

CCF visits C3



CCF Trustee Catherine Stewart reflects on visit to C3 with fellow trustee, Sam Weller

Sam Weller heads up our Grantmaking and Community Impact Committee and to this end he is always badgering the other trustees to come on 'site' visits! Friday was my turn and we had arranged to see Cambridge Community Church, or C3 as it is known. As the sun shone on one of those crisp bright Winter mornings, I was in for a real treat!

I am sure many of you have sat in traffic on your way to Sainsbury's on the Barnwell Road and watched the transformation of an old disused church into an amazing building - well, this is the headquarters for C3.

Architecturally it is beautiful but, as we were shown around, it is immediately apparent that the interior is not only well designed, light, airy and with a lovely feel but is also a fantastic 'space' to accommodate its many functions.

C3 describes itself as an evangelical, charismatic Christian church and I think the key word here is charismatic. We met with pastor Steve Campbell, his wife Angie, who seems to be involved in everything, together with the coordinator, Howard Kettel. All were passionate about what they were doing and the vision they had of a Community Centre.

It is this passion and belief that enabled the plans to be made, the funds to be raised, the building to be built and C3 to be born on this new site.

In many ways the modern building belies its purpose, the vision is for a good old fashioned community center, a place where you can go for friendship, support, with or without any prayer. Under its fine roof (some planted as a green roof and some hosting solar panels) there are planned to be a vast array of groups and activities: youth groups, toddler groups, dance and theatre classes, food bank, debt advice, job(less) club, free lunches, ladies days, a Christmas Market, and teaching courses from financial management to preparing to interview and the work environment to parenting, and a café that cries out for coffee and a gossip. It is early days, the center was only opened in October (and some rooms still look like a building site), so only some of these activities are up and running but already it is making a difference to the community.

C3 is not just about supporting the vulnerable in a slightly patronizing way, it is about creating a community in which the vulnerable are automatically supported and swept along in a friendly helpful manner, which encompassed us.

I was concerned that as a church it would slightly feel as though one 'had to believe to be included' but this was not the feel I got. C3 is bigger than this and perhaps this is why it has been so successful? The main hall seats 450 people and is filled twice every Sunday morning. However, the 'auditorium', so called because it is not just used for worship, can be used for a myriad of other uses. I was quite taken by the full drum kit on stage together with plenty of microphones, cameras and enough kit to excite most youngsters! A Polish group are hosting a talk soon and there has recently been a request for an Arm Wrestling competition! It is a great facility and we at CCF are definitely interested in hosting an event there!

CCF has been partnering with C3 with their original plans, but also as they continue to improve their facilities and their offering to the community.

I think it is fair to say that Sam and I were impressed, but don't listen to us, go and see for yourselves!