



Church Related Community Work

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What is Church Related Community Work ministry?

Church Related Community Work (CRCW) ministry is a life-long, itinerant vocation involving service in a number of projects.

From the perspective of URC ministry, the main purpose of CRCW is to assist the churches to widen and/or sustain their mission in the community. Church Related Community Work provides a framework for how we can love our neighbours today in a way that builds trust and mutual respect; challenges our fears; enables us to embrace the stranger and love our enemy. It helps us to rediscover a more integrated faith, one that helps us to connect loving God with loving our neighbours and enemies, and to connect our enemies and neighbours with a loving God. For CRCW ministry to become part of a church's life this involvement needs to be worked out and clearly defined. This involves hearing what is really happening locally and what God wants the responses to be.

The ministry also has an opportunity to share with the wider church how scripture is being used as a guide both for life and for community - the good news of how a planned mission strategy can relate to how God is working in a particular situation

CRCW ministry in the URC

In the URC, the worker is usually a church member who has gone through the assessment procedure and been accepted as a candidate, satisfactory completed the prescribed training, and appointed to a post approved by the URC. These posts are approved by the CRCW Programme Sub- Committee (PSC) and can be within a singular church, a group of churches that work together or a mission project. Increasingly, in partnership with local groups, agencies and the local authority

The worker is commissioned for 5-year terms. They receive a stipend, paid centrally from the Maintenance of Ministry Fund and the local cost of this ministry is met by the local Church-in-Community project. All projects are reviewed before the end of their term by 2/3 people appointed by Synod. A report is produced with recommendations for the project's future. This report is sent to the PSC for approval. Projects may be extended for a second 5-year term.

Through the process of accreditation of projects the programme seeks to make sure that workers have the space to operate, are actively supported and that there is a balance of commitment, energy, organisation, resources and management skills to enable projects to operate.

The history of CRCW ministry in the URC

Church Community Workers, now Church Related Community Workers have been working in the United Reformed Church since 1981. Initially, it was thought that the work would be "self-financing". By 1983, however, it became apparent that special funds would have to be available to finance them, bearing in mind the type of situation in which the Church Related Community Worker serves. The following year the General Assembly passed a resolution stating that this work should be viewed as a "special ministry" and funds allocated accordingly.

By 1987, Assembly decided that funding should more appropriately come from the Maintenance of Ministry Fund. A resolution was passed that recognised Church Related Community Work as office of ministry, distinguished from but intimately related to the ministry of Word and Sacraments.

“The Assembly acknowledges that in Church Related Community Workers (CRCWs) properly trained and appropriately employed, the Lord Jesus Christ is giving particular gifts for a particular ministry and is calling such individuals to exercise them in a office which is duly recognised with His Church.”

The URC has acknowledged the vocation of the Church Related Community Worker and accepts their commitment. They are appointed to particular ministry and set apart with prayer having been prepared, trained and called to specially approved post.

Like ministers of Word and Sacrament, they also have a responsibility to perform certain functions for the benefit of the whole church.

In 2003, Church Related Community Work ministry was fully accommodated in the structures of URC ministry and the Basis of Union was altered and the following was included.

“Some are called to the ministry of church related community work. After approved preparation and training, they may be called to be church related community workers in a post approved by the United Reformed Church, and are then commissioned and inducted to their office to serve for a designated period. They are commissioned to care for, to challenge and to pray for the community, and to discern with others God’s will for the well-being of the community, and to enable the church to live out its calling to proclaim the love and mercy of God through working with others in both church and community for peace and justice in the world.”

In December 2011, there will be 16 serving CRCW’s in the URC and 1 in training.

What is Church Related Community Work?

Like community work, Church Related Community Work objectives are to respond to the needs of the local community, to help foster community and to combat the effect that unjust structures have on people.

It uses the principles of community development to respond and challenge the issues we face and is about the relationship of community work to the whole ministry of God’s people. Its dynamic should be the transformation of congregations into churches-in-community who deliver practice in community work, through values that are rooted in the faith of the Christian community that imply:

- A respect for the spiritual dimension to life
- A respect for other cultures and religions and a desire to establish a mutuality of respect
- A respect for basic human rights and responsibilities
- An active commitment to justice because of the ‘justice’ of God
- A belief that all are created equal before God and must be treated equally and a commitment to anti-discriminatory practice

- A commitment to the establishment of good relationships in every area of work and to work with people for as long as they wish or allow us
- A belief in the possibility of change through the forgiving work of God
- A belief in the need to enable people to engage in a democratic society
- A belief in the value of working together, that in that togetherness God becomes more real

With its emphasis on social justice, equality and prioritising marginalised people - this approach to community work is both effective and consistent with Jesus' life. For community development to genuinely take place, we need to live out these values that Jesus taught – which echoed Isaiah - and enable others to live them out too.

What does Church Related Community Work ministry involved?

For John Saunders, CRCW in Penhill, Swindon it has involved:

- Supporting the local keep fit group in their preparations of a new community event called the Penhill Fun Run. And continuing to support the local arts & craft group and local dramatic group.
- Working with the local community forum, particularly with regard to the monthly newsletter and play facilities. Working with 2 local primary schools at developing after school 'challenge' clubs.
- Helping to build up the local adult learning organisation (CLIP – Community & Learning in Penhill) and helping to provide trained crèche workers for local meetings and courses.
- Facilitating St. Peters (CoE) church decision making regarding premises and fundraising
- Co-leading new style of worship at Penhill URC and prompting the development of the church's Monday group.

What changes can CRCW ministry affect?

The individual workers bring their own particular strengths to the work and their contribution is essential to its success. They are a large factor in the development of this ministry because they understand how the Christian faith affects practice in community work and are able to articulate what they believe in terms that significantly overlap with the concerns of society through their visible qualified leadership.

They engage in reflective action for common good and help others to do the same, so that communities have a greater feeling that the church is theirs and are working with them and the church has a greater understanding of how it can play a part in the solution of the needs and concerns of community.

This will change how the church is perceived and the number of people the church associates with. It will also change the church's focus and how it does things i.e. order, outreach, worship, spirituality, mission and ministry. Participatory relationships will be built that take commitment beyond the time a worker serves.