

I can't believe the bookshop is closing...

I'm gutted, that's so sad, you're joking, but that's terrible...

Any and all of those phrases could describe your thoughts and emotions at the news of the closure of the CLC Christian Bookshop in Sheffield. Closure came sooner than planned; the clearance sale lasted just two days before the shop had to close its doors due to the new lockdown restrictions.

Read on to find out why we closed, what you can pray for, how to keep in touch with CLC Bookshops and source the items that you need, what happens to the staff, what can be done if there is to be a local supply source going forward...and more.

****Where do I go now?** The shop's closure does not mean that you have no source of supply. Browse and buy on clcbookshops.com or give us a call on 0330 8181000 and choose option 2 (local rate) to make enquiries, ask for advice, place orders and make payments. Both the website and phone line will be there to meet needs, but we know it's never the same experience as being in a shop.

****Can Sheffield support an independent Christian bookshop?**

If there is someone, an organisation, a church or a group of churches out there interested in exploring possibilities so as to keep a Christian bookshop in Sheffield and serving the region, please email jan.burnham@clcbookshops.com with your questions in the first instance. What is the Lord saying to Sheffield's churches, Christian entrepreneurs and visionaries? What are the possibilities and options? Could a bookshop ministry be supported by those it serves...?

****Back to the closure of CLC Sheffield...** The CLC Trustees' prayerful and painful decision to close the shop is due to the downward slide in sales over the years without a parallel slide in costs. Our reality is that almost all CLC branches are gone from our streets, with most of them closing in the past three years due not just to the rise in online retail but to multiple factors.

CLC overseas has also been struggling, with whole ministries recently closed or due to close in Liberia, Japan, Bolivia and Spain as economies shrink, purse strings are tightened, and as church and individual culture and buying habits change.

****But wasn't moving next to the Cathedral far better than being on West Street?** Not long after opening on Devonshire St in 1956 next to the Devonshire Chippy, CLC Sheffield moved and spent 47 years on West St. Some of you will recall praying for us and with us for "somewhere better" than West St. It took quite a few years to find. Relocating to 2 Church Street in the spring of 2018 meant a 16% increase in rent, plus the costs associated with vacating West St, fitting out the new location (new electrics, LED lights, shop flooring, shop fittings, suspended ceiling, alarm system...) and actually moving.

The shop team knew that it was a make-or-break move, but at least it had the potential to stave off or even prevent closing down. Of one thing you can be quite sure: had the bookshop remained on West Street, it would have closed some time ago - and before this pandemic hit. So, yes, most definitely, moving to Church Street was beneficial and positive. Given that ours is a niche market, we certainly give thanks to the Lord that the ministry has lasted as long as it has.

The decision by the charity's Trustees to exercise the break clause on the shop's lease and vacate the property in March 2021 was not easy to make even if the numbers said otherwise. Closing affects people and it leaves an important city and a large area without a Christian bookshop as a source of supply and a place of witness, prayer, encouragement, fellowship and community.

**What about the shop staff? Manager Jan and husband Phil have served with CLC since 1981 in Spain, Africa and the UK. For some years their plan had been to retire at the end of January 2021. Instead, they will be based at home, putting their experience and knowledge to good use in the customer services context, among other tasks. At the moment it is too soon to know what our employed and volunteer team colleagues will be doing from March onwards.

**Our thanks So we thank the Lord and honour those who have worked in the shop over the years as volunteers, full-time missionaries and employees, all of whom have influenced the local Christian scene for good as a result.

Likewise, it is right and proper to acknowledge, thank and honour you, our customer, whose prayers and purchases have kept us going until now. Thank you also for your interest in the wider ministry of CLC, proclaiming the message of salvation in Jesus through the testimony of our colleagues and the written word of the materials we make available.

And we thank the event and conference organisers who allowed us to run so many bookstalls in so many places and contexts, providing resources for people we would otherwise have had no opportunity to serve.

**So, what next? Here are a few pointers...

--Pray that the Lord speaks loud and clear if there is to be or not to be a resource centre (or a number of smaller ones) to replace the CLC bookshop.

--Invest in the mentoring and discipling of others by using and making known the contact details: clcbookshops.com and 0330 8181000.

--Pray for the numerical and spiritual growth of believers in and around Sheffield, with their leaders growing appropriately too.

--Pray for tangible expressions of unity as we, the Body of Christ, work together to fulfil the Great Commission and bring hope to our generation and society.

CLC's purpose is to glorify God by making Christian resources available so that people may come to faith and maturity in the Lord Jesus Christ. Whether or not Sheffield one day has somewhere local making Christian resources available, let's each do our part to bring people to faith and maturity in the Lord Jesus Christ.

When you have the time, think what the CLC bookshop has meant for you; pray for the staff, give thanks for the ministry and the lives it has touched in Sheffield and beyond; and if you wish to add something to our "Book of Testimony & Blessing" – e.g. a word of encouragement, a testimony or some words as to what the bookshop has meant for you – send us the text and we'll stick it in.

With thanks to God for each and every one of you, and for what he has done and will continue to do in our wonderful city. Grace & peace,

Jan Burnham (ex-Manager)

jan.burnham@clcbookshops.com

Pp. your local bookshop team.