

# The whole Church, for the whole Nation, for the whole year

An evaluation of HOPE08  
(executive summary)

# executive summary

HOPE08 sought to catalyse, encourage and support churches across the UK as, through words and actions, they worked together and with public bodies such as government, police and the media in service to their communities. HOPE was **grassroots** - supporting local churches in their commitment to neighbourhoods. HOPE was **collaborative** – always seeking ways to connect different groups, churches and agencies. HOPE aimed to **resource** participants through a range of materials and the expertise of associate groups. Overall, the vision of HOPE08 was to help Christians **raise their game** impacting individuals and communities in **word** and **action**. HOPE partners worked to meet the immediate needs in their neighbourhoods, but they also worked with an eye to the long-term legacy of living out the Gospel in villages, towns and cities across the UK. HOPE enjoyed extraordinary success in achieving its aims and the country continues to experience the fruits of its vision.

This vision was summed up by HOPE's strap line *Do More. Do It Together. Do it in Word and Action.*

## 1. features of HOPE

HOPE08 aimed to

- Encourage as much participation as possible while remaining non-prescriptive
- Give away its logo and allow use of the HOPE08 brand free of charge
- Run with a small support staff and on a modest budget
- Empower local churches rather than control resources
- Limit itself to one year so as to resist institutionalisation

HOPE activities were registered in **1478** locations throughout the UK. This number far exceeds the original 500 locations identified by HOPE as ideal places for a HOPE presence.

A network of over 150 volunteer **HOPE Champions** dedicated themselves to promoting HOPE in their areas. As well as overseeing events, liaising with workers and beneficiaries of HOPE projects and representing HOPE to their local churches and communities, the HOPE Champions were also valuable sources of information and feedback about HOPE activities on the ground.

- **82%** of those surveyed report that that HOPE08 has inspired their congregations
- **83%** thought HOPE08 has made a tangible difference
- **94%** indicate that they are enthusiastic about the goals and visions of HOPE for the future

## 2. the year of HOPE

The planning team identified five **High Points** which roughly corresponded to the traditional Church calendar and which provided some structure to the year.

- **Fresh HOPE:** In the New Year season groups were encouraged to offer services for local people wanting to make a fresh start. Fresh HOPE events might also mark the launch of HOPE08 projects in individual churches for the coming year
  - **70%** of HOPE Champions polled participated in this
  - This high take-up is notable, since this was the first High Point of the year and for many congregations their first real exposure to HOPE
- **The Big HOPE:** Churches working together were encouraged to express Easter in ways that were imaginative and inviting to the whole community.
  - **73%** participated in this
  - Amongst many creative ideas **Blood Donor Drives** constituted one Big HOPE activity. The National Blood Service calculates that HOPE-related contributions have resulted in "**360 lives saved** to date"
- **HOPE on the Streets:** During May HOPE partners were encouraged to reach a target of a million hours of kindness, by working together to deliver social action projects. Events for children and young people were a focus here, as were the hosting of family fun-days
  - The highest take up at **78%**
  - **325,602** Hours of Kindness logged, and an additional **137,288** pledged with many more acts left unreported
  - Many groups running a **Fun-Day** relate that this marked the high point of their HOPE year

- **HOPE Explored:** In the autumn, churches could offer an explanation for their actions by inviting people to take part in courses providing an introduction to the Christian faith
  - **67%** of those polled linked their church's seeker courses to HOPE in some way, many pooling their resources with other groups to make a bigger impression than ever before
- **The Gift of HOPE:** Christmas was an excellent opportunity to make the gospel accessible to the community, and to celebrate all that happened during the year of HOPE
  - **67.6%** participated in a Gift of HOPE event
  - **45.8%** agreed that HOPE had changed the way that their church normally does Christmas
  - Of those that participated, **75%** reported that theirs was a joint-venture involving more than one church

### 3. doing more

The number, variety and scope of HOPE08 projects taking place across the country were unparalleled compared to any other Christian initiative in the UK.

- **86%** of those polled indicated that their church is doing more as a result of HOPE08. **No one** reported doing less in 2008 than in previous years

#### Groups Reached

- When Champions were asked to indicate people reached by their HOPE activities, secondary school aged children and families each attracted **85.7%** of the responses. This was followed by primary school children (**74.3%**) and young people (**62.9%**). Besides parents of children, the main focus on adults was on singles (**54.3%**) and retired people (**57.1%**). Some HOPE projects were aimed at school leavers (**14.3%**) and university students (**22.9%**).

#### Words and Actions

- More than half of those polled - **57.6%** - reported an increase in their church's engagement in **evangelism by words**. **No one** thought engagement had gone down
- **91.2%** of those polled reported an increase in **evangelism by action**
- **67.7%** indicated an increase in levels of volunteering in their church. **60%** reported that their church's attitude toward poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups has improved

- Close to half - **45.7%** - of respondents reported that their churches are praying more than before as a result of their engagement with HOPE08. **No one** thought participation in prayer went down during the year of HOPE. HOPE08 was **publicly launched** at a Trumpet Call prayer event in Birmingham in 2006 in front of an audience of 3000-4000 people. Prayer triplets and groups formed to pray for HOPE08 continue to meet.

