

Towards an Urban Strategy for the Church of England

A paper written for the House of Bishops

*When the stranger says: "What is the meaning of this city?"
Do you huddle close together because you love each other?
What will you answer?" We all dwell together
To make money from each other"? or "This is a community"?*
T.S. Eliot

*The destiny of humanity is being played out in urban areas, in particular, in the great
metropolises.*
Manuel Castells

1. The New Urgency

1.1 Recent urban events have shaken the foundations of society. Just when we had become accustomed to think of our global cities and their international financial structures as all powerful, we have suddenly been reminded of our ultimate vulnerability and insecurity. In our own country, during the summer of 2001, the fear of difference – a reality so central to much of the teaching of Jesus – erupted into violence on the streets of a number of our northern towns and cities and housing estates. We were brought up sharp by the frustration and alienation that lurks beneath the surface of many urban areas and poor communities.

1.2 Earlier that same year we witnessed with concern the mood of apathy and suspicion which accompanied the national General Election as our governmental institutions, once so central to our sense of nationhood, were treated with indifference by the vast numbers who chose not to vote. Earlier still, dwellers in the countryside were bringing to our attention the fact that decisions for rural communities are today being made largely in our cities, and the rural towns and villages are being increasingly inhabited by urban people. London, now with its own elected mayor, has owned its new identity as a 'global city' and begins to look to the international scene for its network of interests and for its financial and economic markets rather than to the nation of which it is the capital. And those same market pressures have set each British city in competition with the next as each vies for a share of the market, whilst at the same time the internal fragmentation which those same pressures create within

each city isolates its poorest citizens and make them seem irrelevant in the sight of those who benefit from the city's success.

1.3 These events come in the wake of the government's Urban White Paper with its aspiration to nurture an 'urban renaissance' through partnerships of state, the private sector and civil society, but this is increasingly overshadowed as the 'joined-up' holistic governance to which it aspires constantly evades its grasp, so that the delivery of its urban policies fails expectations.

1.4 As the powers of global markets and cultural urbanism have forced us together into a 'global village', so also those same pressures force us into competition one with another and create in the independent human spirit a will to proclaim our separate and individual cultural identities. This is increasingly apparent in the rivalries played out between our cities and regions. In this way the urbanised world in which we live has brought together into intense proximity communities of competitive difference, and we have not yet learnt how to negotiate a respectful and interdependent way to live and prosper together.

1.5 The events of 11th September 2001 raise deeper questions. The great twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York City, like the towers of so many a city, had seemed to discontented minds to boast arrogantly of cultural domination and financial control beyond negotiation.. The modern 'world city', so long convinced of its own impregnable security and prestige through the power of its urbanised global market, proved at last to be horrifically vulnerable. In Britain and around the world, urban populations now live with that New York picture in their minds. Biblical themes and events relating to power, prestige and precariousness come readily to mind as aids to analysis as we contemplate these events, whilst urban professionals become aware of the fragility and vulnerability of urban life, just as the urban poor have been aware for generations long.

1.6 The Church too is increasingly facing the challenges of its own vulnerability and, being fearful for its own future, must find new ways of being Church which are appropriate to our modern and post-modern predicament. But this is a predicament which is increasingly being driven by the global urbanisation of our society together

with a resultant 'urbanism' – by which is meant that urbanised mind-set and culture which seems to be prevalent at so many levels and in so many aspects of our life together. Our concern is that the Church must be sufficiently alive to this changing environment so that it can respond creatively and sensitively in mission. We are now twenty years on the inauguration of the Archbishop's Commission which brought us *Faith in the City*, but to what extent have we yet owned that our nation, our mission field, is truly an urban one, and the way in which the fate of our nation is being acted out on its streets?

2. The Challenge of an Urban Britain

2.1 Britain has been for generations an urbanised and urbanising nation. Since the vastly influential population movements during the industrial revolution, Britain has continued to urbanise, with most of its population now living in cities, towns and suburbia. By 1950 over 82% of the population of the UK was urban and that is now increasing to over 90%. The Government's Urban White Paper (DETR 2000, p. 17) charts England's present population as only 5% rural with a further 20% living in areas of a mixed suburban and rural nature. The rest is clearly urban and suburban, so that "over 40% of us live in London, the conurbations and the bigger cities. Each of those major urban areas has a potentially wide influence." (p. 16). We wonder to what extent the Church has yet adapted to this reality. Many hoped that the enthusiasm and activity that followed the publication of *Faith in the City*, would change the Church's concerns, its structures, its mind-set (we still speak of rural deans and pastoral counselling), its training programmes, and its leadership, but these all still tend to deny that for the vast majority in England today, their life-style and experience are urban. There are many reasons for this confusion in Church perceptions.

