Birmingham Baptist Churches Exploring their Black History Project

Leader's Story: Revd Glenford Gordon 'The Ground breaking leader'

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Glenford (Glen) Gordon was born in 1958 in Jamaica. Throughout his childhood in Jamaica, he attended church with his grandmother. Glen came to England aged sixteen, in August 1974, to join his parents, who were already living in Handsworth, Birmingham. They had moved to England, from Jamaica, in the early 1960s.

On his arrival, Glen joined his mum as a regular worshipper at Cannon Street Memorial Baptist Church (CSMBC). Glen recalled that early on in his time at the church, he was baptised, and became involved in leading Sunday School, and Boys' Brigade groups.

His leadership skills were further recognised, when he was elected as a deacon, as recorded in church members' meeting minutes 22 Oct 1979 (he would have been 21 years old at the time). The 5 November 1979 deacons' meeting minutes confirm he quickly assumed this role, as they note him being welcomed to the meeting as a new deacon.

Glen also recalled that in either 1980 or 1981, Revd Stanley Woods – who was minister of CSMBC 1978–1988 – asked him if he had ever considered

training for ministry. He had not, but this prompted him to. Glen left his job working in the jewellery trade, and the church took him on as an assistant pastor, for what was supposed to be for a year. He was also offered a place at Bristol Baptist College to undergo formal ministerial formation for ordained ministry, from September 1983. However, he delayed starting his studies at the college, until September 1985, as he felt called to remain in Birmingham, and continue in his role as assistant pastor, for a further two years.

This two-year period, 1983 –1985 was a pivotal time in Glen's life, and the life of the church. Glen was still a newlywed, having met and married his wife, Maxine at CSMBC, in 1980 (she was involved in leading a sacred dance group, and Girls' Brigade group at the church). Glen played a leading role in 1983, in setting up the Agape Advice Centre (with people like Avis Charles from the church) that operated out of the church. It focused on helping people with housing, welfare benefits, and immigration matters. Alongside this, there was a growing number of church members, and the church was in the midst of the building and opening (in 1985) of the community centre, that became known as the Olive Branch. The assistance Glen offered Revd Woods in navigating this time of change and growth was significant. Then, the time was right for Glen and his wife to move to Bristol, so he could commence his ministerial studies.

In 1988, after completing his three years of study at Bristol Baptist College, Glen had hoped to return to CSMBC to join the ministerial team (Revd Stanley Woods was still minister there at that time). However, Glen recalled sensing a lack of clarity from the church, as to what his specific role would be there, and how his gifts would be utilised. So, instead, he accepted a call to be minister of Acocks Green Baptist Church,

Birmingham (at the time very much a white British majority church). Glen recalled helping the church become more dynamic in its worship (for example, by introducing the use of drums, and a worship group) during the 15 years he served there.

Whilst serving as minister at Acocks Green, Glen also served in regional church and community roles. This included for a period of time having a co-ordinating role in an initiative initially known as the 'Birmingham Baptist Inner City Project' (1984–1993), but ultimately became a registered charity in 1996 called 'Paving the Way', that focused on developing and resourcing church members and leaders (many of them Black, and Asian) of both Baptist and non-Baptist churches, in inner city areas of Brimingham. Glen also served for a year as President of West Midland Baptist Association (an organisation today known as Heart of England Baptist Association), offering inspiration and insights to the well over one hundred Baptist churches, and Baptist ministers, across the West Midlands.

In 2003, Glen accepted a call to be minister of City Road Baptist Church, Birmingham, where he remained until his death in 2024.

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