

Urban Life Research Community (ULRC)

The purpose of **Urban Life Research Community** is to support postgraduate research up to doctoral level in contextual mission and practical theology. The team of supervisors bring together academic expertise in a range of key areas of contemporary missiology and between them have significant ongoing practical involvement in mission in a wide variety of national and international contexts.

In forming this new research community we want to achieve a number of key goals:

- Offer an opportunity for practitioners to pursue advanced research into the practices and experiences of mission in their own particular contexts.
- Inspire a renewed energy for and understanding of Christian mission in our complex and fast- changing world.
- Foster thoughtful and open-hearted engagement with key questions raised by those who are experiencing poverty, deprivation and marginalisation.
- Enable research that is transformational by equipping, shaping and informing the Christian community for effective involvement in society.

Those who take up a research degree in association with ULRC will be part of a community of people who are seeking a creative, faithful and transformational engagement in a wide variety of situations. The community will hold research gatherings two or three times every year which will give opportunity to explore cutting-edge developments in the fields of contextual missiology and practical theology. Students are encouraged to join in the schedule of graduate research seminars and are required as part of the programme to join the annual research conference hosted by Trinity College Bristol and Bristol Baptist College which includes more than forty research students studying across a broad range of theological disciplines (seminars can be accessed online as well as on site at Bristol).

Exploring Postgraduate Research

ULRC works in partnership with [Trinity College Bristol](#) and [Bristol Baptist College](#) whose research degrees are fully validated by the [University of Aberdeen](#). It is also associated with the Church Mission Society ([CMS](#)). Students may pursue a research degree full-time, part-time, in residence at Bristol, or by distance. Information about the application process and financial costs for research degrees can be found by contacting Sophie or Peter at the Baptist College.

Introducing the ULRC Team

The ULRC supervisory team draws together people with proven experience in both practical mission and in the disciplines of missiology and practical theology. They include Dr Ash Barker, Dr Sam Ewell, Revd Dr Mike Pears, Dr Stuart Murray Williams, Dr Cathy Ross, Dr Anna Ruddick, and Revd Dr Howard Worsley. The research interests of each member of the group are outlined here and prospective students may start an application process by approaching any of the group members to discuss their initial ideas for research.

Dr Ash Barker

Immersed in contexts of urban poverty for over twenty eight years- including twelve years in Bangkok's largest slum, Ash loves to help people participate with Jesus in seeing transformation emerge from within urban peoples and places. Ash founded and led [Urban Neighbours of Hope](#) for over twenty years (1993-2014) and [Surrender Conferences](#) (2003-2007). He is currently director of Micah Global's [International Society for Urban Mission](#) (2012-current) and co-convenor of [Urban Shalom Project](#) (2016-current)



Ash's PhD examined a Christian response to the rise of urban slum and squatter neighbourhoods (MCD University of Divinity, 2012) and he is the author of eight books. In November 2014 the Barkers moved to Winson Green, Birmingham, UK to establish [Newbiggin House](#) as seed-bed for urban change and Newbiggin School for Urban Leadership which aims to raise up compassionate, innovative and resilient urban leaders. Ash is also a community chaplain based in Winson Green prison.

Ash's supervision interests are in the areas of Theology of Urban Environments, Practical Theology and Urban Mission as well as applied community building, place-making, social entrepreneurship and community organising. Ash can be contacted on ashleybarker1969@gmail.com

Revd Dr Sam Ewell

Sam Ewell is a U.S. national and permanent resident of Brazil, where he served as a missionary from 2003-2010 with his wife Rosalee and three children (James, Isabella, and Katharine). Since 2010, the Ewells have resided in Birmingham, UK, where Sam has recently completed his PhD on Ivan Illich and Christian witness entitled *Faith Seeking Conviviality* (publication forthcoming with Wipf & Stock).



As an ordained minister and member of Companions for Hope, a Christian collective based in Summerfield, Winson Green, Sam is passionate about combining prison and community engagement, urban agriculture, and theological reflection as a way of cultivating abundant community at the edges of inner-city Birmingham, especially among 'the discarded.'

As a researcher-writer, Sam focuses on the interface of Christian spirituality and practical theology, exploring the intersection of personal, social and ecological transformation in the midst of what Pope Francis has aptly described as the 'throwaway culture.' Currently he is involved in an examination of how community-based reconnection with the land and the food cycle offers a creative response to the twin issues of ecological and criminal justice.

Sam's supervision interests are in the areas of spirituality and social movements; place-based Christian community development and practical theological engagement around issues of ecological transformation and criminal justice. Sam can be contacted on samuel.ewell3@gmail.com

Revd Dr Mike Pears

Mike is the director of [Urban Life](#) and is missions tutor at Bristol Baptist College. He has been involved in urban ministry, mission and church planting since 1983 in a variety of contexts including Peckham (London), Vancouver (CA) and Bristol and most recently a member of a small intentional community in a large urban estate.

Mike is particularly interested in exploring how Christian communities can engage practically and effectively with deprived places and communities that experience marginalisation. This involves developing practical approaches to theology that relate well to marginal contexts and are shaped by the struggles of those who live there.

Along with Prof. Paul Cloke (Exeter University), Mike is co-editing and authoring a series of six books entitled *Mission in Marginal Places* published by Paternoster.

For fun Mike likes playing with his grandchildren and is into cycling, walking, art and eating good food. He is a director of the innovative cookery school *The Square Food Foundation*.

