

## **Chris Proffitt**

### **ECUMENICAL?**

Christened in Church of Scotland.

Confirmed into Church of England.

Joined Methodists as a Member.

Absconded to the United Reformed Church.

Currently ordained Elder and Church Secretary, also responsible for 3 church properties.

URC representative on CTiS and founder member of Enabling Group.

CTiS representative on Town Partnership (now vice chair) and on Friends of St Peters.

### **ORGANISED?**

17 years self employed.

From Tiptree originated and ran Business Club, Autumn Fair and Colchester Early Retirers' Club.

For 3 years chaired Colchester Economic Forum, a regular meeting of the great and good (University, Borough Council, Garrison, Institute, etc, etc).

Trustee of Colchester Signpost Centres (services to the unemployed).

Past President of Sudbury Rotary Club (2007/08).

### **ANYTHING ELSE INTERESTING?**

Have written two papers for the West Suffolk Group of the United Reformed Church.

The first was a reply to a Synod paper asking churches to consider their Visions, Dreams and Reality. Should individual churches, looking at a defined number of years ahead:

Stay as they are,

Move premises.

Join with another church, or

Close?

The second, entitled BUT ARE WE DOING ENOUGH?, responded to a request to individual churches to comment upon a leaflet and questionnaire entitled Vision 2020.

This suggested that "Some churches have become gathered congregations with little connection to the areas around which they meet".

Completing the questionnaire, Christ Church queried the use of too much "church speak" and in particular suggested that the frequent reference to "community" was unhelpful and that it would be better to define individual communities: Businesses, the Housebound, the Disabled, Children, Young People, Those in Hospital, etc, etc, and made some practical suggestions as to how some of these challenges could be activated by the churches (paper attached).

The paper was presented to the Elders of our Bury St Edmunds church (Whiting Street) who may discuss it with Churches Together in Bury.

*(The paper follows)*

## BUT ARE WE DOING ENOUGH?

Some thoughts from Chris Proffitt, Christ Church URC, Sudbury.

Last year we were discussing the Synod paper Visions, Dreams and Realism which urged us to consider the best use of our assets, both our people and our buildings.

Our Elders have recently been studying Vision 2020 and the suggestion that "Some churches have become gathered congregations with little connection to the areas around where they meet" certainly touched a sensitive spot.

Also, when completing the questionnaire we decided to query the use of the word 'community' and suggested that it was too all embracing and that it would be more helpful to use a set of more precise definitions such as Children, Young Adults, the Disabled, the Elderly, Those in Hospital, Business People etc and, our own idea: Street Communities.

By directing our thoughts towards specific groups, and identifying those we largely ignore, perhaps we can develop a more proactive approach and be less inward looking?

At Christ Church we have decided that it would be unrealistic to continue hoping for our Sunday School to return. Our geographical location and the activities of other churches with younger congregations mean we have put this group on the back burner.

However we do visit the nearby retirement homes and encourage them to come to our services. We are also increasing our activities with Hillside Special School. (Incidentally we will take on board the suggestions from Vision 2020 to have an Open Day and provide a welcome pack. We will also be displaying a group shot of our congregation to show we are really quite normal folk!)

The question we would ask of Whiting Street, the West Suffolk Group and perhaps Churches Together in Suffolk is this...

AS A GROUP OF CHURCHES DO WE HAVE THE COMMITMENT AND A SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF MEMBERS WHO COULD PRODUCE A WORKABLE CAMPAIGN OF OUTWARD-LOOKING ACTIVITIES?

As an example of an approach to the Business Community I have just piloted a 4-hour course teaching the essential disciplines to anyone thinking of starting their own business. 10 people came forward, most were redundant or under the threat of losing their jobs, and costs were minimal. The course was underwritten by a Rotary Club but this was not really significant. It could have been sponsored by the churches.

Would Whiting Street host and publicise such a course in September?

Would Churches Together in Sudbury do the same?

I am only asking! It is just an example.

I could personally extend this programme for the Business Community to a series of seminars with topical subjects and invite local entrepreneurs to speak.

The Elderly and Housebound seem to be well covered by Age Concern.

Children: I need your input, also for the Disabled.

The Hospitalised: Does Samantha need help with the transport of relatives or any other support?

Street Communities: There has been media coverage quite recently on Land Share and Gardening Time Banks. Are there residents of social housing and the new estates who would benefit from our experience? They may only need encouragement to get them going.

Even with limited assets the churches can become catalysts or enablers.

So much for the People assets.

Our Buildings are very particular to individual congregations. However interesting tilings are happening elsewhere.

Faith in Action Issue 4 and the Expository Times, June issue page 429 are very relevant and the Bromley-by-Bow development would make an interesting visit.

I look forward to your comments!

LET'S DO IT ALL IN THE NAME OF THE CHURCHES!!