## 4. doing it together

### Churches

- **88.2%** report that as a result of HOPE08 their church's attitude towards other Christian groups and denominations has improved. In areas where inter-church partnerships were already in place, **71%** thought that these working relationships were strengthened. **No one** thought attitudes had got worse as a result of HOPE08.
- **91.7%** of those polled indicated working with **Baptists** of various affiliations, **88.9%** worked with the **Church of England** and **77.8%** saw **Methodist** involvement. Other denominations and the response rate they attracted include **Roman Catholic** (58.3%), **Salvation Army** (55.6%), **United Reform** (50.0%), **Assemblies of God** (41.7%), **New Frontiers** (41.7%) and **Elim Pentecostal** (38.9%). 'New' and 'Independent' Churches were significant partners in HOPE projects, registering 47.2%. Amongst others this category included **Brethren**, **Vineyard**, **Community** and **House** churches.

### Associate Groups

- The Church denominations and para-church agencies which accepted the invitation to partner with HOPE were known collectively as **Associate Groups**.
- **155** of these organisations registered with HOPE
- **100%** of Associates surveyed agreed that HOPE was a good fit for their organisation. **100%** think that the continued association with HOPE08 was a good one. **None** of the Associates polled thought that HOPE had a negative effect on their organisation's work.
- Prominent partners include **Soul Survivor**, the **Message Trust** and **Youth For Christ**, each of which donated generously and released Mike Pilavachi, Andy Hawthorne, Roy Crowne and other staff to do the work of HOPE.

- Other organisations also released key personnel to be on the HOPE Board and Leadership team: **Bible Society** (Rob Cotton); **Cell UK** (Laurence Singlehurst); **Make It Happen** (Matt Bird); **The Church of England** (Paul Bayes); **Street Pastors** (Eustace Constance); **World Prayer Centre** (Jane Holloway) and **Pioneer** (Steve Clifford)
- Other collaborations at the national level include: **ABA Design**, **Associated Bus Ministries**, **Authentic Publishing**, **Christian Enquiry Agency**, **CPO**, **Evangelical Alliance**, **Urban Saints**, **MEMO**, **New Life Publishing**, **Scripture Union**, **RUN**, **Kingsway Communications**, **Fresh Expressions** and **Vivid Broadcast**
- **Alpha**, **Ignite**, **Book of HOPE**, **CARE**, **Compassion**, **Spring Harvest**, **the Methodist Church**, **Saltmine**, **UCB**, **Elim Church** and **New Wine** were amongst organisations who dedicated significant resources to HOPE and to the promotion of HOPE throughout the year.
- The **Girls** and **Boys Brigade** gave their summer camp a strong Acts of Kindness dimension in partnership with the HOPE on the Streets High Point.

## Young People

- HOPE Champions report that the **majority of people reached by their HOPE activities were under 20 years of age**.
- Throughout the UK, young people also took active roles in leading HOPE events
- **HOPE Revolution** was the official youth arm of HOPE08, and choose not to use the '08' in its logo

## Government, Police and Media

- In June 2008 **Prince Charles** hosted a reception at Clarence House for the organisers and volunteers of HOPE. In December 2008, **Prime Minister Gordon Brown** honoured HOPE workers at a reception at 10 Downing Street
- HOPE08 gained the early support of stakeholders such as the **Association of Chief Police Officers** (ACPO), the office of the **Metropolitan Police Commissioner** and the **Department for Communities and Local Government** (DCLG)
- Many **MPs** gave their public support during the early promotion of HOPE

- A number of regional police forces officially included HOPE in their community strategy documents
- **61.8%** of HOPE Champions agreed that their church's relationship to secular institutions overall has improved. **No one** reported having a worse relationship with these groups as a result of HOPE08
- **68%** saw specific improvement in working relations with **local government**
- **67%** agreed that relationships with the **police** had got better
- **59%** found that their church's relationship with the **local media** had improved as a result of HOPE08

Strong partnerships were forged with **Christian media**.

- 16 publications agreed to devote regular space to HOPE stories
- A number of national publications published HOPE stories on a case-by-case basis
- HOPE's Communication Officer wrote articles for Christian publications as well as denominational literature including calendars, prayer leaflets and promotional literature.

