

Faith Comment published in the Petersfield Post

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People matter

Nowadays, the world seems to be full of disasters and, while the media tend to concentrate on international tragedies, here at home, with the economic crisis and, recently, the horror of the Cumbrian shooting, personal disasters loom large. Bereavement is always traumatic, the loss of self-respect after a man is made redundant is immense, those "living rough" through no fault of their own need help and many others are suffering.

In all these cases, goodness has not gone from the world. There are still people who are tirelessly dedicated to helping others. Abroad, aid workers often have to work against the odds, and here at home organisations such as the Samaritans, Shelter and Cruse, to name but a few, are there to give hope and support.

But there is also the Church, where there is fellowship and sensitive support for those who seek it.

The churches in Petersfield are always open, and offer a welcome to those who feel they need to get an understanding of the world beyond what we can see or hear or touch. At St Mary Magdalen, Sheet, after the main morning service, there are people who stay behind specially to listen. It has been recognised that, in later life, those on their own, particularly the bereaved, can find comfort talking to others who have been through the same trauma, and a social group has been formed, meeting for tea and getting together for a pub lunch. St. Mary's Over Fifties (Singles) SMOFS - has been going now for 15 years; fellowship has turned to friendship, and many people have said it has been a lifeline for them.

Here in Petersfield, the churches cater for young and old. Burdens are shared, and what seems like a personal disaster can be alleviated by prayer and friendship. People matter.