



1989 - 2014

**25 YEARS
OF
CREATING CHANGE IN
COMMUNITIES**

in words and pictures

The Work of
Church Related Community Work Minister

Simon Loveitt

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FOREWORD

History

The United Reformed Church ministry of Church Related Community Work (CRCW) began in 1981 in Bradford.

In 1987, it became formally recognised by the United Reformed Church General Assembly as a distinctive ministry on a par with the ministry of Word and Sacrament.

Calling to Church Related Community Work Ministry

My formative years were spent in inner city Aston in Birmingham, (where my father was Minister of South Aston United Reformed Church), and at Silcoates School a boarding school in West Yorkshire. Having missed nearly a year of schooling when 14 due to complications with appendicitis, the 'O' level exams two years later were a bit of a disaster.

Leaving school at 17, I knew I wanted to work with people and thought that the catering industry was my vocation, spending a year at a college of further education to secure the necessary entry qualifications.

During this period my link with the Church grew stronger. Thanks to FURY and the opportunities that brought, I attended the 1981 Christmas Conference, which was a key weekend in developing my faith in God. I became a member at South Aston United Reformed Church in 1983, and a couple of years later was ordained an Elder. In 1982, I became involved with Pilots at the church, becoming its 'Captain' and developing the Pilots Company into a large, vibrant multi-cultural youth group alongside Junior Church, attracting upwards of 50 young people.

Having spent two years at catering college and working at The Metropole Hotel at the National Exhibition Centre it became apparent that the catering industry wasn't where God wanted me to be, so spent a year as a volunteer community worker at South Aston United Reformed Church working with its South Aston Neighbourhood Development Scheme. This proved to be pivotal in discerning where God was calling me and over the next year tested this call through the candidating process to the new and exciting ministry of Church Related Community Work.

My training for Church Related Community Work took place within the Selly Oak Colleges, studying theology at St. Andrew's Hall, followed by a secular community work qualification at Westhill College. I lived in at St. Andrew's Hall for three years, thoroughly enjoying the diversity that 30 nationalities under one roof bring. The community work training at Westhill College was robust and challenging, providing a good grounding for my future ministry.

Creating Change in Communities

Churches should be involved in both the pastoral (community service) and prophetic engagement (community development) in its neighbourhood. I believe that the CRCW's priorities have to be that of prophetic engagement, building stronger and more resilient local communities.

This report will describe the various issues that I have encountered within the four communities where I have worked. It will show that breadth of work, and how it has made a difference.

1. The Churches in Community

Hulme United Reformed Church Hulme, Manchester – 1989 - 1999



In 1989 I was called to the South West Manchester Group of Churches, and was based at Hulme United Reformed Church, and worked for ten years working in inner-city Moss Side and Hulme.

In 1999 I was called to the East Cleveland Group of Churches, and was based at Linthorpe United Reformed Church, working for five years in inner city Middlesbrough.

Linthorpe United Reformed Church, Middlesbrough – 1999 - 2004



**St. John's United Reformed Church, Bradford
2004 - 2009**

In 2004, I was called to St. John's United Reformed Church in Bradford, and was based there for five years, but following the closure of St. John's Community Centre, I moved to Eccleshill United Reformed Church in 2009.



**Eccleshill United Reformed Church, Bradford
2009 - 2014**



2. Financial Inclusion & Credit Unions



Financial Inclusion is:

- Having no bank account
- Poor credit history
- No credit history
- Unemployed or only income from benefits/pension
- Unable to produce proof of identification documents
- Low literacy levels – unable to understand paperwork
- Fear of being declined and lack of confidence



Credit Union's are one answer. They provide an opportunity to save, and to borrow at very competitive rates. They now also offer budgeting accounts, ISA's, on-line banking and pre-paid debit cards.



I have been involved in the Credit Union movement since 1992, and this has been a major part of my ministry since. I have held a number of roles – Secretary, Treasurer, and for the past six years, Chair of Bradford District Credit Union, guiding them from a Council employee credit union, to one embracing everyone who lives and works in the Bradford District.



Pop Goes the Weasel

**Half a pound of tupenny rice
Half a pound of treacle
Mix them up and make it nice
Pop goes the weasel**

1850's Nursery Rhyme.

A 'weasel and stoat' is Cockney rhyming slang for "coat", which is "popped" or pawned.

3. Neighbourhood Regeneration

St. George's Estate Action Project 1992

Estate Action was an £11.5M local and central Government project to improve some of the housing stock in Hulme. My role was to support the tenants during this process, ensuring they were treated fairly, and compensation due was paid. Inevitably, the nine-month project was delayed and resulted in a project lasting 1½ years.



