

Dear Friends,

In this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, something very significant is beginning to happen in Richmond. It is bringing churches together for action and service.

This 'something' is a Street Pastors' initiative for Richmond.

Street Pastors is an inter-denominational Church response to urban problems, engaging with people on the streets to care, listen and dialogue. It was pioneered in London in January 2003 by Rev Les Isaac, Director of the Ascension Trust, and has seen some remarkable results, including drops in crime in areas where teams have been working. There are now over 100 teams around the United Kingdom. There is a hugely successful scheme in Kingston. Each city project is set up by Ascension Trust and run by a local coordinator with support from Ascension Trust and local churches and community groups, in partnership with Police, Council and other statutory agencies.

"Street Pastors is about Christians rolling up their sleeves and getting involved in practically responding to the problems of crime and safety. They are like beacons on our streets and I want to see them shining brightly in every constituency" (David Burrowes MP)

The most interesting and significant thing about this new initiative is that it has come about because of intense pressure from the police and Richmond Council. So, when all of a sudden, church leaders and clergy are talking to one another and meeting (something which hasn't happened much before!) across theological divides, it comes because others can see an important role that the churches in Richmond can play in and for the community.

If you are in any way interested in knowing more about Street Pastors in Richmond, the Steering Group are hosting their first recruitment event at Richmond Green URC, at 7.30pm on Wednesday 16 February.

There will be a presentation by the coordinator of Street Pastors in Kingston – where the average age of volunteers is 57 years. There are several roles to volunteer for, not only being out on the streets.

Do please consider coming along, if only to understand more about this new (ad)venture we're embarking on. It is exciting!

On behalf of the Steering Group,

Rev Kristin Ofstad, Richmond Green URC and Raleigh Road United Church