

HOPE's vision for reaching the nation – start with friends and family

HOPE gave churches a fresh challenge yesterday – to equip every member to share their Christian faith in relevant ways, particularly with friends and family.

More than 100 Christian leaders from a cross-section of denominations, ministries and regions of the UK, gathered in London for HOPE's Vision Day, hosted by Rev Yemi Adedeji, HOPE's Associate Director, with Roy Crowne, HOPE's Executive Director, and Steve Clifford, General Director of the Evangelical Alliance, who chairs the HOPE Board.

Describing HOPE as a catalyst for mission, Roy Crowne said, 'Being together in mission has a great impact in our communities.'

Looking back to 2008, he explained that the original dream had been to mobilise the whole Church: 'But we didn't do it.' Even in 2014, when many more churches worked together, the *whole* church in the UK was not mobilised for mission. 'Let's build towards 2018 and mobilise the whole Church in mission together – in words and action – for the whole year.'

HOPE's reach is growing. Nick Spencer from the think-tank Theos, which published a review of HOPE 2008 and HOPE 2014, reported to delegates: 'The HOPE network is broader and more diverse than in 2008. We were told that "HOPE has brought ecumenical connection into relationship and away from structure". 67.5% of survey respondents who represented churches reported that they had collaborated with other churches through HOPE 2014. Of these, 85% were working with churches of different denominations.'

To define the task ahead, HOPE, the Church of England and the Evangelical Alliance commissioned the Barna research group to survey people's perceptions of Jesus. They asked people living in England what they know about Jesus? Do they know someone who actively follows Jesus? Have they ever had a conversation about Jesus?

The findings were presented by Dr Rachel Jordan, the Church of England's, national mission and evangelism advisor who is part of HOPE's leadership team, and Gareth Russell from the Barna research group.

Dr Jordan said: 'We are not losing our reach – younger people know as many practising Christians as older people do. Our greatest opportunity is right up close. Not the people we don't know, but friends and family; the people who are right next to us and know us really well – 67% of the population know a practising Christian. (For the purpose of the survey that is someone who prays and reads the Bible regularly and attends a church service at least once a month.)

The survey results are available at www.talkingjesus.org and include an animation which churches can show to congregations.

Roy Crowne said that the research will shape how HOPE moves forward to 2018 building on what we do to help make the church more effective in mission.

Jane Holloway from the HOPE leadership team announced that HOPE and its partners are calling the Church to prayer on the first Sunday of 2016 – Sunday 3rd January to pray through the themes from the Talking Jesus research.

To explain how HOPE will support local churches in mission over the next four years, HOPE board member Laurence Singlehurst said, ‘The future is about people power – about every church member being confident and mobilised to talk about Jesus.’

HOPE is offering to:

- help equip Christians so they are confident to share faith in words.
- showcase best practice in mission – not either-or, action or word-based mission, but both.
- support churches helping people on the journey to faith – a sowing, reaping, keeping journey that links with a rhythm of mission running through the church year.

HOPE founder Andy Hawthorne highlighted plans for ‘Higher’ - a Manchester-based youth-led schools mission event in 2016. HOPE Revolution is providing the training already launched this summer as 70,000 young people were given copies of the Chatterbox and invited to try the [Fun-size Mission Academy](#). The goal is to build towards 2018 with thousands of young people mobilised to share their Christian faith with words and action.

- Roy Crowne outlined further key initiatives, which HOPE is developing to support churches in mission:
- Try Praying (www.trypraying.org.uk) - encouraging churches to ‘use and lose’ a simple seven-day practical guide to praying.
- Care for the Family, in partnership with HOPE, is developing the [Wisdom House book](#) into eight discussion-starters for churches to use in conversation with people in their communities.
- Following on from the success of Silent Night Carols, HOPE, Tearfund and Sports Chaplaincy UK are supporting churches holding [Sing Christmas](#) community carols events in stadia and pubs; karaoke carols are a new option for 2015 following a pattern tried and tested in Leicester and Lancashire with their local BBC radio stations.
- In 2016 HOPE is inviting churches to hold parties to celebrate the [Queen’s 90th birthday](#); a 64-page book highlighting the Queen’s Christian faith is being prepared as a give-away for churches to use.

Steve Clifford concluded the day with the question: ‘What can we do over the next five years that could impact the next 50 years of the Church?’

Contact the HOPE office (01788 542782 or email office@hopetogether.org.uk) if churches in your area would like a HOPE presentation of the Talking Jesus research and HOPE's vision of mission to 2018.