Hulme City Challenge – 1992-2002

A massive multi-million pound Government initiative transforming the poor quality deck-access and crescent housing in Hulme to new, mixed social and private housing. My role was to try to enable local people's voices to be heard during the juggernaut of a huge redevelopment programme.



The Old...



...And The New



4. Environment



Eccleshill United Reformed Church Graveyard Project

- Overgrown graveyard
- Environment project linking the church with the 'Agape' Project - a church based drug and alcohol project
- Through the volunteers from Agape, the graveyard cleared of the overgrowth
- Very positive feedback from local residents
- The church expressed their thanks by cooking a Christmas meal for church and Agape volunteers





Bradford Moor Park



The Old...



The Consultation

- Funding group formed which I chaired
- £100,000 raised from trust funds
- 5 tenders received from manufacturers
- 6 Schools & 2 Mosques voted on their favourite
- 1,500 votes cast, with 980 voting for winning design



...And The New

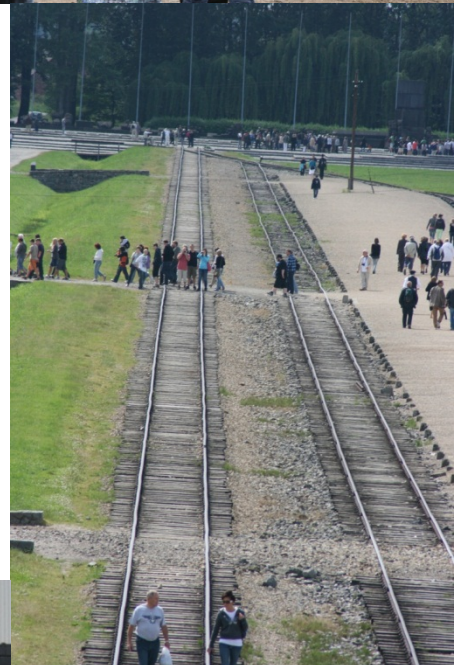


...The Demolition

5. Community Cohesion

Via Media

Through the BD3 Partnership, which I chaired, I became involved with Via Media, an organisation who worked to integrate the segregated communities of Bradford, and in particular the young people of those communities.



The 12-week course culminated in a visit to Poland, and to Auschwitz Birkenau or Belfast

Photographs are from July 2010 and February 2011.

It was a truly inspirational project to be part of.

Britain First

Britain First is a Far Right political group, formed by ex-members of the British National Party who felt they were not outspoken or extreme enough.

Bradford has attracted their attention on a couple of occasions.

Firstly in 2012, when they wrote to several Mosques, ‘on behalf of Christians’, expressing their concerns about predatory Muslim gangs targeting white young girls. I co-ordinated a response to this with a letter signed by the General Secretaries of the United Reformed Church, Baptist Union of Great Britain, and the Methodist Church.



On the second occasion, several Mosques in Bradford, and the Lord Mayors house were visited by members of the Britain First group who proceeded to intimidate the congregations and gave out British Army Bibles and “anti grooming” leaflets to those there.

Again I co-ordinated and wrote the letter, signed by leaders of the West Yorkshire Ecumenical Council. This was

distributed to all Mosques in the Bradford District, where it was received very well, as reflected by social media and to many people I met.

Race Hate Scrutiny Panel

For a couple of years, I was part of the West Yorkshire Police Division’s Race Hate Scrutiny Panel. It met monthly to look randomly at a selection of the previous months race hate crimes and stop and search incidents to check whether the Police have investigated them to the correct lengths. I was also part of a Divisional review of how Stop and Searches are carried out, participating in some research carried out by Hull University.

6. Neighbourhood Partnerships



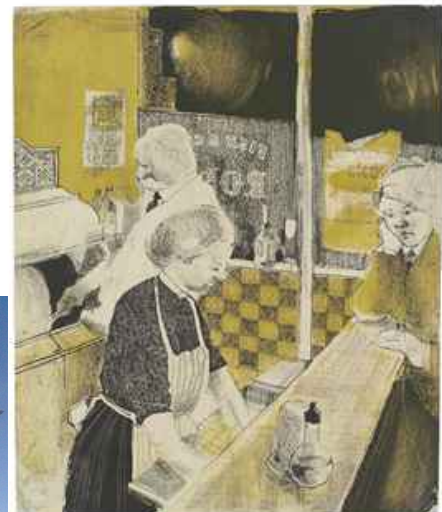
In the ten years I worked in Bradford, I was involved with and chaired three different neighbourhood partnership groups:

1. B-Moor Together, was a local Neighbourhood Action Planning Group, set up through District Local Strategic Partnership called Bradford Vision, working in the Bradford Moor neighbourhood of Bradford.

