**Singles Ministry in the UK: The Vine and the Branches by Chris Kelly**

I have felt for a number of years that I was being called to a new challenge. I thought possibly that God was calling me abroad as a missionary. I wondered why after my Divorce 22 years’ ago and bringing up my son on my own that I had never found my “Prince”. Of course I had not realised my Prince had been with me all the time. I felt that there was a reason I was Single and free to pursue a ministry.

During the last few years [John 15 verses 1 – 17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+15&version=NIV) had come to mind many times…I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.

*"I felt that there was a reason I was Single and free to pursue a ministry."*

In May 2014 I had a weekend in the Cotswolds with some Christian friends. While journeying home we discussed the lovely places we had visited ie, Bath, Oxford, Broadway Bourton-on-the Water etc. I wondered if I could find new places of interest around my home town of Sittingbourne in Kent that could compare with what we had seen. Over the next few months I decided to plan a social event a week. I arranged trips to the Theatre, Cinema, walks, meals etc and invited as many people as I could.

I also contacted Joss Walker at the Diocesan house in Canterbury to discuss Ministry. Joss thought I should maybe consider Church Army. I spoke to my Minister Mike Resch and also Stephen Plumb who was one of our [Street Pastors](http://www.streetpastors.org/our-network/united-kingdom/) of which I am one in Sittingbourne. I also made further enquires about training in the Church Army.

During this time, I had many conversations with friends concerning the need for a Christian Singles Group.

In November I felt very strongly that I must go ahead and organise the group – there had been enough discussion. I spoke to a few close friends from Holy Trinity Church and we met on a Thursday evening and decided to set up a singles group. Wendy a close friend mentioned that she used to belong to the Medway Branch of the National Organisation Christian Friendship Fellowship (CFF) many years’ ago. I emailed Fiona Hay who is the Chairman of the CFF and in 2 weeks we had set up the new Branch of the Kent North CFF Group for Single Christians.

**THE START: Divine Collisions**

We had our first meeting on Monday 15th December 2014 in the VINEYARD are local Pub/Restaurant. Our Group has steadily grown over this year and we have 15 members who have joined the National Organisation and many others who are hopefully joining or have started to attend regularly.

In January 2015 I was visiting with Margaret McCooey (a Christian friend and mentor) and as I left she gave me a small piece of paper with the details of [Kris Swiatocho](http://weebly-link/593443178656280401) an international Evangelical Speaker. Margaret had been woken at 3 am whilst staying in Scotland with her father and turned on the TV. Whilst watching Revelation TV she had seen Kris speaking.  She said she was an amazing speaker for Singles Ministry. I emailed Kris (not expecting a reply as I understood she was a very busy lady) but within a week Kris had spoken to me via Skype and arranged to come and meet me and our CFF group during her planned UK tour in April/May 2015.

**EVENTS and CONNECTING**

From January – May 2015 I with the help of Wendy Smith continued to arrange events for the CFF. I also set up our committee of 7 including 4 other Leaders to help and support me as our Group grew. We have regular monthly meetings on 3rd Monday of every month in our local pub/restaurant for a meal and/or drinks. We also try and host at least 2 other events at weekends during each month namely theatre trips, walks, murder mystery evenings, prayer and praise evenings and also trips to places of interest. I also contacted the Sussex East Group and arranged with their Leader John Carmody for our two groups to meet at Sissinghurst Castle midway between Eastbourne and Sittingbourne for a day out (28th March 2015). This was a great success. We have since met up on 28th August in Rye for the Music Festival and we hope to meet them in November for the monthly CFF meal in Spaghetti House in London.

**UK TOUR, THE SINGLES NETWORK MINISTRIES**

Wendy and I also made plans for Kris to come and visit us in Sittingbourne during her 5 week tour. Our friend Margaret McCooey kindly offered to host Kris for 6 days in April. We all had a fabulous week, the sun shone and we found ourselves having lovely conversations with everyone we met. Kris met our CFF group, spoke at 2 events and visited my Church (Holy Trinity Sittingbourne) and enjoyed our Sunday Service.

We organised 2 Christian Events at the United Reformed Church Sittingbourne for Women with Kris speaking on “Women of Worth”. There is a large mural of the Vine Tree extending 2 floors at this Church. The other event was for mixed adults hosted at The VINES United Reformed Church Rochester with Kris speaking on “Knowing your Purpose”. These events were well attended and everyone had an amazing time. Fiona Hay our CFF Chairman also came down from Glasgow to meet up with us all and Kris during the 6 days that she stayed with Margaret.

Wendy and I took a few friends to see Kris in Dagenham to enjoy a Singles Event with “Single Mix”. It was absolutely fabulous and we enjoyed talking to everyone, listening to Kris’s Comedy and dancing! Wendy and I also attended Kris’s leadership course also held in Kingsley Hall Dagenham. We have learnt such a lot and are presently putting it into practice…

**GROWTH**

On Thursday 27th August 2015 I set up the East UK Singles Ministries Cell Group. We have had 8 meetings (weekly) where we have discussed Kris’s book Jesus Single Like Me. I decided after one of my transatlantic calls to Kris to start off my Singles Group (separate to CFF which is for Singles for friendship and Fellowship) as a small group to begin with comprising of Singles who are searching for God and Love. We have now finished Kris’s 8-week course of Study and are about to start her next book. We are gradually increasing in numbers and I hope to organise an Event soon. We are hoping it will be like the Kris’s Single Mix Event which we all thoroughly enjoyed in Dagenham.

Editor Note: [Chris Kelly is one of The Singles Network Ministries UK leaders.](http://weebly-link/584804522744827605) She continues to build leaders, make connections and grow the ministry. We are very excited to see what God is going to do next.

*Christine was brought up in a Christian famiy, attending Sunday School at her local Baptist Church from 6 years’ old until 15 when she became a Sunday School Teacher at the Methodist Church. This gave her good grounding as she went on to set up a Youth Club when she was 18 with another member of the Church. Christine loves working with young people and volunteered with young offenders. After marrying she moved areas and worked for the NHS in Hospital and General Practice  before moving back to her home town with her young son Ben.*

*Christine has a BA (Hons) Degree in Social Policy and Administration, and now works in the Kent & Canterbury Hospital as a Supervisor Medical Secretary. Christine is a member of the Church of England and after working with the Youth Sunday School as a Youth Leader she is now a Street Pastor, Cell Group Leader and Leader of the Kent North Christian Friendship Fellowship Group for Single Christians.*

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