Mike's supervision interests are in the areas of the theology of place, especially as that relates to issues of power and inequality; the interplay of ethnography with embodied Christian and missional practice; mission in relation to deprivation and social exclusion (with a particular focus on 'estates'); theology and missiology of urban environments. Mike can be contacted on mpears@urbanlife.org



Dr Stuart Murray Williams

Stuart spent 12 years as an urban church planter in Tower Hamlets (East London) and has continued to be involved in church planting since then as a trainer, mentor, writer, strategist and consultant. For 9 years he was Oasis Director of Church Planting and Evangelism at Spurgeon's College, London. In 1997 he founded *Urban Expression*, a pioneering urban mission agency with teams in several cities in the UK and in other countries.

Since September 2001, he has worked under the auspices of the Anabaptist Network as a trainer and consultant, with a particular interest in urban mission, church planting and emerging forms of church. In 2014 he became the founding director of the Centre for Anabaptist Studies, based at Bristol Baptist College.

He has written several books on church planting, urban mission, emerging church, the challenge of post-Christendom and the contribution of the Anabaptist tradition to contemporary missiology.

Publications include *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World* (2004), *Church after Christendom* (2005), *Planting Churches: A Framework for Practitioners* (2008), *The Naked Anabaptist* (2010), and *A Vast Minority* (2015).

He lives in Canterbury, is married to Sian, who is a Baptist minister, and has two grown up sons and three grandchildren.

Stuart's supervision interests are in the areas of the theory and practice of church planting, Anabaptist history and theology and urban missiology. He is currently researching the life and writings of a sixteenth-century German Anabaptist. List of publications attached. Stuart can be contacted on stuart@murraywilliams.co.uk.



Dr Cathy Ross

Dr Cathy Ross is MA Coordinator for Pioneer Training at CMS (Church Mission Society), Tutor in Contextual Theology at Ripon College Cuddesdon, Tutor in Mission at Regent's Park College, Oxford. She has previously worked in Rwanda, Congo and Uganda with NZCMS. Her publications include *Women with a Mission, Rediscovering Missionary Wives in Early New Zealand*, (Auckland:Penguin, 2006), *Mission in the 21st Century, Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission* (ed with Andrew Walls); (London:DLT, 2008), *Life-Widening Mission: Global Anglican Perspectives* (Oxford:Regnum, 2012), *Mission in Context* (with John Corrie, Ashgate, 2012), *The Pioneer Gift* (with Jonny Baker, London:SCM, 2014), *Mission on the Road to Emmaus*, (with Steve Bevans, London:SCM, 2015), *Pioneering Spirituality* (with Jonny Baker, 2015). She has also contributed to various books and journals in the areas of hospitality and mission. She is a New Zealander, married to Steve, a GP and they have three children and one grandchild. She is a keen supporter of the All Blacks and the Silver Ferns.



Cathy's supervision interests are in the areas of hospitality, contextual theologies, World Christianity, feminist theologies and pioneering. Cathy can be contacted on Cathy.Ross@rcc.ac.uk.

Dr Anna Ruddick

Anna has worked supporting, equipping and accompanying Christians involved in incarnational urban mission since 2005. For much of that time she worked in various national developmental roles for the Eden Network which became the context for her doctoral research: *Missional Pastoral Care, innovation in charismatic evangelical urban practice*. This research took an ethnographic approach to understanding the relational dynamics between incoming evangelical Christians participating in incarnational urban mission, and the people they met in their communities. It sought to discover the effects such mission had on those involved and drew out implications for understandings of mission, evangelical identity and pastoral care.



Since 2014 Anna has been working as a Community Engagement Associate for [Livability](http://livability.org.uk), living in Leicester and working nationally facilitating theological reflection and learning by coaching leaders, leading learning processes for congregations and enabling strategic development in Christian organisations seeking to deepen and strengthen their relationships with their local community. She is also a trustee of the [William Temple Foundation](http://williamtemplefoundation.org.uk) and part of the core team of Urban Life particularly involved in developing Learning Journeys as a process of theological accompaniment for incarnational missional groups. She aims to be an active reflector, working within Practical Theology and using qualitative and ethnographic research methods to explore issues in mission and the role of the church in the public sphere, poverty and marginality and religious identity.

Anna's supervision interests are in the areas of UK Urban mission and ministry; evangelical identity, theology and mission; Practical Theology; Pastoral Care. Anna can be contacted on aruddick@livability.org.uk.

Revd Dr Howard Worsley

Howard Worsley is currently the Tutor in Mission at Trinity College in Bristol where he is also the Vice Principal.

He is a researcher into children's spirituality and their early perceptions, a contextual theologian and an educationalist who publishes regularly for academic journals. In 2009 he published a book on children's insights into the Bible called, *A child sees God*. In 2013 his book, *Two Hundred Years of Anglican Church School Education* was published by Bloomsbury.

He has previously worked as a secondary school teacher, a Scripture Union worker, an Anglican vicar, a university teacher of theology, a director of education (in the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham and then in the Diocese of London) and as a chaplain in both the HE and FE sectors. His connecting themes are contextual theology and young people and his interests are to do with sport (the great outdoors or rugby) and travel (preferably in remote places and by off road motorbike or canoe).

Howard has been married to Ruth for 31 years (she is the Bishop of Taunton). They have three sons, Nathanael, Jonathan and Benjamin.



Howard's supervision interests are in the areas of Church Schools; Children's Spirituality; Urban Mission; Rural Mission; Qualitative research into identity, educational process, Christian formation, and Ecclesiological growth. Howard can be contacted on howard.worsley@trinity-bris.ac.uk.

