A New Place

Since my last article I have moved to a new project. I am now living and working in Huddersfield West Yorkshire.

So I have been finding my way about and listening and learning about a whole new community. I wonder if you have ever heard about the alchemy of a community. This is my very different take on the phrase. Alchemy, the word comes from late middle English via old French, medieval Latin, from an Arabic and Greek, as well. The word was described as a seemly magical process of transformation, creation or combination. People originally associated it with a fore runner of chemistry trying to turn base metal in to gold, or to find a universal elixir. In the medieval world it was associated with magic and astrology.

I like the fact that the word has roots in different languages and is therefore affected by different cultural contexts. Where I live the local community Primary School children use 27 different languages, so the world around them can be described in 27 very different ways. All of which have to be acknowledged and valued. Also, each person in Huddersfield sees the world in which they live, from their own experiences.

So, when you ask a simple question about what you like about where you live, you get many different answers. Some overlap but many don’t. Some people find it very difficult to look at the good and conversations soon turn to negative things about where people are.

Listening to and learning from people in the church and community and then seeing how we can work together is one of the most difficult things we have to do in CRCW ministry. This is a challenge that we face each day; there is no magical process of transformation. You listen to many views; mix them with patience, understanding and discernment, consultation, and prayer. Then we try to move forward. That to me, is the alchemy of community, mixing many ways of thinking, looking at the world, each person valued equally.

In Huddersfield I am still at the stage of putting all the elements together while we start to look forward and face the challenges that we all face in our churches and communities.

Francis Moore Lappe wrote, ‘I also believe that it’s almost impossible for people to change alone. We need to join with others who will push us in our thinking and challenge us to do things we didn’t believe ourselves capable of.’