



Cliff College Students visit Central Methodist Mission, Johannesburg

Cliff College – Partnership in Sharing Joyful News!

ASHLEY COOPER

As I write this, I recognise that it will be my final article for MET:Revive as Principal of Cliff College. Over the past eight years, I have deeply valued the partnership between the College and MET as we have worked together to equip the Church in sharing the Joyful News. This partnership has not always been without its

challenges, but it has always been rooted in friendship, for which I am truly grateful.

Reflecting on this season of ministry, I am reminded that the mission of spreading the gospel and transforming lives through Christ is never a solo endeavour. It flourishes through collaboration, mutual encouragement, and a shared vision. As I prepare to pass on the leadership of Cliff College to Rev Dr Andrew Stobart, I want to celebrate the partnerships that have shaped our work and the transformation they have enabled.

A LEGACY OF PARTNERSHIP

Cliff College has a long and rich history of fostering partnerships that equip and empower individuals for mission. Since its founding, the College has trained leaders, missionaries, and evangelists passionate about sharing the gospel—or as early Cliff pioneers described it, the 'Joyful News.' I love that phrase, and it remains central to our vision today. The gospel is, by nature, joyful. Yet, in the face of challenging statistics and cultural shifts, the Church can sometimes appear joyless. But our message in Jesus Christ always brings joy.

This mission of sharing Joyful News is never undertaken in isolation. Partnerships enable the sharing of resources, the exchange of wisdom, and the

multiplication of efforts, allowing the gospel to reach further than any individual or institution could alone.

This model of working together is not just strategic; it is biblical. The early Church thrived through collaboration. Paul frequently acknowledged his partners in ministry—from the Macedonian churches supporting his work (Philippians 4:15) to the vital contributions of Priscilla and Aquila (Romans 16:3). Likewise, Cliff College continues in this tradition, engaging with a diverse range of partners to advance the mission of Christ.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS: A COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

In recent years, Cliff College has recommitted itself to serving the Church—both Methodist and beyond—as we train and equip leaders for the future. Our partnerships span both the UK and the world, drawing upon the strengths of a global Christian community where mission flourishes and the gospel is communicated in diverse contexts.

One exciting example of this is our new BA Theology in Mission programme, launched in September 2023. As part of this course, we introduced a ‘Global Theology in Context’ unit, where students engage with theological perspectives from around the world. Our first unit took us to South Africa, where we partnered with the Methodist Church of South Africa to learn from their history, culture, and be immersed in it. This is partnership in action—learning, being challenged, and growing together as the body of Christ.

THE LOCAL CHURCH: A VITAL PARTNER

Churches remain at the heart of Cliff College’s mission. The latest iteration of TREK has strengthened our ties with Methodist churches across the UK, providing students with firsthand experience of what God is doing in diverse congregations. Every student at Cliff, at every level, engages in a local placement, ensuring that mission is woven into the fabric of their academic journey.

This is something I am particularly proud of from my time as Principal: no longer can a student pass through Cliff College without engaging in mission. It is no longer an optional extra—it is the core to who we are.

ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIP: THEOLOGICAL EXCELLENCE WITH A MISSIONAL HEART

At its core, Cliff College is dedicated to theological education. We remain a proud partner college of the

University of Manchester, and we have recently secured validation for another five years. This endorsement affirms the quality of education our students receive, combining academic rigour with a deep missional focus. The Church today needs leaders who are both theologically grounded and Spirit-empowered, and it is our joy to help form such individuals.

At the heart of all these partnerships is the recognition that the gospel is bigger than any one institution or individual. Advancing the Kingdom of God requires a unified effort, transcending denominational, cultural, and geographical boundaries. This collaborative spirit not only strengthens each partner’s individual mission but amplifies the collective impact of the Church in the world.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As I step aside and new leadership takes the helm, I am confident that Cliff College will continue to build on these partnerships. Under Andrew, the College will forge new collaborations while deepening existing ones, ensuring that the ever-relevant gospel continues to transform lives.

By working alongside the Methodist Church in Britain, mission organisations, academic institutions, and you, Cliff College remains at the forefront of equipping and training the next generation to proclaim Joyful News. Together, we can accomplish far more than we ever could alone.

Christ for All: All for Christ.

REV ASHLEY COOPER

Rev Ashley Cooper has served as Principal of Cliff College since 2017 leading the college through a significant period of change. He has served as Superintendent of the Burslem Methodist Mission and a number of other appointments in the Methodist Church in Britain. From Summer 2025 he will move to be Executive Pastor of ChristChurch, Fairview Heights, Illinois, USA.