2.2 First, British cultural history has a strong anti-urban streak which has had a great influence upon us all, and most commentators admit that we British have never been very good at the urban. Jeremy Paxman has described this anti-urban high culture in his book, 'The English'. (see especially chapter 8: There Always Was an England)

The English are town-birds through and through, today, as the inevitable result of complete industrialisation. Yet they don't know how to build a city, how to think of one, or how to live in one. They are all suburban, pseudo-cottagey, and not one of them knows how to be truly urban.

D H Lawrence

2.3 Also, Bishops find themselves constantly wrestling with their wish to give equal time and emphasis to all their people whilst recognising that the number of rural parishes to be visited far exceeds those of the towns and cities, even where the urban population of their diocese far outstrips that of the rural. The bishops have no wish to deny the importance of rural parishes – and indeed have been able of late to speak out on their behalf – but also wish to affirm that the higher concentrations of population are elsewhere. And what goes for the bishops' experience is certainly true of the synodical decision-making structures of the Church, which largely base representation on parish church electoral rolls rather than the balance of the national population.

2.4 Yet the situation is far more complex than any simple analysis might suppose, for while there is in the English a hankering after the rural idyll, in fact it is suburbia that fills vast tracts of our landscape. Suburbia is often peopled by those whose forebears inhabited the inner and outer city regions and who sought to escape the intensity and the deprivations of that environment. This family history leaves in the psyche of most suburbanites another form of 'urban denial' – they may certainly now commute daily to the surrounding urban centres and live an urbanised lifestyle, but their mindset remains ambivalent towards the urban. Although the suburban fades into the rural at one end of the spectrum and into the city and town at the other, suburbia supports in the main a distinctive urban lifestyle. It is here we find many of the people who in their professional lives shape the destiny of other communities – town planners, architects, financiers, regeneration consultants, directors of social services, Lay upon this complex picture the differences of north and south, of young and old, of historical patterning, migration and physical and commercial infrastructure, and we become aware of the extraordinary urban complexity which is Britain today.

2.5 The present British government is now calling for partnership with 'faith communities' in its urban programmes, but the Church is often seen as reluctant to engage. Perhaps we sense that answers to urban problems have by and large eluded government through the years and we are loathed to commit ourselves to an issue where we might stand little chance of outward success. Will long-term investment of resources in vulnerable and poor urban areas really pay dividends which can sustain a national church which is increasingly dependent upon higher weekly giving from congregational members? Could it be more sensible to concentrate on areas where we have a tradition of strength and sustainability? On the other hand the Church knows it has a duty to these poor areas and also a desire to deliver on its vision of the parish system by which the Church has a presence in every community and in every section of the country. In the marginalised rural and urban areas alike however there is a reducing probability of being able to sustain that parochial system given our present strategies. Whilst it may be that to these marginalised communities falls the privilege of leading us to new ways of being Church, we should not force this responsibility upon congregations which already have a heavier burden to bear than most.

3. Grasping the Opportunities

3.1 Despite the pressures upon us to withdraw resources from the poor urban parishes emergent biblical and ethical theology, as well as our missiology and ecclesiology would point us to the need for more urban engagement not less. The very compact and concentrated nature of our city, town and housing estate environments means that they are often theological laboratories of our age. It is here where people are so tightly packed that issues of identity and difference, power and powerlessness, global and local, inclusion and exclusion, place and sustainability, are writ large. And these experiences are at the very centre of today's theological exploration. The urban arena is where God's poor are seen to suffer and where vast wealth is created. It is here that questions of success and the power of weakness, crucifixion and resurrection are explored moment by moment. This is where the young are making tomorrow's world. On the pavements and in the tenement blocks of poor urban landscapes, one meets the Jesus of the Gospels at every turn and our congregations witness to that fact daily. Real, vibrant gospel experiences are the daily fare of urban ministers and congregational members, yet their experience is not at the heart of our wider Church's life and learning.

