Unsure of where to start with this reflection, I was considering four themes and in the end I have decided to share them all. As I come to the end of my second post in CRCW ministry it is these four themes that stand out.

**CRCW is not about projects it’s about people.** From the outside looking in I understand why people may feel the ministry of CRCW is about setting up projects. This is a fair observation on the surface. My ministry could be measured by this; holiday clubs, youth groups, book clubs, computer clubs, cookery classes, community gardens, lunch clubs, consultation events, big lunches and the rest. But this is not the measure of CRCW. CRCW ministry is the process which often culminates itself visibly as a project. The joys of the ministry for me have been all the things that lead to project work as a result of journeying with people. Meeting people, hearing their stories, sharing in their celebrations and struggles, bringing people together, making safe spaces, making creative spaces and seeing ideas grow, people grow, challenges faced, struggles overcome and lives transformed.

The best examples I can give, believe it or not, are the two community pantomimes that have been a part of my time as CRCW...oh yes they have!!! In both cases my involvement was limited but what they both achieved was breath-taking. Yes wonderful performances, which raised funds in both cases, but it was the back story that was the success...the scenery made weekly by the dementia support group, the confidence built in those who were living daily with depression and anxiety, the laughter and new friendships in the script writing group, the recently widowed dame who found new purpose to leaving the house and fulfilling a childhood dream to act, the coming together of people who had never worked together to use their skills and passions to create a masterpiece of community.

**CRCW is recognising, nurturing and sharing our God gifts.** For me this is evangelism. Over and over in my ministry I have received blessing from the people I have been fortunate to meet and work with. My experience has been that we all have our ‘God gift’: the thing that makes us who we are and therefore not like anyone else. Each individual is gifted life and purpose. Once we recognise this God gift in each of us, nurture it and use it, everyone receives from it and is enriched as a result.

An example, we work with a chef at one of our churches, his God gift is with food. His latest course was a food hygiene course, very practical and necessary in this age of health and safety. But what transpired was a 6 week course that was extended to 10 weeks through demand, not for food hygiene certificates but for the safe space created. Five asylum seekers were a part of the group. With 7 nationalities around the table food was the common language. Skills were shared, stories
heard, prejudices challenged, laughter and tears and new friendships and cultural awareness formed. Using his God gift created an atmosphere that I would describe as life-giving for all of us present...the spirit was moving, healing and inspiring people.

**CRCW is kingdom ministry.** So no, those who were not already church attenders in the Pantomime or food hygiene course did not turn up to church the following Sunday morning. CRCW ministry is not about growing church but about recognising God’s Kingdom here on earth. Creation as God intended (if we dare claim to know what was intended) for all people and not as an institution or religion, as it is so often now deemed to be by many, both inside and outside the church. Kingdom ministry is about the message not the traditions. The message of hope, compassion, love, understanding, truth, worth, wisdom, being in relationship with each other, creation and the Creator God for the fulfilment of life for everyone and all creation.

Church as community is important and community is a strength of the church but must in my experience be held with caution. I often hear from people that one reason they go to church is because they like to be with like-minded people. My understanding is that the Kingdom is for everyone and therefore like-mindedness is unlikely to be achieved.

**Letting go and letting God.** CRCW ministry in the main is about developing, creating, building and getting involved. But there is also the bit that is about stepping down, pulling back and letting go especially in the last phase. My experience of church leads me to believe that we aren’t good at letting go. We are much more about ‘keeping the show on the road’ and ‘hanging on in there’. It is a sadness for me that even with our own central message of life, death and resurrection, we still struggle to have the faith to let go. The dedication, energy and resources used to maintain the church is colossal and in the main I see from a well-intended place. What concerns me is that our calling is not to the church or to uphold the church. CRCW ministry is not just ministry to the community but to the church as well. Only this last month I was approached by a church elder asking to talk, as they were struggling with an internal conflict because they felt they were a ‘dutiful church attender’ but not a ‘faithful follower’, a painful but ultimately life-giving realisation that I fear many will never feel able to verbalise. Until we let go of those things that are no longer required, and grieve for them appropriately, we will not be gifted the opportunity for a resurrection experience to new life. Where people have let go and let God incredible things have been achieved and I am grateful to the ministry of Church Related Community Work, which has allowed me to experience this both personally and with others.