2. The BD3 Neighbourhood Partnership, replaced B-Moor Together, working in a much wider area of Bradford East, including the neighbourhoods of Bradford Moor, Barkerend and Thornbury.



3. For about four years, I chaired the Eccleshill Village Steering Group. Out of this group, the annual Village Fair and Christmas Lights are planned, and other local concerns are raised and action taken. This group regularly attracts upwards of 40 people, comprising of local residents, police, council officers and councillors.



One of the local campaigns, to save the local fish and chip shop, made famous by Eccleshill's David Hockney's lithograph.

7. Community Safety

Bradford Moor Crime & Anti-Social Behaviour Group

For three years, I chaired a Bradford Moor Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour Group, a multi-agency response to the extremely high statistics for the estate – more than double the District average. Those attending included Police, Housing, A.S.B.O teams from the council, Councillors and local people, and students from the Laisterdyke Business and Enterprise College.



BD3 Community Against Drugs Campaign



As in common with many communities, there is a significant problem with drug dealing within the Bradford Moor Ward. The photographs show a police raid on a cannabis factory within the BD3 community. Yet reporting of dealing to 'Dob in a Dealer' or 'Crimestoppers' was extremely low.

A major project began, to provide a high visibility community led anti-drugs message through a variety of posters, banners and leaflets.

Two drug and alcohol training programmes were initiated.

The first one was for places of worship, where Imams from eight local mosques came together to undertake a five-week training and education programme around substance misuse. Following this, they delivered sermons on the issues of drug taking and dealing within the community. Other places of worship were approached to read out a statement on the campaign during their services.

The second training programme involved delivering interactive assembly sessions in the two secondary schools within the Bradford Moor community.

8. Housing



The quality of housing is key to any community. Having a decent place to live impacts on well-being of the household, The impact of poor housing is also felt throughout the local environment and neighbourhood.



These photographs were taken in Bradford and show fundamental design and management issues with local housing stock. The photograph of Thornbury Place was taken with the prospective tenant looking at the house. Unacceptable. Through campaigns, meetings and working groups, these problems were addressed and overcome.

Thornhill Place, Bradford

9. Community Celebrations



Extravaganza 2008

Community Celebrations are a great way of bringing a community together. Extravaganza was by far the largest event I have organised, with over 7,000 people attending the music and food party. The Eccleshill Village Fair has also grown, with thousands attending. This is to raise funds to pay for the installation of Christmas Lights throughout the village. This culminates with a Christmas Lights switch on event each November with carols, mulled wine and minced pies.



Eccleshill Village Fair

The Bloom in Ecc event has been running for a couple of years, which is designed for local households to take pride in their gardens and enter an annual competition.

Bloom in Ecc



Christmas Lights Switch On Event



10. Youth Work



Over my 25 years of ministry, my involvement with youth work has changed as skills developed and I became older and grumpier!

For the ten years I was based In Moss Side & Hulme, the youth work was mainly detached or minibus based in partnership with Hulme Sports Programme. Funding was plentiful so many summer were spent on residential weekends.

In Middlesbrough, I still participated in some centre based youth work with The Settlement Youth Club, and also training some of their junior leaders.

In Bradford, I have done no face to face youth work, but have raised funds for a few detached work project, which I have managed.

11. Church Holidays



In both Hulme and Middlesbrough I organised church holidays. The first holiday was to the Lake District with Hulme United Reformed Church, and the second to Holy Island with Linthorpe United Reformed Church.

12. Developing & Sustaining Community Centres



In 2010, I was asked to become involved with Eccleshill Community Association and to support the management of the centre. When I became involved, there was an inexperienced Centre Manager running the building, and the centre was losing £9,000 per year.

I became a director, and vice-chair of the organisation. Through support, the centre is now much busier, the Board has grasped its financial responsibilities and the centre is now making a slight surplus. I also guided them through the process to become a charity. The centre is well advanced with an ambitious project to transform this tired Victorian building into one fit for purpose, which will overcome its many accessibility issues, and bring complete sustainability for the building, removing any dependency on Council commissioning funding.



Based at the Mechanics Institute is the Men@EccyMeccy Project. The Centre was successful with a £56,000 lottery grant to provide new sessions to help men cope with things such as bereavement and poor physical health. I project manage this initiative, which employs a project worker.

