

## **Coordinator's Report – August 2008**

Over recent months I have begun to meet various people from across Bristol, who, like me, are lay people working for the church. These meetings have been invaluable in helping me to think about what it means to be your Coordinator, and what exactly this Partnership *is*. At various times I have wondered if the Partnership is something that people really want; indeed if it means anything to anybody. I wonder if there is any joint sense of purpose, how much is it reasonable to expect from people in terms of time and commitment, and what people are actually getting out of belonging to this Partnership.

More and more I feel that all those of us who are employed by or work for the Partnership are here, because we have a passion for faith, and have made a commitment to facilitating faith. Whatever our gifts or the tasks we have been given to do, it is the same faith that we all care about, it is the same faith that we all serve, and it is this faith which, through the life-renewing holy spirit, becomes more than the sum of the parts which went into building it.

I do feel that the Partnership has tremendous potential, but that in some ways its path has yet to become clear. Here we are situated in an area of Bristol with so much going on; people of many races, creeds and economic strata. People with all sorts of need: emotional, physical, spiritual, and people with mental health problems of all kinds, learning difficulties and those grappling with addiction.

I would hope that the Partnership would allow me, as Coordinator, to begin focusing in on some of these issues, which seem ever so present once you start looking. The partnership office is beginning to be used as a drop-in, for local people, but I feel this use could be expanded. Originally there was an idea of renting a shop front for the Partnership office, which would mean we were that much more visible to folk passing by. This might not be financially viable at the moment, but I hope it might still be something we can think about for the future.

Another initiative is the setting up of a care-network across the Partnership, which I could coordinate. I'm very excited about the possibility of being the first point of contact for those in need of pastoral care, so I can then get people in touch with a priest, lay-minister or someone from the Prepared to Care team, who could counsel them further.

I feel that the role I have been asked to perform is to coordinate a structure which is still in its earliest stages of emergence. It's still very fragile and vulnerable, and no-one really knows how it's going to turn out. It's a very different role to coordinating something which is robust and long established. It's new, and no-one knows what it is yet. At the end of the day, I feel there's no reason why we should expect anyone to care about the Partnership, but if you do, now is the time to make your presence felt and get involved in shaping its future.

In this spirit, I hope that people might feel able to come and use the resources of the office, including the computer and photocopier. If you're not free in the mornings, we can arrange another time for me to let you in. It's our Partnership office, and everyone is entitled to use it. Hopefully this will mean that it can grow as a centre for resources.

I look forward to seeing you all soon,

Love and blessings from Mark