

EX LIBRIS

CIRDIC

CHURCHES IN READING DROP IN CENTRE

This monthly paper began life as a joint enterprise of the Christian churches in Caversham. It was founded to promote the Christian gospel of respect, indeed love, for all people. It was a groundbreaking venture to put aside, in our community, the years and centuries of differences and intolerance that has marred the history of Christendom.

On a very practical everyday level, the Churches in Reading are daily acting out this same message through the work of CIRDIC. When I visited the centre earlier in the year, I was struck by the relaxed friendliness of the environment which is due to the dedication and genuine feeling of Christian love of those who help in running the centre. The volunteers come from all our Christian traditions and no doubt there will be theological and liturgical differences between them. But these pale into insignificance when manning the kitchen, selecting clothing, helping with garden projects or cookery classes and helping people who have lost their homes, jobs and even self-respect, who may be drug dependent or just suffering from an infirmity be it physical or mental.

My son recently graduated and spent a couple of months' job hunting. He was assessed as being able to live on £49 per week. He was fortunate; he had his family who could support him. He had a warm home and food. When he was ill we could take care of him. What if he had been homeless? What if he had been rejected by his family? What if he had had to sleep rough and then go for an interview? What if, to numb the pain of cold wet nights, he had taken to drink or drugs? He has now found a well-paid job with bright prospects. I doubt if his story would have been quite the same if life had dealt him a different hand.

And this is where CIRDIC plays its role. The drop-in-centre was established in 1990 because a group of local Christians wanted to respond to the needs of homeless and disadvantaged people in Reading. Originally the aim was to provide a welcoming place to offer food and clothing. Now, in response to growing needs, The Centre offers a wide range of support for its guests.

WHO DO THEY HELP?

'Any adult who comes in,' is the simple answer. CIRDIC is the only place in Reading that offers a truly open door and free service. CIRDIC welcomes the homeless, the rootless, substance abusers and addicts. It welcomes those afflicted with mental health problems, those living in poor housing, the unemployed and those in serious financial difficulties.

Some guests have used the service for years, others merely pass through. But all are treated with respect, so that each guest can experience the fact that every one of us is indeed worthy of respect no matter what our circumstances.

Building relationships is slow work, but the hope is that in time guests will become ready to address their difficulties.

FINANCE

Who supports CIRDIC? Where does it get its money?

The Centre relies entirely upon gifts from individuals and groups and on grants from organizations and public bodies. Reading Borough Council makes an annual grant without which the Centre wouldn't even be able to open. But the main support, without which CIRDIC couldn't operate, is the Christian community of Reading. There is only one paid member of staff, all others are volunteers, yet even so there is often a shortfall in funding.

WHAT IS PROVIDED?

The support includes the following: meals, clean clothing, bath and shower facilities, a safe postal address, use of a telephone, provision of confirmation of identity, listening time, regular access to and links with specialist services such as health care and housing.

TESTIMONY

It is a primary injunction of the Christian gospel that we should feed the hungry, clothe the naked, give comfort to the despairing. The practical love of those working in CIRDIC is a living testimony to the Christian message. And it best summed up by one of CIRDIC's ex guests who is now employed and living independently:

"I am grateful that our paths crossed as the Drop-in was my first step in the recovery I been enabled to have... I have taken many steps that I could not have managed on my own and the first one was accepting the food, warmth, shelter and guidance that was offered to me at CIRDIC."

THE FUTURE

As with any voluntary organization without a firm financial basis, each year is an uncertainty. The purpose of this article is to bring the work and continuing need of CIRDIC to the attention of the readers of this paper. I am writing this on a hot sultry day late in July. By the time you read this autumn will be approaching and with it the cold of winter, shortening days and, for the people I have been writing about, the fear of loneliness and illness looms even greater.

HOW TO HELP

If you are a church member then your church will have a contact. Here is one area all Christians are truly working together in a very practical way. If you would like to contact CIRDIC their details are:

CIRDIC
Berkeley Avenue
Reading
RG1 6JT
Tel: 0118 9502536
Email: enquiries@cirdic.org.uk

A THIRD WAY

LINDSAY'S ANNUAL CHARITY QUIZ

Many readers look forward to Lindsay's annual quiz. Last year it raised over £1500 for Reading Family Aid which helped send children on a summer outing. RFA also provided many children with Christmas presents which they would not have otherwise received.

This year CIRDIC will be the recipients of the Lindsay's quiz funds. As ever this year's quiz is a word puzzle entitled OUT OF HOUSE AND HOME, since all the answers contain one of these words. It should provide hours of fun and debate, let alone 'google' research and clue swapping, for quiz addicts. But its main purpose is to raise money for CIRDIC. Don't worry if you can't do all the clues, I couldn't. But why not have a go, Copies will only cost £2.00 The quiz will also be available through most, if not all, churches. Since CIRDIC is supported by all the Christian Churches in Reading, it is hoped each one can be an outlet for the quiz, thereby raising even more money for this crucial cause. The quiz will be available from the beginning of November and the closing date will be towards the end of January. So there is plenty of time. But in case you forget I shall be reminding you in November, when I shall also let you know of any other outlets.