‘...urbanism is present throughout scripture as an influence, casting a shadow, pulling, challenging devouring, provoking a response. The protagonists and writers wrestle with these forces, processes and movements in rural and wilderness settings, as well as within the multiple layers of urban life.’

Andrew Davey *Urban Christianity & Global Order*, SPCK 2001

Observing the urban landscape I sense a deep at-homefulness. It is as if I have heard other inner-city people say, “take off your shoes, you’re on holy ground”. I sense the majesty, energy and power of God in what heavy industry remains to us. The bustle and business of the financial and commercial centre speaks of God’s intertwining with us in creativity and enquiry. We’ve been given gifts to work with such complexity and find comradeship, worth and identity in the endeavour. In the service industries too I find sacraments of God’s presence – hospitals, shops, leisure centres, sewers and dustbin collection – all gifts in their fascinating urban complexity. And with every such gift I sense too the challenge and anguish when we get it wrong. When commercial life becomes unjust; when political groups seek their own aggrandisement; when social services are badly resourced; I still feel God within it all, but now yearning and suffering with his children.

An Urban Priest

4. The Church Responds

4.1 Unlike *Faith in the City* (1985), our task in this paper is not to bring to the nation’s attention the facts of urban deprivation for they are all too well-established and the data are readily available in current government reports such as the *Indices of Deprivation 2000* or the annual reports of the Joseph Rowntree Trust : *Monitoring poverty and social exclusion*. Our task is to claim the right for the Church to stand in critical partnership with others of goodwill who have a heart and will for the wellbeing of our urbanising nation. Neither will the reader see set out here simply a series of one-off resolutions which if implemented would relieve the Church of its long-term urban responsibilities. Rather, this paper calls for a new awareness – a repentant change of mind-set in our Church – that enables us to commit ourselves to a

new role in the evangelization and redemption of the urban processes which are sweeping across our culture, and to help these processes become more sustainably creative. (cf Aylward Shorter, *The Church in the African City*, Geoffrey Chapman 1992)

4.2 It is from the Church of England's proven base of experience and commitment that the Urban Bishops Panel calls the Church to renewed vocation for our urban mission. We must live with and work with the urban poor and with the wealthy so that we can together foster all that makes for abundant urban living, where justice and fulfilment abound. We no longer wish to see an urban Church strategy as an optional extra for our national Church but as a lens through which the thinking, decision-making and activities of the main-stream of our Church life is to be focused. Our energies must be engaged where the vast majority of our people live and need us. It is our belief that by taking up this new focus and commitment all our people will benefit, rural, small town, suburban and urban, since so much that affects us, wherever we live, is determined within the urban setting. We want to celebrate the city and transform the urban experience that it may be, for more than a minority, an exciting and vibrant experience of fulfilment, choice, happiness and justice.

Our commitment resonates with the vision recorded in Isaiah 65:20-23, where Isaiah describes what God wants for human society. The vision speaks of a community in which children are well cared for; old people live in dignity; people who build houses get to live in them; and those who plant vineyards eat the fruit. So we want our urban churches to be communities which are active in the sustaining, healing, redeeming and transforming of those environments, for God desires that they should flourish.

4.3 The Church of England has a distinctive Christian contribution to the urban debate and the urban process and that is to proclaim the abundant life which God gives us in Christ, and to work for its achievement amidst the complex issues and experiences of urban living. Our God brings promise and we must proclaim it. Our Church has a real presence in the urban communities of our land and from that basis we ask the questions – 'What can we contribute to make a good city?' 'How can we help make urban life in our housing estates and towns a fulfilling and wonderful

experience?’ ‘How can we meet God in our urban living?’ ‘How can we be true here to the God who brings hope and promise to all?’

4.4 In the years before and after *Faith in the City* the Church of England has developed a great deal of urban mission experience and expertise that is worth sharing. Where the government looks to sustainable urban renaissance as a new feature of policy, our Church already has a proven record of long-term commitment which we applaud and for which we give thanks to God. We can look to the courageous witness of clergy and laity in places which others have long deserted. Of all the professions, our clergy remain alone as those who are duty-bound to live with their families in the communities they serve. In some communities even the very weakness of the Church congregation speaks volumes about the real weakness of the community in which it is set, the Church being there not merely ‘alongside’ the poor, but ‘as’ the poor – a very telling and authentic voice of the voiceless. From this authenticity all manner of Gospel opportunity can flow.

