

Minutes of the CTiS&D Forum held on Thursday June 30th 2022 at St Andrew's, Great Cornard

There were 16 people present representing 11 churches.

	<p>Welcome & Opening Worship The Forum was welcomed by Rev Chris Ramsey who led the opening worship.</p> <p>The Forum welcomed the Rev Andrew Doarks and Pastors Joel and Kady Taylor who gave a brief summary of how they were called to serve in Sudbury.</p>
2	<p>Apologies Apologies were received from Ruth Ridge, Andrew Dixey, Peter Heard, Peter Halden, Tom Burrows and Judith Offord.</p>
3	<p>Minutes of the Forum held on 23rd January 2020 The minutes of the Forum held on 23rd January 2020 were accepted as accurate and signed by the Chairman.</p>
8A	<p>Tim Ayrton – No 72 Tim introduced himself as one of the Directors of No 72 which had been working in Sudbury for 15 years. He explained that they worked with families and individuals and that it was a privilege to be able to do so. He said that at the moment they were engaged in a number of areas. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debt – this was a hangover from the pandemic. They were working with REACH, an organisation based in Haverhill and have become a satellite to that organisation. Rob McNeish, at No 72 was a qualified debt advisor. • Ukrainians – they were working with an increasing budget for work with Ukrainians of whom they were seeing an increasing number. They were able to supply pre-paid SIM cards donated by Vodafone for those in “communication poverty”. They were running drop-in sessions in the Bannister Room at St Andrews on Monday mornings. GoStart Community Transport were operating at no charge a bus service which went round the villages picking up those who wished to attend. They were also working with Storehouse and with the Salvation Army. • The Neighbourhood Chaplains Scheme – this was a tool for churches to help them reach out into the community and serve them. Tim showed the Forum a selection of cards which were available to help churches introduce themselves to those in their community. He left information for churches. <p>Questions were invited.</p> <p>Tim was asked whether CAP is a similar model to REACH. Tim explained that CAP only deals with churches so had declined to work with No 72. He said there was more flexibility working with REACH and that it was more suitable for the people with whom No 72 was working</p> <p>Tim explained, in answer to a question, that Ukrainians needed clothes, shoes [preferably new], school uniforms and phones.</p> <p>The drop-in sessions gave Ukrainians the opportunity to meet together, to apply for benefits, to find out how to get in touch with the job centre. Tim asked for prayers for this work.</p> <p>The Chairman thanked him for his presentation.</p>
5	<p>Ratification of appointment of Vice-Chairman Tom Burrows at a recent EnGp meeting had agreed to be a Vice Chairman for CTiS&D and was appointed by that meeting. The Forum was asked to ratify this appointment. Tom's appointment was ratified. As a</p>

	result of an appeal for additional Vice Chairman, Tim Ayrton agreed to consider whether he was able to consider appointment to this role.
6	<p>Treasurer's Report</p> <p>A copy of the Treasurer's report for the period 1st September 2021 to 1st June 2022 had been circulated. The Treasurer had said that he had no additional comments to make and that no specific approvals were needed.</p> <p>The Chairman expressed thanks to the Treasurer for his work keeping the finances in order.</p>
7	<p>Chairman's Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chairman said there was an urgent need for someone to take responsibility for social media and press matters for the CTIS&D. He asked that all churches consider whether there was someone in their congregation who would be prepared to take on this role. • Holy Trinity had been asked if they could host the next Forum and AGM which would be taking place on October 3rd, but had not as yet responded. Malcolm Offord offered to follow this up. It was agreed that the next Steering Committee would consider who should be invited to speak at the Forum.
8B	<p>Rev Chris Ramsey spoke to the Forum about his sabbatical and his research into Men's Sheds. A copy of his report prepared for the Diocese is attached as an annex to these minutes. Questions following his presentation included a question as to whether a site for a Men's Shed in Sudbury had been identified. Chris said that several sites had been considered, but no decisions had been made. What was needed was a group to drive the project forward.</p>
9	<p>Any Other Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andy Jowett reminded the Forum that the Prayer Breakfasts were now taking place hosted by different churches. He said that these breakfasts were a powerhouse of CTIS&D. • He added that Songs of Praise would be being recorded on Tuesday July 19th at Holy Trinity Church. It was hoped that there would be representation from all churches on this occasion. Admission was by ticket which could be obtained by emailing SOPcongregations@avantmedia.tv. It was planned that there would be contributions from Storehouse and from Foxearth Meadows. Rev Matt Lawson had asked for prayers that this event would encourage and strengthen local Christian witness. • Malcolm Snow expressed thanks to those who had been involved in collecting for Christian Aid. The total collected in Sudbury, Great Cornard and Shimpling was £3,800. Unfortunately there had been no collection in Long Melford this year. • Malcolm Snow said that Sudbury had been a Fairtrade Town for a number of years. If it were to retain this status, it would be necessary to strengthen the current group. The current Chair is Sue Ayres. There was a lot of work to be done and volunteers, not necessarily church members, were urgently needed. The next meeting would be held on 25th July at 2.00 pm at the Town Hall • It was noted that Bob Bird, an ex Chairman of CTIS&D, had died recently.
10	<p>Closing</p> <p>The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance. The meeting closed at 8.55 with everyone sharing the Grace.</p>

Of sheds and men – A Sabbatical reflection by Rev Chris Ramsey

I always used to think of a shed as a place to keep things – usually garden tools like spades and lawnmowers, sometimes a workbench covered in plant pots, piled high such that you can barely open the door safely; but I have found out just how wrong I was.

