



SAVE THE DATE!

TRAINING DAY: **What Should We Do With Our Church?**

Saturday, 17 October 2015

(Venue to be confirmed)

Following the very successful *Funding* training day earlier in the year, IBEX will be doing something similar again... But this is for people or Churches who are at a different stage on their journey - **Those who want to do something but don't really know where to start.**

We think there are three main possible stages to any Church development process:

Stage 1 - Think about your wider community, talk to your wider community and work out what you might be able to do to be useful.

Stage 2 - When things begin to happen - as they will - identify how your premises are inadequate, and what you need to do to "do it better".

Stage 3 - Raise the Money!

So this will be for people somewhere in the first two stages - the final

programme will only be developed after talking to people who will be there, to identify what would be useful.

And remember, coming to such an event could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship! or rather a longer term supportive relationship.

Let's Share The Good Work We Are Doing!



What Are The Churches Doing For Their Country?

It was John F Kennedy who said "Don't ask what your Country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country. On a (loosely) related theme, we have had over the last few years the notion of the "Big Society" as what seemed to be a jolly good idea before the last election, but which soon was seen by many as a "toxic brand". Both are about seeing the bigger picture, about caring what goes on for other people

Am I alone in thinking that, with the "Big Society", it didn't seem to be just about encouraging people and organisations to be benevolent in times of need and - dare I say it - austerity. It seemed to be much more about treating the welfare of many in

such a cavalier fashion that people who care, such as the Churches and the Faith Communities, would be forced in to coping with the mess that was left. And then there is precious little appreciation for what is done: there is a proliferation of food banks because there is a real, real need, and then they are dismissed by numbers of people in "people only use them because they are there" mode.

Mr Gove, Mr Osborne and others who have made similar comments seem not to realise that the only alternative to foodbanks to probably most of their users would be just not to eat. It was even suggested to me before the election that we should tackle the rumour or misconception that the Trussell Trust is an invention of or a part of the Labour Party to be used as a Public Relations vehicle by them. Mind you, I have also seen while researching this that there are also rumours that the Trussell Trust was founded by the Conservative Party, while the truth, I think, is that it is fiercely apolitical and independent.

BUT, whatever our views might be, the Churches have become notably more active recently in reacting to needs in their local community. If there are people who need help, the Churches are most likely to react and support. We wouldn't leave people in the lurch just because we didn't approve of the system that might have created their need. I would be the first to advocate challenging "the system", but there is a time and a place.

So, we said in the last newsletter that we wanted to gather and share stories of good work going on. We really mean it. Experience tells us that people are far, far too self-effacing and modest about what they are doing, when we ought to be putting to one side those bushels and letting the light shine. Things that you might think very ordinary and run of the mill might be a total inspiration to someone else. Let us know what you are doing - food banks, thrift shops, support for the unemployed, working with young people, ex-offenders, the homeless, addiction of some sort, debt advice, housing support or whatever else. Write it up. Send us some photographs. Or let us come and talk to you and we will write it up for you, take some photographs, but make sure AT ALL STAGES that you are happy with what we are doing.

And that wouldn't be onerous. We would enjoy doing it. And it could well give other people the confidence to try something. As the old Chinese proverb says, "Every Journey Starts With a Single Step!"

The Cinnamon Network Report



I was involved a number of years ago in a report produced from research done in the old South-east government region which sought to put a value on the **presence and work done in the region by the Faith Communities**. The figures were stunning, and the report also highlighted the real quality of what was done across a wide range of areas.

The [Cinnamon Trust](#) has just [published a report](#) doing the same sort of thing for the work that Churches do across the country in their communities and supporting people who need help. The figures in it are simply stunning. It values the work done by the Churches at £3billion per year - yes, that is billion with a **b** for bravo.

The report is well worth a look. And it needs to be stressed that when Churches undertake work of this sort, they do it well, very well, because they care about what they are doing and who they are doing it for.

Quote of the day ...



Horace Greeley,
Editor and Politician

“It is impossible to enslave
mentally or socially a Bible-
reading people. The principles of
the Bible are the groundwork of human freedom.”

