the unique challenges and opportunities of incarnational ministry in coastal areas.

Thanks to generous funding from Mission Forum and a private sponsor, Jon Timms and I have now been released as Coordinators for a day a week each. Our aim is to develop Coastal Expression as a mission agency that will connect and support those seeking to embody the good news incarnationally, in under-churched and marginalised coastal communities.

We have begun to share experiences, resources and support through a regular newsletter, an online gathering and a Facebook page and group. We are also busy planning our first physical gathering from 30 November – 2 December, supported by a grant from Baptist Insurance.

We will seek to gather and share the stories of how God is at work in these coastal communities and what we are learning as we journey together, in the hope we will encourage others to consider relocating to a coastal neighbourhood and discover the opportunities for joining in with God's mission there.

For more information contact

Barney Barron:

barney@urbanexpression.org.uk

Jon Timms:

jdtimms@hotmail.co.uk

