



# UCSG newsletter

supporting urban URC churches in Thames North and Southern synods

## Community Work Stories

The URC has a strong history in community work. In particular the Church Related Community Worker programme has been widely seen as an example of good practice in the area of church related community work. But there is also much more to community work in the URC than this particular programme. Many churches are engaged in small pieces of community work which make a significant contribution to their community as well as enabling Christians to do Christianity rather than just talk about it.

In the Urban Churches Support Group we are beginning to gather some of these stories. We hope that this will celebrate some of the hidden things being done in our churches as well as provide practical examples of the kind of things that any church can do anywhere. As we gather some of these stories we are already beginning to learn interesting things:

- Although some funding is necessary this is not such a dominant concern as in the voluntary sector. Churches already have the financial and building resources to enable people to do something if they want to
- Doing community work is a real encouragement to churches. It enables Christianity to become practical rather than theoretical
- Community work normally involves cooperating with other people - especially other churches

Sometimes people talk about the distinctive contribution of churches to their communities and to society but I think what we are beginning to see is that this is often more about the *way* things are done rather than *what* is being done, or even *why* it is being done. Community work in churches comes out of the life of the churches rather than being a response to government targets, what the voluntary sector considers to be good practice or particular theological fashions. Sometimes churches develop their community work so that it becomes more 'professional', but more often it is a grassroots response which comes from the heart rather than rational planning. This, I suspect, will give it more resilience in the time after the next election when governments will be seeking to cut spending at every available opportunity. We will see very clearly that the state is not able to provide everything and it will be up to us as communities, of all different kinds, to respond from our hearts to the needs which we see around us in our urban communities.

So if you have a well established, effective community work programme and would like to tell your story, or if you are just beginning to take your first tentative steps we would love to hear from you! Our contact details are at the end of the newsletter.

## ***UCSG news and events***

John and Sandra led 2 sessions on the '**Rites of Passage**' for the latest TLS Residential on Pastoral Care at Ely 26th/27th March.

June 5 **Church Secretaries Consultation** Lumen URC 10:30-1 PM. Our popular event for church secretaries this time looking at the theme of "How to Make My Church a Volunteer Magnet!"

October 30 **Church Secretaries Consultation** Southern Synod Crossway URC. A follow-up to the previous consultation particularly looking at the multicultural dimensions to the issue

### ***Forthcoming in the Autumn***

**Half day for urban multicultural churches.....**Topic: Looking at developing knowledge and awareness of the opportunities and resources that our denomination has to offer us and from which we can all benefit.

**Be Not Afraid.** A conference for the chronic illness programme which we have been running for a number of years. Watch this space!

***Advance notice for 2011: Saturday 24th September...URC Multicultural Event at Carrs Lane URC Birmingham***

## ***Some resources for community work***

We are developing a few resources on our website:

[www.urbanchurches.org.uk/communitywork.htm](http://www.urbanchurches.org.uk/communitywork.htm)

There is also a helpful list of resources on the URC National website, although I did notice it is a bit out of date in places:

[http://www.urch.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/crcw/resources/further\\_information\\_on\\_resources](http://www.urch.org.uk/what_we_do/crcw/resources/further_information_on_resources)

This link to a URC church in Bolton gives a good description of the CRCW programme and its philosophy in a particular context:

<http://buildingbridgesintongemoorbolton.co.uk/whatisacrcw.aspx>

The Livability community mission website is also an useful source of resources and a regular newsletter <http://www.communitymission.org.uk/>

The Churches Community Work Alliance still has its website up and running but hasn't really been active for a few years now <http://www.ccwa.org.uk/>

**Need a break  
from intense  
community  
work?**

**Want to develop  
your community  
mission and  
ministry?**

**Radical Church  
Challenging Communities**

**Are you a church  
member wanting  
to get more  
active in your  
neighbourhood?**

**Are you a church  
leader wanting  
to develop your  
church's role in  
the local  
community?**

 **Developing  
Community  
Experiences**

**Building confidence and  
enhancing skills in the field of  
community development work  
and community mission**

**2010: 3rd-5th September (Cambridge); 26-28 November (Bristol)  
2011: 25th-27th March (Manchester); 17th-19th June (Cambridge)**

TLS course fee £575 (including accommodation, meals, sessions, tutor groups and materials). Four weekends (only) fee £400 (including accommodation, meals and sessions)

Through home study units, residential weekends, tutorials and practical engagement you will gain confidence and enhance your skills in community development work from a faith perspective. This course is validated by the University of Chester and may contribute towards a Higher Education Foundation Degree in Contextual Theology

[crcw@urc.org.uk](mailto:crcw@urc.org.uk). [www.tlsonline.co.uk](http://www.tlsonline.co.uk) . 02079168653. Bursary aid available

## ***UCSG can...***

Urban churches support group seeks to provide a range of resources, events and services specifically designed for churches operating in an urban environment -- whether that be a classic inner-city community, an outer estate or a more deprived part of an otherwise prosperous neighbourhood. Whilst most of our work is in London we are also keen to support work in urban communities outside London in the southeast.

We have done the following in the past:

- Advice and resources on setting up new projects
- Events addressing urban worship, mission and responses to violence
- Exploring the issue of chronic illness in urban churches
- Interim ministry to churches in pastoral transition
- Introductions to urban ministry for new ministers
- Nonmanagerial supervision for community workers
- One-off consultations
- Ongoing support for church secretaries
- Ongoing training on multi-ethnic rites of passage
- Pastoral support for clergy and lay workers
- Promoting urban issues within the URC
- Support to churches threatened with closure or in crisis
- Theological reflection and practical guidance on estate ministry
- Theological resources on multicultural ministry
- Training for Elders
- Training to enable the multicultural church to address racism

etc...!

We have a range of skills as experienced ministers, community workers, trainers and youth workers available to support you in the exciting but challenging world of urban mission. We can offer a range of support from planned long-term interventions to occasional telephone support.

**Our desire is to make sure that no URC Church in Thames North and Southern Synods feels unsupported in its mission and ministry to urban communities**

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