

Three Churches Project

Annual Report 2008



Three Churches Project

St. Matthew's, Chapel Allerton
Stainbeck United Reformed
Holy Trinity, Meanwood

*A member of
Leeds Christian Community Trust*



LCCT

releasing dreams and visions

Notes from the project worker:

Perhaps the first thing to say in looking back at 2008 is that I am glad not to have had to leave the post in July, having completed the three years I was initially contracted to. One of the major reasons for this is that we have been able to secure funding to continue the project, £10,000 of which has come from Leeds City Council, which is very encouraging. We have continued to receive support from other organisations (listed at the end of this report), and we are very grateful for those who are willing to resource us.

Resources, of course, come in all sorts of packages, and it is also important to give thanks for the materials we are given by different individuals and organisations, the energy and time of our volunteers, the advantage we have of being able to make use of our church buildings, and the other resources we share with our partner organisations.

The bulk of this report reflects what we have done together over the past year. It's also important for me to outline the "lesser seen" parts of my work:

I continued helping with the Princes Trust/ ASDAN group at Carr Manor High School until the summer holidays in 2008, the main result of which was to produce a DVD of some basic British Sign Language words that I had taught them. We have a good relationship with the school, which has many benefits, including the clear advantage of seeing/ working with the same young people that we see in other areas of our work.

I have received training in Common Assessment Framework, which is a Government initiative that I have found a very positive approach to working with children (and is also an obligation which too few people in the voluntary sector know about). I can often be a cynic of new Government "initiatives" but I believe this one is important and urge everyone who works with minors to find out more about it.

I have also been involved in planning and teaching for an Applied Theology course called Workshop, as part of a new weekend focusing on creativity. The time has been good for developing links with other Christians in the Arts and also thinking through the theology and practice of what we do.

And finally, along with Angela Hughes, I continue to attend local forums and meetings for residents and for partner organisations, as well as continuing our vital links across the city. There's a balance to strike when it comes to attending lots of meetings, but being part of these forums really has been an important part of ensuring that we have a voice in decisions made at a local and wider level, in us being advocates for those we work with, and in us having the opportunity to build relationships with people outside the Church.

For me, 2008 was in many ways a year of hope, which I think has been reflected through Three Churches. I hope this report now sparks the question, "What Next?".

Vanessa Brown

Events and Activities, 2008

Regular Activities:

ReFresh – a club for 7-12 year olds, Mondays in term time.

Refresh began in Autumn 2007 and now has almost 50 children registered, with new faces almost every week and 25-30 children at each session. Leeds Youth Service (City Council youth workers) have supported us by sending two workers, despite this not being the age group they would ordinarily work with. The club is run by our paid worker and volunteers from the churches and local community. It continues the work of the Two Hills Project, which drew to a close last year.



Rewind. We recently started a new group, in partnership with Leeds Youth Service, to give provision for those too old for ReFresh. The group decided to call themselves Rewind, although only they could tell you why! We have about 10 young people, age 11-15 at the moment. Volunteers come from the local community and local partner organisations, including Careforce workers from Meanwood Valley Baptist Church. Most of the group used to attend ReFresh, but there are one or two new faces, some of whom we already have links with through Carr Manor High.



Craft Club continues to be headed up by Sylvia Rudge and Joyce Cockryll, both local residents who put a lot of time into preparing each week. The group runs after Stainbeck Church's **Community Café** on Thursday afternoons and has been pleased to welcome a number of new people over the year, some of whom have been referred by local agencies.

SOWN, our social group for adults, has also seen new faces this year, although the group has stopped for Winter and will be under review, as we decide the best way forward to build on what has happened there.



Drum Circles: Having had consistently good responses to drum circles in past years, we ran monthly circles for the community this year, alternating between Holy Trinity and Stainbeck churches as a venue. These have been well received but poorly attended by church members, so will need to be reviewed as to how they are best "used". The drums do continue to be a wonderful resource.

One-off Events:

2008 saw a number of one-off events. Early in the year we were involved with a "**learning market**", organised by a group called Learning Partnerships. This has been just one part in our ongoing relationships with local partners, which continues to be an important part of the work we do.

We were also involved with the **Community Fair at Moortown** and **Hope '08**, technically not "Three Churches Project" events but nevertheless significant events in our year. The community fair took place at Carr Manor High School and was run by what is now called Faith NETWORKS, based on the name given to the Extended Schools cluster in our area. The group began with Stainbeck Church and the women of the IQRA Muslim education centre. More people from other faith groups joined us this year and the community event was a real success.

Meanwood's contribution to the nation-wide Hope '08 campaign was to organise three days of activities, including a children's holiday club, adult foot massages, crafts, café, crèche and computers (not deliberately all beginning with "C"!). We were pleased to have the support of about 15 young people and leaders from Leeds Youth Cells Network, who, despite bad weather and tiredness were consistently enthusiastic and resourceful.

Two Lads: Our "big" project for the year was Two Lads of Leeds, a community play that recreated a Shakespeare classic, and which was re-written by the cast, most of whom were children age 7-14. The project created many challenges but was successful in bringing members of the community and church together; building confidence and skills and developing our relationships with other local partners,

including the police. About 40 people were involved, onstage and off, most of them with little or no experience of theatre. Each night saw packed out audiences at Stainbeck Church, which was transformed for the occasion. Despite the hard work, this was a fun project that was well supported and was excellent for occupying local young people during the school holidays. The relationship



with the young people and their parents that has resulted from the project has been one of the greatest benefits of doing it, which serves to remind us that if you can work through challenging situations with people, there are usually stronger bonds at the other end.

Finances:

By the end of 2008, we were financially “secure” to continue to employ a worker to run a similar amount of projects for another 18 months – 2 years. Our accounts for the year are not yet published but will be available on the website by the end of March 2009.

We are currently funded by:

Leeds Christian Community Trust;

Diocese of Ripon and Leeds;

United Reformed Church Yorkshire Synod;

Church Urban Fund;

The Three Partner Churches;

Leeds City Council Wellbeing Fund: (The Well-Being Fund grant is awarded by local Ward Members through the North East (Inner) Area Committee)