The Men's shed's movement grew out of Australia in the 1980s as a way to improve the mental health and well-being of older men. Recognising how important social networks are, which can often suddenly be cut off at retirement, the sheds created a healthy space in which men (and women) could find the kind of camaraderie they might have enjoyed in the workplace; and people amongst whom they might find belonging and space to talk "shoulder to shoulder" about the problems and pains which troubled them.

The movement has grown to many other parts of the world now, including New Zealand, Ireland, Canada, the US and the UK. Here in the UK we might think of men's sheds as an extension of working men's clubs but away from the prop of alcohol, with a focus on mental health, skill sharing and, in many places, community action.

In most of the sheds I visited there was a rejection of the term "Men's" Shed with a desire to include women and also people of all ages rather than just those of retirement age, recognising the needs of individuals of all stripes and interests. However amongst these there was a sense of the importance of bringing men, in particular, together, creating a space in which they would feel welcome, safe, accepted and able to talk with others "shoulder to shoulder"

Shoulder to shoulder

That phrase "shoulder to shoulder" comes up time and again in the men's shed movement and recognises the reticence of many men to talk openly about weakness, struggles or failure. The lessons of "big boys don't cry" that men grew up with, the "stiff upper lip" or calls to "man up" when struggling with emotions, are deep rooted within the male psyche. This can leave men with no place to turn when the black dog stalks near; fearful to admit to crushing anxiety in case they are looked down upon or somehow seen as less masculine or a failure.

This is by no means an exclusively male experience, but it may be an indication of why suicide is the single biggest cause of death of men under 50 after alcohol and substance abuse.

Returning to Men's or Community Sheds, as many like to be called, many work on community as well as individual projects:

- creating bird boxes for local schools
- benches for a care homes
- cut-outs for a silhouette nativity scene at the local church in one place I visited

Many also raise funds by making and selling items at their premises or at local fetes and markets, also helping raise awareness of their existence.

Premises

Many sheds are a project in and of themselves needing to be built on vacant and available sites or equipped and outfitted for use. Health and safety are a priority with training given before individuals are allowed to operate power tools and machinery - those lax bad habits formed at home have to be challenged in an environment where an individual's short cuts can lead to harm being caused to others.

A need for permanent premises sets the Sheds apart from many community groups - whilst an art group can arrive with their own equipment or a cookery group might use a village hall kitchen, it's difficult when you want to use pillar drills, band saws and lathes or need to store lumber and racks of hand tools to move from place to place. One shed I visited had moved premises 4 times in two years thanks to promises falling short and at the time of my visit had been given a barn but had no mains electricity or toilet facilities. Some sheds run out of converted shipping containers, others used former cow sheds and one had purpose built timber sheds on the site of a sports and social club

I believe that this is one area where churches can potentially offer direct support to sheds - giving land over to projects which will pay back dividends in terms of community engagement as well perhaps as having resident crafts-people who might help with all kinds of works in the church in return for rent-free accommodations! I saw this up close in Redbourn where a school had made its redundant woodwork room available to create a Community Shed (run by a local charity). The school enjoyed resident handy people, prop and bench builders whilst the shed enjoyed excellent secure accommodation with little need to fundraise for many of the costs other sheds have to raise.

Pastoral skills

The other area I feel that the church can have a particular part to play is in active membership of a local shed by members who might have training in pastoral listening skills and an awareness of who to turn to when speaking to folk in need. Most of the sheds I visited were fortunate to have members who were retired crafts people or experienced hobbyists who could share skills and offer practical advice on projects, however the same could not always be said when it came to pastoral matters. Whilst Men's sheds are a grass roots operation there is pressure in many places within the Men's sheds association to move toward a little more professionalism: offering mental health first aid training, safeguarding skills and referral pathways both into sheds from GP's or social workers, and back out into the professional mental health sphere where shed members perceive a need which they cannot, nor should be expected to handle themselves.

Incarnation

I was particularly taken with the arrangements in one shed I visited, in Essex, where there was a close working relationship with the local GP surgery. The surgery would "socially prescribe" patients to try the shed as a means to tackling isolation and low-level mental health issues. This relationship was founded upon the particular personalities in situ for sure; and it was telling that the shed leader was an elder in their church. This meant they had received training in pastoral listening, safeguarding and had the support of their ordained leader in supporting the members of the shed.

Another shed I visited in Suffolk was led by a team who happened to mostly be Christians from different churches who shared a concern for the well-being of people from their village and saw the shed as part of their mission to build the kingdom through shared social action.

The shed is not a place for evangelism, but it is a place where it is possible to exercise that Christ-like calling listening, loving and building the kingdom in profoundly incarnational manner through wood shaving and graft, "shoulder to shoulder"

Transformation

I'll close with a reflection that I found to be true in each shed that I visited: that of the particular shrine of the kettle. This was at the heart of each shed I visited and represented for me the truth that when the tools were put down and mugs taken up, the real business of the shed took place over a brew. A knowing look, and a questing of "so, come on how is it really". I met with prisoners who had been freed from isolation, those struck dumb by anxiety who'd found voice for their feelings and people with opened eyes to see the gifts they could offer others. signs of the kingdom in which "industry is for mending the bent bones and the minds fractured by life" (*R.S. Thomas The Kingdom*) shining out in community apart from the church in which we ought to joining in the work of the spirit "shoulder to shoulder" with Christ.