Project Plenty: We can be at the heart of the community again

The upcoming Project Plenty reflections will explore key themes that were raised during the listen and discern process. The second theme is “developing churches locations as community hubs in a 21st manner”.

I found an old “vision day” schedule from early in my days here at Redcliffe. Looking at it, I thought it was an amazing document. We’d spent time praying, considering who we were, what were our gifts, what God was saying, and what we could do for the community.

We had a plan, people and a process, but nothing much came of it. Why not? I suddenly realised we had failed to do perhaps the most important thing; ask our community what they needed. Spend enough time with them to see where we could be salt and light.

Fortunately, because of our people, in other areas we accidently did that. We engaged with the community around us and found ways to be involved. We had strong partnerships and supported clients of the Department of Communities and involvement in domestic violence awareness, school chaplaincy, legal services and UnitingCare Queensland.

It was when we partnered with our community, found out where they were at, and what we could bring as disciples of Christ, that things happened. Our reputation in the community began to change. People began to notice us, value us. People chose to make us their spiritual home because we lived out a tangible faith.

I’m so excited that “Churches as community hubs, 21st century style” is front and centre of our thinking for the future of the church.

Not because we happen to be doing it, but because it is front and centre of the gospel. “For God so loved the world, that he sent his one and only son ...”. We are the sent ones, but like you I find it easier to stay in the safety of the church with my people than mix with ‘God’s so loved’.

Here’s the thing. It’s actually a lot easier than you think. You’re probably already part of a social, sporting or serving community outside the church. Listen to them. What is the cry of their heart? What is their groaning?

As our Moderator likes to say, “What gift can you bring to that situation as the church?” Once you do that, things turn around. Slowly, silently, subtly—like a mustard seed taking root and growing.

We can be at the heart of the community again. Not from a position of privilege and prestige, but gift, grit and grace. Pay attention to this Project Plenty process. It has the potential to bring resurrection.

Paul Clark is the Team Leader at Redcliff Uniting Church If you would like to share your thoughts on discipleship, email the Project Plenty team.

Share your thoughts today to shape our future for tomorrow. Join the Project Plenty conversation by visiting the Project Plenty website or following the Project Plenty Facebook page.