

Elizabeth Simon, Ecumenical Adviser

I think it is absolutely fundamental that churches work together in every possible way for these reasons. First of all Jesus tells us that this is how we should be behaving and doing and because our message is clearly so much stronger when it is not divided. That is fundamental and that would be true of any organisation so first of all that is the best reason why we should be working together because then everything we did and said would have more power and more credibility. There are also very good resource reasons why churches should be working together. The Shaftesbury Society was developed out of the great example of the 19th century reformer, Lord Shaftesbury, who is famous for his work setting up schools, abolishing the employment of young children as chimney sweeps and all the things that he did. That Society had a campaign recently called 'Challenging Church'. They have had a project of working with local churches to help them on their community action projects and what they found was that it was very wasteful and weakening for churches to be doing things individually. For a church to have a bright idea and say we want to do something for the homeless without thinking what are the other churches in the area doing, are the other churches already doing that, does another church have a better building, do they have people or money that could help make this a really good project? Challenging Church said 'think together, work together' – think together and then see if you can't work together, before you ever decide to do anything individually.