Church Action On Poverty



An article by Niall Cooper, the Director of [Church Action on Poverty](#), quotes the following from Psalms, which seems to provide as much justification as anyone might need to be interested in Social Justice.

"Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, I will now arise," says the Lord. "I will protect them from those who malign them."

There are real concerns around about benefits capping, the question of a Minimum or Living wage, worries about housing. [Read about such things here!](#)

The Newsletter also highlights the idea of local Church Action on Poverty Groups, and there is [support available to set one up](#). Is anyone local up for that I wonder?

Local or Regional Joint Public Issues Teams?



The leaders of the Churches which make up the JPIT (Joint Public Issues Team) have [written to the Prime Minister](#) to congratulate him on his election success. In doing so, they recognise some of the good stuff which has been done in the past, but at the same time express their real concerns for the future and their support for the most vulnerable.

Incidentally, the idea has been suggested recently that there should be a local or regional Joint Public Issues Team. Representatives from the Methodist and United Reformed Churches locally have already had a preliminary exploratory meeting with a member of the national JPIT, which would support the development wholeheartedly. One major plus would be that a local JPIT would not be limited to the denominations involved nationally. It could therefore have as wide an ecumenical spread as could be developed. Watch this space.

The letter stresses also how many Churches or Church groups held hustings and were interested and involved in the process and the issues. We need also to maintain this interest after the election, too, supporting the good and challenging or questioning the not so good.

The rest of the [JPIT website](#) and the [PRAXIS newsletter](#) are worth a look, too.

On another note ... I was lucky enough to be given a paper copy of the JPIT publication [Time to Rethink Benefit Sanctions!](#) Through being involved in this area, I am aware of some of the draconian measures that can be taken against people who, quite often, are really trying hard. And what can people do if they do not have enough of anything, and then even get that taken away from them with, as the report points out, sometimes no notice. What better way could there be to drive people into the black economy or crime, or to more drastic measures, which is why all the Advisers at the Benefits Advice centre, of which I am secretary, have Suicide awareness Training. And benefits are set to be cut more!

Have Your Say on the



'Commission On Religion and Belief In Public Life' ...

Were you aware that there is currently in existence a Commission on Religion and Belief in Public Life.?It is being chaired by Lady Elizabeth Butler-Sloss. Having such a chair is probably an indication that the matter is being taken seriously. Apart from being a high profile legal figure, her Wikipedia page also puts her forward as a church-goer.

The [website is here](#), and there is still time to contribute to the debate.

And Finally.....



And finally, it has also been suggested that, now the election is over, we need to be ready to deal with MP's of all parties and any party. Whatever their priorities and policies are, and however much you might disagree with the ideas of the "other side", the vast majority of MP's are there for the right reasons - to make the world a better place.

And of course your MP is there to represent you, whether you voted for him or her, whether you voted for someone else, or even if you didn't vote at all. But they are very busy people. So it is important to think about and plan your approach. [Herewith some tips from the Horse's mouth](#), so to speak - an MP on how best to go about it ...

The Place of Religion in Education?

Our team leader, David Wrighton, is the secretary of SEEFF - the South-east England Faiths Forum. That organisation is holding a conference in September in conjunction with the University of Winchester and NASACRE about the place of Religion in Education. The main speaker will be Alan Brine, a former senior manager at OFSTED responsible for Religious Education.

This promises to be a very worthwhile event. Further preliminary details can be found through the organisations [website here](#).

Who is IBEX?

IBEX – the Church working in the Economy Central South Coast

IBEX is a Christian organisation relating faith to economic life, in Hampshire and Dorset, mainly Bournemouth and Poole.

We are funded by the URC Wessex Synod, Southampton Methodist District and Baptist Home Mission.

Our main areas of activity:

- Support for local churches serving their communities
- Work with Partner Organisations on Community Projects e.g. local authorities, statutory and voluntary organisations
- Support and development of Chaplaincy

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Our mailing address is: newsletter@ibexsouthcoast.org.uk