

Church Chat

A Year in the Life of *Churches Together in Sudbury & District*

Churches Together in Sudbury & District groups together twelve churches in Sudbury itself, two in Great Cornard and a smattering of churches in surrounding villages. In the past churches, the Church, has had an unenviable reputation for division, rivalry and conflict. *Churches Together* seeks to repair that reputation and to provide a platform for church members to express and celebrate their common faith. We realise that there is much more that binds us together as Christians from different backgrounds and traditions than separates us.

To that end we put on a number of events throughout the year that enable us to worship and share our faith in God - at the beginning of each year is the *Week of Prayer for Christian Unity* on each day of which we attend a short service in different churches, the *Women's World Day of Prayer* later on unites Christian women from the town and indeed from all around the world in a united service.

In addition to these events we hold four united services a year, again in different churches, collections from which are ear-marked for a number of good causes. Perhaps the most obvious manifestation of *Churches Together in Sudbury* is our café cum information centre cum Fair Trade outlet *Kettle & Fish*, which runs most weeks in St Peter's in the town centre on market day. This has proved very popular not only with church people but also with Thursday shoppers and tourists visiting the town. We have a team of volunteers from most of the town's churches who happily give their time serving refreshments or chatting to visitors.

There are a number of other ventures which operate under the auspices of *Churches Together in Sudbury* - all motivated by a desire to help those in need and to share God's love with as many people as possible. For youngsters there is *Eden's Project* located in Gainsborough Street, where 12-18 year-olds are able to meet in a relaxing atmosphere and do the sorts of things that teenagers like doing. They are able to use the facilities on offer - IT and games especially - as well as create their own music and develop other skills. For younger children *Future Vision* takes teams of helpers into schools

to lead assemblies and to present dramatisations of Bible stories to the children there (*Open the Book*).

On Saturday evenings *Town Pastors* with their high visibility vests can be seen in the town centre offering advice and help to some of those, mainly youngsters, who have got themselves into difficulties through too much drink or drugs. Much appreciated by the police, the *Pastors* provide a means of defusing potentially dangerous situations.

There is considerable expertise among members of *Churches Together in Sudbury* in the areas of advice on marriage and relationships and of motivating and mentoring men who are finding their way into faith and need support.

As Christians we recognise the value of prayer. All our activities are supported by church members praying (we hold *Prayer Breakfasts* every Saturday) - these prayers are not just for ourselves but also for the wider community, as we invite requests for prayer through various means, *Kettle & Fish*, individual churches and contacts that we make with folk during our everyday lives.

Churches Together in Sudbury is an organisation that sees itself as an integral part of Sudbury life, whether openly, through the projects already mentioned, or internally, as members of the town's large number of churches share faith stories and journeys and encourage each other to explore the exciting adventure of the Christian life.

Malcolm Offord
Vice-chairman CTIS
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