

While watching the T.V. before Christmas I saw an advert that started me thinking about this reflection. Smirnoff Vodka is doing an ad campaign called 'an open story'. The strap line that made me think is: 'Labels are for bottles not people'. So, with thanks to the people at Smirnoff, the rest of this reflection includes my thoughts.

CRCW ministry is about people, not projects, as Helen Stephenson said last month. But unfortunately, we like to put labels on people and situations. You only have to listen to the news or read many news articles and frivolous pieces to realise that.

It does not matter which way you find information; labels are the first way people are defined. Vulnerable, disadvantaged, troubled, challenging, disabled, celebrity, addict, Christian, Muslim, lonely, financially inactive, refugee, asylum seeker.... to name but a few. We get so caught up in labels, we forget the human being behind that label.

This Christmas, at Christ Well in Swansea, we had a meal on Christmas Day for those who would normally be on their own. But what was interesting to see was that everybody enjoyed the company and food. They were just folk who got together to celebrate Christmas. Our guests were a marvellous mix of people; I do not want to label them with either a condition or a limitation. That's the point; our society is made up of a great mix of people.

I can hear some people reading this saying that we need descriptions, to tailor either church or society to cater for particular needs or circumstances.

What in your opinion comes first; the whole person or their needs or circumstances?

Our projects in Swansea work with people who are looking for something apart from the main issue that brings them to us.

People want to be treated with respect and dignity. They want someone who is interested in them as an individual and to care about them, whether that is by an individual or an organisation or by a statutory body, or government.

Part of CRCW ministry is about changing the way church, community and society sees people. Jesus was called many things: Messiah, Son of God, Rabbi, Son of Mary, Friend, Saviour Redeemer. But he was not limited by these 'labels'. He was love, hope, inspiration, councillor. God made flesh.

When someone says, 'What do CRCWs do?' we change the world one person at a time. One step at a time, sometimes we walk very slowly, sometimes we run. The label CRCW is different for each person in the ministry because we are all different, just like everyone else. That is my answer to the above question.

I wish you all an interesting, sometimes enjoyable, sometimes sad, always challenging, peaceful 2018.

This year we start discovering, through Walking the Way, what it is to be a Disciple in 2018, walking in the footsteps of all those people who have gone before us. A clue to what we, as church communities can offer, is in the people not the Label.