

## Church Chat February 2013

It's often said that Britain and America are two nations separated by a common language (for example British *tap* for American *faucet*; British *pavement* for American *sidewalk*). From time to time it also seems as if the language of the Church separates it from folk not familiar with Church talk. The Church's tendency to use archaic language together with unusual imagery in some of its services – and there is no doubt that the language of the *King James* version of the Bible of 1611 is beautiful – can be a real obstacle to people's understanding of what is going on in Church services. It is also true on the other side that the use of words like *God* and *Jesus Christ* as expletives is very distressing to those who feel that such words should be treated with great respect.

The separation between Church and non-Church resulting from differences of language is compounded by a historical separation. The events that constitute the foundations of the Christian faith took place two thousand years ago. That is a long time ago. Memories of what happened during the Second World War are becoming more and more dim, as those who lived through them become older and older and inevitably die. So keeping alive the memory of events two thousand years old is a very difficult task and challenge indeed.

This is a challenge that *Churches Together in Sudbury & District* is keen to take up. On Easter Saturday members of the organization will take to the streets of Sudbury dressed as the main characters in the original Easter story – Jesus, Mary, Pilate, Judas, the high priest, a Roman centurion. Children in town that Saturday will be given cards with pictures of those characters printed on them, and, as they spot them, they will ask them to sign their card to show that they have tracked them down. Prizes will be awarded to those who collect a good tally of signatures. There will be other games and activities for the children – and adults - in St Peter's at the same time. This is *I-Spy Easter*.

That event is *Churches Together's* most dramatic attempt at bridging the time and language gaps that sadly separate the churches from many members of our town. But *Churches Together* also tries to put into practice some of the teaching that Jesus gave to his early followers and which is recorded in the New Testament. As members of the town's churches, we have a deep sense of commitment to our town and all the people who live in it and visit it.

That is the inspiration of the *Town Pastors* project – trained Christians who at the weekend walk the streets of Sudbury making themselves available to help people whose Saturday nights out have not turned out the way they were hoping; maybe they have drunk too much or they have become parted from their friends or have been involved in a confrontation. The Pastors are able to help them find transport home or provide warm clothing or 'sensible' footwear or a listening ear, so that they are not left alone and vulnerable in the early hours of the morning.

*Churches Together in Sudbury* is determined not to become a closed shop, a group of people focused solely upon their own interests. Our desire is to connect with

our community, to share and explain that two-thousand-year old reality of the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ with our fellow townsfolk in a language that is relevant and contemporary. God is not fixed in a time warp, only to be accessed through ancient language, but is a living, spiritual being who can be communicated with by anyone, anywhere who wishes to do so.

*Malcolm Offord*

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