

Ben Smith

Prayer Letter

Just got a minute?

October 2020

*1 Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labour in vain.
Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain.
2 In vain you rise early and stay up late,
toiling for food to eat— for he grants sleep to those he loves.*
Psalm 127

CU Staff Worker in Sheffield

74 South View Rd
Sheffield
S7 1DD

bsmith@uccf.org.uk

If you're just on the way out the door and would like something quick to pray, please ask that the Lord would work these verses into my heart. That I'd be able to rest in His promise that success in anything we do is a good gift from Him and not a result of our hard work and that no amount of anxious toil can earn for us what God chooses to give as gift.

Prayer points

If you've got a bit longer I'd really appreciate you sending up some prayers for the following;

- **Give thanks** that God has helped me establish good relationships with students here and that I've managed to arrange to meet many of them weekly.
- **Give thanks** for M a non Christian student from Hong Kong who I've been meeting up with to read through John's gospel together.
- **Praise God** that he's given the CUs in Sheffield a heart to see the good news of Jesus go out on their campuses and a passion to see their friends come to know him.
- **Give thanks** for the Lords provision of a new fridge freezer for us as a family.
- **Give thanks** for a really encouraging time away with the rest of the team in the North East and for a chance to rest together and to be spurred on to keep running the race.

- **Ask God** to keep teaching me that my identity is in him and not in how students and church leaders view me.
- **Ask for me** to receive wisdom from the Lord to manage my time well and prioritise Jo and the girls in a Godly way, especially during a very busy November.
- **Ask the Lord** to sustain me during a long term and my first time with no half term break.
- **Ask for the students** to be given a continued passion and energy that is stirred up by the Spirit through the Word and not by them.
- **Ask for me** and the students to remember it is the Lord who changes hearts and not us and that the burden of success in this mission is not ours to bear.
- **Ask for patience and energy** for me and Jo dealing with Imogen's asthma symptoms which flare up when she has colds and chest infections.



Freshers' week

The academic year started on the same week for both universities in Sheffield. Both CUs put on a number of events to help students find out about the CU and it's mission, to help them meet local church leaders and to help nonbelievers hear about the gospel, some for the first time.



It was a hugely encouraging week with lots of people seeming to get stuck in to local churches including some second-years who because of the pandemic hadn't joined a Sheffield church yet. We also saw many non Christians hear the gospel through talks and testimonies over the week.



A particular highlight was Sheffield Hallam CUs Cake and Accoustic night which was advertised incorrectly by the Students Union and as a result attended by at least 70 international students.

Christian Union meetings

Both Christian Unions have begun regular main meetings during the week, on a Monday night for University of Sheffield and on a Thursday night for Hallam. These are a time for students to be encouraged and encourage one another in Christ, to sing and pray together and to hear testimony from people who have been talking to their friends about Jesus. All with the hope and prayer that they'll feel encouraged and equipped to go about making Jesus known on campus.

The CUs also run small groups called Impact Groups who meet during the week to meet Jesus in His Word and think about how Christian students, living for Him, can have a positive effect on every aspect of life for everyone at their university. The studies for these are written to be really accessible to non believers and each week the groups take on different challenges to try and encourage friends who don't know Jesus yet to come and meet him in His Word. You can find out more about Impact Groups on UCCF's website.

We also ran a day of training and prayer for CU leaders we called Forum North East + with the aim of helping refresh them with God's Word and to give them an opportunity to start thinking about the process of handing over their roles for next year. Hopefully new student leaders for the CUs will have been asked and responded by Christmas. it was a really encouraging and fruitful day and both CUs now have a time line in place for arranging their handovers.



Uncover

T is a CU member whose housemate M came along to some freshers' events, both are from Hong Kong. M isn't a believer but picked up a copy of John's gospel and agreed to read through it with me. We've been using UCCF's [Uncover John](#) resource and so far M says he's been amazed by how much he's learning about himself and how deep the Bible stories are. M has also been going along to church with T.

Team days

In October I finally made it away for Team Days after missing the last ones due to COVID. These days are a chance for all of the Staff Workers and Relay Workers (graduates who spend a year working alongside a CU) in a region to gather together to be refreshed, trained and built up together. My team who serve in Yorkshire and the North East gathered in Leeds to hear teaching from Ray Brown (a pastor from London) about our hope in Christ, to get some practical training on understanding our specific contexts better and delivering seminars well and just to enjoy time together as brothers and sisters. We even got dressed up for a Cheese and Wine evening. It really was a refreshing time and I loved getting to know my team mates better!

Family life

We're still struggling to get to grips with a new way of life in this new role. I've found it particularly difficult to know how to use the flexibility of the job to best love and serve Jo and the girls.

Ellie has now started crawling and sleeping much better. Please give very big thanks for the latter!

Imogen has had a nasty cough which we've been treating with inhalers. Things have improved with the use of a new inhaler but we're still having regular meetings with the doctor and Asthma nurse as we work out the best way to help her. Please give thanks for how happy and bouncy she so often is despite all this.

Despite this we've had some really wonderful times with family and friends and are particularly thankful for a chance to get away together to Center Parcs, the girls were both in their element in the pool.

We've also been really blessed by the gift of a free fridge freezer to give us space to batch cook and store more food now that Ellie is weaning (hopefully we'll also be better able to cook for other people too). We've also had some really generous help from family to replace our car which the garage have advised won't be safe to drive for much longer.



Looking forward

- Both universities are planning weekends away together in November, a time for CU members to get to know each other better, be encouraged in God's Word and equipped to share the Gospel on campus.
- The CUs will have a joint carol service at the beginning of December, this has historically been incredibly well attended with lots of students coming to hear the gospel for the first time.
- In November I'll go away for a week of training with all the other first year staff. I'm excited to go but please pray as combined with the weekends away it means a lot of time away from the family.

Support update

It's an enormous blessing to get to do this work as my full time job and as I've mentioned before that's made possible by the grace of God and the incredible generosity of people who give to UCCF to help them fund my post. UCCF are a registered charity so 100% of their income comes from charitable giving. Thanks to my incredible supporters I've now raised enough money to cover over 70% of my salary. If you'd like to partner with me by giving financially and helping me cover the full cost of employing me (my salary and training costs) then please either get in touch or use the button below to go to my profile on the UCCF website where you can give a one off gift or support me with a monthly donation.