4.5 National and local government also calls for what has become known as ‘capacity building’ whereby local groups and individuals gain the expertise and experience required to organise and be involved in decision-making for their own community. Again, our churches are highly skilled in fostering local decision-making and practical partnership by virtue of a long tradition of parochial subsidiarity in our Church structures. Churchwardens, Parochial Church Councils, groups and associations, have been the vital motors of local action in the urban Church for generations, and the Holy Spirit has been investing power and energy in local Christians which is often evidenced in profound ways.

4.6 Our parishes have invested sacrificially over generations in buildings and property to serve the community, often now remaining the only public meeting places still within financial reach of the local community. (Unfortunately because many of these buildings are not listed they will not be eligible for VAT concessions). We have sought to offer inclusive education of a high standard in our Church schools, and clergy and congregations are often the only ones left alongside vulnerable communities in times of despair and loss. We have provided, through God’s grace, places of sanctuary and solace, opportunities of growth and worship, and in all this

have pointed to deeper values than those which are commonplace on the streets of the city.

4.7 Whilst affirming this committed witness of so many urban churches we also readily acknowledge that many of our congregations are only just holding on to viable presence in our marginalised communities. Despite the situation mentioned above (4.5) there can often be a low skill-base in post-industrial urban localities, aggravated by the pursuit of young people to get out of the area as soon as they can gain the wherewithal to do so. Sometimes the clergy remain as the only ones who have even the basic skills for running a simple parish structure. They find themselves nurturing volunteers who eventually find employment and move from the area taking all the priest's, community's and congregation's investment with them to suburbia.

4.8 Similarly, clergy and congregations often find themselves in conflict with local officials and council members who simply find any open collaboration which may lead to change an attack on their vested interests and ways of doing things. They can rightly feel that their old models of working and dominant patterns of local democracy might be threatened by an interested and alert Christian congregation in a community and this calls for great sensitivity on the congregation's part even when they are working from a weak and marginalised base. How welcome it therefore can be when council officials begin to share the vision for listening partnership and recognise the important contribution that the Church can offer.

The Churches and their leaders can help put the human being and Christian values back at the heart of the regeneration agenda. For too long the Church has been doing all this, but nobody's noticed. You need to tell us. You have experience and can teach us how you create active citizens, people with hope and confidence in the city, people who listen to the poorest and the richest, and you can bring us together in partnership with a vision.

A City Council Chief Executive.

4.9 It comes as a surprise to some to learn that the Church can often be the place where senior business managers meet with local poorer folk in an unusual equality. As congregations meet together as equal brothers and sisters before God, so urban

people of very different backgrounds have opportunity to mix and learn to understand one another's experiences. Often too it is the local clergy who bring disparate groups together when they are asked to be the bridge people in situations of community strife and misunderstanding. We often act as the ecumenical enablers of multi-faith gatherings – an essential piece of bridge-building in these times when religion plays such an evident rôle in urban community identity. In this way we have proved to be the urban community-builders of long experience.

5. A New Time – a New Opportunity

5.1 It was in 1985 that the *Faith in the City* report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas brought issues of poverty, racism, policing, and housing to the centre of the Church of England's concern – and contextual training for urban ministry and appropriately participatory structures were debated and many changes were introduced. The Church Urban Fund was inaugurated and the Church of England was hailed as prophetic by the wider Church and Nation. Nearly twenty years on from *Faith in the City*, the Church of England has the opportunity to review and re-imagine its engagement with urban communities in our very different political, economic and social context.

5.2 During the intervening period many of the cities of northern England have suffered depopulation at the expense of an overheated south east which in turn struggles to cope with the resultant overcrowding and affluence. Once down-at-heel neighbourhoods are now being gentrified and the indigenous populations priced out of the area. For all the urban regeneration schemes through these years, they have rarely proved to be beneficial for all, and answers to poverty and exclusion still elude social engineers. Inequality of income and wealth has increased largely as a result of the growing influence of global market forces which include or exclude communities geographically, socially and economically. Government urban renewal programmes have destroyed and rebuilt housing estates; private sector investment has turned old wharves and docklands into fashionable zones and has increased urban sprawl; market-lead change has created shopping malls as the new cathedrals of consumerism, and built its towering finance houses in the centre of those cities that have found their particular niche in the global market. So much has happened in twenty years.