## 5. HOPE materials and resources

HOPE produced a high quality promotional **DVD** featuring stories, ideas and words of endorsement from leaders of denominations and organisations across the country

- **22,800** copies of this DVD were given away
- **100%** of HOPE Champions polled reported finding this resource 'Useful' or 'Very Useful'

There were three main parts to the HOPE family of **websites**

- **www.HOPEnews.co.uk** provided a platform for broadcast reports, E-news stories and user-generated content
- **www.HOPEinfo.co.uk** (created and maintained by Christian Enquiry Agency) was designed to be the public face of HOPE08. The site won the 2008 Christian Web and Blog Award for Best Christian Social Action Website

- **www.HOPE08.com** was the inward-facing website, intended primarily for participants and organisers of HOPE08 activities
- The websites attracted a combined 'Useful' or 'Very Useful' mark of **94%**, while **88%** found the E-News service to be of use to their projects

The **Resource Book** was the major material production to come out of HOPE08. It was published by Authentic in 2007 and it featured extensive resources and ideas, with chapters devoted to every key feature of the HOPE Year.

- **91%** of HOPE Champions polled found the Resource Book 'Useful' or 'Very Useful'
- By the close of 2008, **29,420** copies had been sold
- A follow-up 'HOPE Great Ideas Book 2' is planned for summer 2009.

## 6. recommendations and reflections for future projects

- *A new model of mission seems to have emerged across the UK in recent years combining words and actions, being good news as well as proclaiming good news. HOPE08 has been an important champion of this change.*
- *Grass roots collaboration between local churches served by national agencies allows the empowerment of Christians to serve their communities in ways which are appropriate to their situations.*
- *Non-prescriptive models of mission allow a flexibility of approach within a national vision. A give away 'brand' creates an expression of unity in the midst of a diversity of activities.*
- *The small scale relatively low cost administrative base provided limitations to the support of the HOPE initiatives. An earlier employment of a key administrator and a detailed, planned database would have helped both communication and evaluation.*
- *Black Majority Churches represent a vibrant and growing part of the UK church scene. An earlier consultation and opportunities to shape the vision might have resulted in an even greater buy in from this part of the church.*
- *HOPE's use of new technology (web/email/text-messaging) assisted communication in ways unthinkable previously. It is anticipated that future initiatives will further benefit from technological change.*



- *Target setting for initiatives such as HOPE has always proved challenging. Certain targets, such as the number of locations adopting HOPE, were outperformed by a factor of 3:1, while other targets proved more difficult to either achieve or monitor.*
- *Large 'successful' churches sometimes find it difficult to see the benefits of an association with national initiatives such as HOPE. Future planning should consider articulating the vision of large churches serving smaller churches as an expression of their commitment to the wider body of Christ.*
- *The HOPE high points provided a helpful model for church's to plan their diaries, reflecting on both the church's calendar and the rhythm of everyday lives.*
- *The HOPE08 Resource Book provided an invaluable resource, enabling churches to access creative ideas and resources with which to deliver their HOPE initiatives. A number of networks and denominations invested in the book as an expression of their commitment to HOPE and desire to resource local churches. A new HOPE Resource Book will be available in July 2009, drawing on the lessons learnt from 2008 and providing fresh, practical materials to move the vision forward in coming years.*
- *Engagement with local councils and police has many positive advantages. Early approaches are both appreciated and will result in greater opportunities for joined up activities. Mutual understanding of the different cultural environments between the church and state agencies takes time to develop.*
- *The intentional use of villages as the first part of the HOPE strap line, 'HOPE in our villages towns and cities' was clearly appreciated, but much more could have been done. There is a need for increased understanding of rural church life when nationwide initiatives are being planned.*
- *There are a tremendous number of excellent resources widely available to help churches engage more effectively in their communities. The challenge for everyone is to remain aware of these and make good use of them.*

## 7. conclusion

Considering the deliberately scaled down model and the 'giveaway' nature of the HOPE initiative, the success that HOPE08 enjoyed across the country is all the more remarkable. The amount of churches and regions which signed on, the new community projects that began and which look set to continue, and the strong partnerships that HOPE participants made with each other, with local government and with the police is testament to the strength of the vision guiding HOPE08. HOPE08 has undoubtedly left the UK in a better state than it found it, by doing more, by doing it together and by doing it in word and action.

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## An evaluation of HOPE08

HOPE08 was an initiative of the churches across the UK which aimed to demonstrate Christian faith in action and to explain the meaning of that faith in villages, towns and cities.

This report by Theos, the public theology think tank, evaluating HOPE 2008, was commissioned by the HOPE Board in June 2008. The aim of the report is to record the extent and nature of HOPE generated activity across the UK during 2008, and identify successes and areas for improvement, in order to support individuals and organisations in their planning of future initiatives.

"The passion and drive of the church in the UK is amazing, and we saw involvement from a huge variety of denominations and church streams. Thousands and thousands of churches took the 'do more, do it together and do it in word and action' challenge of HOPE08 and made it their own."

*Steve Clifford*

"HOPE08 was always a grassroots movement. I think that the timing and sense of God's spirit caused a fantastic mobilisation of ordinary people to do extraordinary exploits in their own communities. Thank you for being a part of such a nationwide initiative to see our communities transformed."

*Roy Crowne*



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