As men grow into old age they often go through life-changing experiences, including bereavement. The loss of a wife or partner can leave older men feeling vulnerable, isolated and unable to cope with domestic tasks.

Following consultation with agencies such as Age UK, MIND and GPs, Eccleshill Mechanics Institute identified a gap in provision of services for older men, so teamed up with Bradford District NHS project Health on the Streets to set up a men's support service.

The lottery funding came to an end in March 2014, and we secured three months of temporary funding whilst we waited for two major bids to work their way through the system. Just before I finished at the project we heard that we were successful in a £86,000 Henry Smith bid, and are in the final stage for another lottery award.

13. Student Placements



Over the past 25 years, many students have been on placement with me – from Holland, Germany, Bradford College, and 23 from Finland over a ten year period. I also visited Finland twice to run training weeks, alongside Doreen Finneron and Malcolm Brown, who were based in Manchester at the time. The photographs show the group of students at college in Jarvenpaa, and a photograph of Tuula and Annika with John Bremner and Elders at Hulme United Reformed Church.

14. Awards



In January 2008, Bradford Vision, the Local Strategic Partnership for the Bradford District held an award ceremony recognising individuals or companies who had made a difference in their communities. In all there were seven categories, and I was nominated in the Neighbourhood Renewal award, which recognises a group or individual making an exceptional contribution to the improving the lives of people in their neighbourhood or Bradford District as a whole.

As the photograph shows, I won the Neighbourhood Renewal Award, receiving the certificate from Linda Barker. The citation read as follows:

Simon has been the Chair of the B-Moor Together group and subsequent BD3 Neighbourhood Partnership since February 2005. He has created an excellent range of partnership working arrangements (especially with the local police, Bradford Council, local high schools and the Environmental Task Force). Simon has single handedly brought in £100,000 of funding for a high quality new play area in Bradford Moor Park. This involved arranging consultations about the type of play area which children wanted by asking them for their preferred option out of three choices. Simon has been the lead organiser for the Extravaganza Summer Gala, which attracted around 7,000 people – a huge logistical task. Simon also has an ongoing commitment as Chair of both the Neighbourhood Partnership and the successful Bradford Moor and Thornbury Community Safety Group.

15. U.R.C. Visits Abroad



I have been very fortunate to have had the opportunity to part of URC visits abroad.

In 1992, I visited Naples, as part of a European Contact Group conference.

In 2005, I was part of the URC Multicultural Ministry Study Visit to the Uniting Church in Australia. The group members were: Andrew Prasad, Carla Grosch-Miller, Godwin Odonkor, Carole Ellefsen-Jones, Simon Loveitt, Katalina Tahaafe-Williams & Philip Woods.

In 2009 I was part of a Church Leaders' visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The group members were: Brian Jolly, Helen Garton, Frank Kantor, Simon Loveitt, John Campbell, Andrew Prasad, Kevin Watson, Linda Elliott, & Linda Mead.



16. U.R.C. National Work

As part of my wider Ministry, I have fulfilled a number of Synod and National Roles.

Member of Church Related Community Work Central Management Committee (Programme Sub Committee)	1993 – 1999
Member of U.R.C.'s National Youth & Children's Work committee	1996 – 1997
Convener Durham and Teesside District Finance and Property Committee	2001 – 2004
Member of U.R.C.'s National Church & Society Committee	2002 – 2006
Convener of U.R.C.'s National Church & Society Committee	2006 – 2008
Member of Commitment for Life Management Committee	2005 – 2008
Member of the U.R.C.'s Ethical Investment Advisory Committee	2006 – 2012
Member of the Joint Public Issues Team Strategy and Policy Group Methodist, Baptist and U.R.C. working together on social issues	2005 – 2012
Member of the U.R.C.'s Mission Committee	2008 – 2012
URC Spokesperson on Public Issues	2008 – 2012
Member of Mission Enabling Group (Yorkshire Synod)	2011 - 2013
Member of Synod Council (Yorkshire Synod)	2013 –
Commissioner for Churches Regional Commission	2013 - 2014

17. Conclusion

For the Church to be relevant in today's society it must be relevant to its neighbourhood. The Parable of The Good Samaritan is an extremely well known passage in Luke's Gospel. For me, the key question posed in the parable is "And who is my neighbour?" Jesus goes on to tell the parable that we are so familiar with.

Church Related Community Work Ministry has to be about building relationships, neighbourhoods and trying to make a difference in that community by addressing the many issues that present themselves.

I hope that through this report, I have demonstrated some of that prophetic engagement, which has created change in both church and community, and has gone some way in answering that question of "Who is my neighbour".

Simon Loveitt