

2011 – AGM – CROSSNET

“Working with young adults”

REPORT BY NICK CRAWLEY

At Easter last year I wrote a summary report to our Bishops examining Crossnet’s position in relation to the original objectives in 2003/4, the wider Fresh Expressions movement, and against two important critical documents; George Ling’s report, ‘Do Network churches work?’ and the Bishop Graham Cray’s report to General Synod on the fifth anniversary of the Mission-shaped Church report of February 2004. Against the background of these national photographs there was certainly encouragement that Crossnet was making progress, but I argued that I was sensing too much isolation, and that this ministry needed greater rooting and connection with mother church. So I am very grateful to the authorities for their response in appointing me as Incumbent of Holy Trinity Church, Hotwells last September. This development has brought that desired stability, and indeed has meant that Crossnet’s ministry can continue beyond this autumn when the Diocesan funding ends.

After six and a half years, what has emerged is that I have gravitated more and more towards a teaching ministry, mainly teaching the Bible and being involved with discipleship. We have consistently had a steady stream of young people, Christians, fringe Christians who were not attending any other church and a few non-Christians coming along. The result is that we have developed what is now a ministry to young people (mainly aged 14-26). Lucy’s interests are more towards reaching out to the unchurched and those on the fringe, which we find is something we are able to encourage through our teaching and training of young people. They are natural evangelists and are all fully immersed in non-Christian worlds whether at school or at university. So we have continued with our dual focus of discipleship and mission - our original vision. We see Crossnet now as a place for nurturing young believers, equipping and preparing them for a life of discipleship and service, as well as being a place where people are strengthened and envisioned for mission. We continue to run a regular ‘Open Questions’ evening in a café to which Christians are very happy to bring their non-Christian friends. This seems especially appropriate in view of the recent call by our two Archbishops’ to focus on Young Adults.

Lucy is now in the final stages of completing her PhD in Systematic Theology. She is now speaking regularly across an increasingly wide range of contexts, to both Christians and Non-Christians. All these features show every indication of encouraging development. Crossnet also ran a mission visit to Harare, Zimbabwe in October 2010, during which we led a conference on Discipleship.

Looking to the future, Crossnet is likely to continue as a relatively small community of young adults, meeting mid-week, and focussing on discipleship and mission. Our congregation, if it continues to be young people, will always be transient and mobile and therefore, we need to get used to this style of ministry which is more akin to chaplaincy work. We send out many to serve in other cities and abroad, and the encouraging thing is that so many of them keep in touch. We hope that in future we shall be able to develop a team again with other people who have an emphasis on evangelism and ministry to the poor.

From this autumn, I shall not be receiving the current half stipend from the Diocese of Bristol. So we are taking a step of faith believing that the Lord is encouraging us to pursue our ministry with Crossnet. If we are wrong, then we'll know soon enough. If we are right, then we are planning for Crossnet to contribute £500 per month, (£6,000 per annum) to the Diocese, and to raise the rest of the stipend in other ways.

I end with special thanks to Andrew Wood for auditing the Accounts, to the Diocesan Authorities for their patience and encouragement and long term support, to all those who support us financially and in prayer, and especially to our members ...*So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen in temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.* 2 Corinthians 4:18

Nick Crawley

15th March 2011