

CGSC Executive Committee:

| | |
|-----------|--------------------|
| Chairman | Tony Cornfield |
| Secretary | Miranda Cormack |
| Treasurer | Rosemary Wakefield |
| Executive | Elaine Coupe |
| Executive | Rita Bennett |
| Executive | Vivienne Hall |
| Co-opted | David Vincent |

Contact:

The Chairman on 01732 452062

Or email Tony@7oaksvineyard.

freeserve.co.uk

The Secretary on 01732 457230

Or write to 17 Pontoise Close,

Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 3ES

Churches Group for Social Concern -

Aims:

To encourage the people of the churches in the application of their faith to everyday life in the community.

To draw the attention of member churches to current local needs and work in partnership with other agencies in an attempt to meet them.

To assist in thinking about ethical and moral issues, by initiating appropriate study projects and conferences.

When necessary it will arrange fundraising events.

Compassion

The Sevenoaks Churches

Issue 4, Dec 2004

Future plans and events

Following Steve Chalke's visit:

7.30 for 8.00pm on Thursday **13th January** at The Drive Methodist Church a meeting with Merle Bigden from Sevenoaks District Council.

Spring Group Meeting:

7.45pm on Monday **14th March** at a venue TBA

Every church representative is encouraged to come with a leader from their fellowship, to give consideration to real proposals for the way ahead.

Community Action Day: Bank Holiday Monday **30th May**, from 10.00am to 3.00pm in the community, followed by a BBQ.

Each church is invited to recruit a team or two, to make an impact through tidying, painting, clearing, blessing and encouraging people in our local communities.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Colossians 3 v 12 & 14



Where are we going?

I believe that we have a unique opportunity to change the way that "church" is viewed here in our community in our day and age.

Unique, because government is encouraging statutory bodies like the district council and health authority to actively participate with the faith community - the church - in helping to meet the needs of our community.

Unique, because there is a growing bond of unity here between churches of all denominations, and increasingly, church leaders are praying, planning and participating together in the work of the Kingdom of God.

This is too good a moment to miss!

Can we collectively commit to encourage our people to serve the community under a Christian Faith-Working banner?

Can we follow in the footsteps of Sevenoaks Christian Counselling Service and SAYT by putting our faith into action, to glorify God and love our neighbour?

Please come to the Spring SCGSC Group Meeting on Mon 14th March, bringing an interested friend / leader, prepared to say Yes or No to starting a new churches - together initiative, that will begin to change the way church and community relate.

faithworks

Inside this issue:

| | |
|---------------|---|
| Spring House | 2 |
| Bridge Trust | 3 |
| Future Events | 4 |

We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2 v 10

Building & Supporting Relationships

Peter Pickett from Spring House, by way of introduction, offered a 'job description' of a Mother. This enumerated the skills that would be valuable in a parent but for which there was no obvious training. Within a close family other members would be teachers, mothers, sisters, aunts. Now many families had moved away from their original home and it was difficult to find a role model. Health visitors and district nurses did their best but they were too busy to be able to spend enough time with each family. Spring House offered a place of safety where pre-school children would be cared for and 2 family support workers and a play leader would offer the children and their parents the chance to develop their own skills. This family support service was very busy and the work of play leaders and their assistants was vital.

There was a drop in three times a week. This gave the parents time to meet each other and for the staff to build a relationship with the parents. The parents got a chance to be listened to and to ask questions.

Spring House will be ten years old in 2005 and the needs are growing. One of the new projects was work with families with difficult teenagers. There was outreach work for isolated families and those with significant

problems. There was also a holiday club for the 5-11 year old age group. There were individuals and a few churches, Vineyard Church for example, who gave practical donations to individual families. This often meant the difference between the family being able to cope or not.

When asked about methods of referral, Peter said that they came through health visitors with an increasing number of self referrals and some from Social Services. When asked if there was not a problem of dependence after the families had settled down at

the centre, Peter replied that the problem of the parents handing over the responsibility for their children and just enjoying a cup of coffee had to be addressed. It was not a permanent option and parents had to be helped to move on.

Core funding for the centre came through social services with 20% being raised through fundraising activities. Spring House was a charity run by a board of trustees and the staff were responsible to the board. They all tried to help as many vulnerable families as possible.



Within Families - Autumn Open Meeting

Niall Willis from The Bridge Trust explained that The Trust was set up in 1991, specifically to provide action and support to single homeless people in West Kent. Broadly speaking the Trust has 2 roles: as a provider of services to the single homeless, including supported accommodation, and a facilitating role in bringing together agencies within the voluntary and statutory sectors to gaps in provision to the homeless. E.g. lobbying government and housing associations to offer social housing to a wider section of society.

Given that 57% of all homelessness was caused by some form of domestic breakdown, it wasn't surprising that young people whose parents or friends are no longer able or willing to keep them at home, form a substantial portion of the homeless total. Homelessness isn't necessarily the same as sleeping rough, it is more typically people sleeping in different locations, a friend's sofa or the floor. Those with no permanent address, can't open a bank account, and often can't claim benefit to which they are entitled.

The Bridge Trust operates with a Christian ethos, but is open to those of all religions and none. It operates four supported accommodation projects where there is a no alcohol and no drugs policy. There's a winter

shelter project in Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells and a shelter for women fleeing domestic violence. A recent sponsored workshop explored provisions for homeless 16 & 17 year olds, and concluded that one way forward could be a supported lodger scheme. The Trust also operates two Supported Move On schemes. Alongside these larger projects, the Trust runs street teams, comprising some 30 volunteers who offer soup, sandwiches, comfort and advice, 4 nights a week.



BRIDGE TRUST

action for single homeless people

Seeing that 5% of all school leavers will experience homelessness during their life time, it is appropriate that The Trust has access to schools, inputting to the citizenship curriculum. The Trust depends upon community support. Though 60% of revenue funding comes from the government's "Supporting People" initiative, that leaves £150,000 to be raised from other sources.

Responding to a question, Niall agreed that there was no local facility available for emergency accommodation, but they were exploring the possibility of setting up an all year round emergency project.