

Rossiter, J & Summers, S: *Assets for Life: Building Community in your Neighbourhood*.

First published in Great Britain in 2004 by The United Reformed Church, 86 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9RT, UK. Tel. + 44 (020) 7916 2020 © The United Reformed Church

## ASSETS for LIFE

### Summary

This action pack and report provides practical information and stories about the wide range of mission and church related community development work carried out by Christian agencies, including the United Reformed Church. It is a snap shot of activities rather than a definitive study of all the community work being undertaken by the churches. But it is hoped that it will give the reader an idea of the extent to which churches are involved with supporting and developing communities as part of Gods mission. From a picturesque Cotswold village to a peri-urban housing estate in Glasgow you will find someone with a formal or informal link to a church toiling with others and attempting to create a better neighbourhood.

The report was compiled following face to face interviews with church workers and beneficiaries (often the same people) in fifteen locations through out Britain and telephone interviews with personnel from other projects. Throughout the interviews, emphasis was put on how the work had improved and changed people's lives. The Information section of this pack includes numerous ideas, tools, resources, contacts and details to support the development of community initiatives.

Some of the stories in this pack are related directly to a church. Others are partnership initiatives where a church is working alongside other agencies. One of the intentions of this pack is to enthuse churches of all denominations presently not engaged in community ministry to take up the challenge and to help them identify resources and methods which will enable them to do it effectively. It is hoped that churches already engaged in community work will develop their existing ministry with further ideas. This pack is a working supplement to the *Assets for Life Video* and has been requested as a contribution to the discussion about how to be a more mission-focussed Church that makes a positive difference to our communities and our society.

This pack also intends to be a contribution to the ongoing debate around 'the emerging church' or 'new ways of being church'. It provides stories of churches that are not just focussed on members but churches that are concerned with the local environment, that stand alongside those in debt, that speak out against injustice, that demonstrate kingdom of God values where people live, work and play. Actually, for many churches, these aren't particularly 'new ways' at all!

The pack provides ideas and tools for you to build relationships and a mutual sense of belonging with people in your neighbourhood. Community initiatives and activities can provide the opportunities for conversations and meeting people beyond the church building. Relationships that can enable conversations with spiritual significance, a 'touching place' for glimpses of the gospel and that may provide opportune moments for 'apt liturgy'.<sup>1</sup> But relationships of trust that are authentic, mutual and honest, not with a motive of 'getting people along to church' (even though people may eventually choose to do so). It's not so much about taking God to the neighbourhood as discovering that God is already there. The Church needs to be active in the neighbourhood for its own developments sake as much as for anyone else's; to see God in, and at work with the marginalised, excluded and those in poverty, to take the risk to learn from and do things with those we wouldn't expect to.

---

<sup>1</sup> Morisy, A: *Journeying Out: A New Strategy for Mission*. Continuum, 2004.

## **Contents**

### **Summary**

### **Acknowledgements**

### **Assets for Life descriptions and stories**

### **Information Sheets:**

- 1 Some definitions of Community Development Work
- 2 Church involvement in Community Development Work
- 3 Some ideas for prayer and reflection.
- 4 Some issues to consider when setting up a Church Related Community Project
- 5 Some learning, development and training opportunities for individuals and churches
- 6 Some funding opportunities for Church Related Community Development Work
- 7 Some Community Development Tools for use by churches and community groups
- 8 Agencies providing resources, advice & training opportunities to support Church Related Community Development Work.
- 9 Glossary of Useful Terms Used in Community Development Work
- 10 Some publications about Church Related Community Development Work and ministry.

### **Appendices:**

- A Touching Place; examples of community initiatives in the United Reformed Church
- A modular, part-time delivered course for community development workers
- A Talk to the Local Government Association about faith-based organisations involvement with communities
- A conversation with a Church Related Community Worker