5.3 When *Faith in the City* was published, the Cold War still divided East from West, the electronic technology which was to transform information and communication was still in its infancy, and the financial markets had yet to be deregulated. There has since been a momentous acceleration of globalisation and its intimate relationship with the changing patterns of urbanisation, as the role, impact and perception of cities changes. The new Europe seeks to find its rôle on this global stage, and has impacted significantly on our own governmental organisation as it in turn models the European style of regional political management. Some British industries have been devastated by the international economic pressures. Our coal, steel, automobile and rural communities have been ravaged or transformed. It is estimated that each piece of food on the English dinner plate has travelled an average of one thousand miles, reducing British farming to a shadow of what it was and increasing the pollution of road and air. The mega-cities of the southern hemisphere grow at unprecedented rates, accompanied by new patterns of migration on a global scale. Meanwhile the inner cores of the old cities of England are denuded of their population and old working-class communities new metropolitan cultures and burgeoning faith communities take their place, living cheek by jowl with remnant communities, and emergent professional residents in gentrified quarters. . We live with increasing diversity and difference in our urban centres to such an extent that other environments can certainly appear to younger people as boringly monotonous by comparison.

‘To my mind the most beguiling formulation of planning yet offered, at least in the English language literature, is Patsy Healey’s notion of “managing our co-existence in shared space” Such a formulation speaks with equal clarity about environmental, transport, housing and other conflicts, reminding us that, whether we like it or not, we do share space on the planet with others who in many ways are not like us, and we need to find ways of co-existing in these spaces, from the next-door neighbour to the street, neighbourhood, city and region.’

Prof. Leonie Sandercock, ‘When Strangers Become Neighbours: managing cities of difference’ *Planning Theory and Practice* 1(1) 2000

5.4 The urban scene is all much more complex than in the days of *Faith in the City* and the disciplines of those who study these dynamics have correspondingly grown in

their sophistication and intricacy. So much is radically different, with new layers of governance introduced through social and economic regeneration partnerships, the growth of the voluntary sector and also through the community planning process which has introduced area management and new systems of representation to many local authorities.

5.5 Given all this profound change the Urban Bishops Panel have considered what, for some, amounts to a sea-change, even a 'kairos moment' of new judgement and unique possibility. Are these changes merely the symptoms of a continuing, progressive process or are they so fundamental that as Christians in mission we must act decisively now in radically appropriate ways or find ourselves becoming irrelevant to a new time? Whilst we all acknowledge the shortcomings of our present national Government, it is offering us in its policy documents some very significant entry points into engagement which have certainly not been so evident in the past. Should we be ready to take the risks, mindful that these opportunities are also minefields into which the unwary may stumble into compromise and collusion and thereby jeopardise our mission enterprise?

Christianitycan become spiritually a withdrawal from the concerns of the world; especially from its social economic and political problems. In that case, the natural institutional form of Christian spirituality in society will be either private activity or purely religious communities. If on the other hand, the end of the world and its history which has come in Jesus is viewed positively as the fulfilment of the world and history, Christian spirituality will be intent on transforming every aspect of the present and bringing it to fulfilment

W. Pannenberg

6. **The Faith in the City Inheritance**

6.1 Having stated that challenge it is also very important to own the fact that the Church of England has itself not stood still in the intervening years since the publication of its *Faith in the City* report. The Report brought to the attention of its congregations and councils the stark facts of urban life – its problems and its joys. The data were challenging and the stories from our urban churches alerted the wider

Church to its responsibility to its colleagues in what the Report taught us to call 'Urban Priority Areas'. The Church's attention was drawn to the experiences and projects of its urban mission pioneers, and lessons were learnt for engagement, supported now from the consequent Church Urban Fund. In the parable, Dives had not noticed the presence of Lazarus at his gate until he was starkly reminded that the poor man might after all have something to offer him. The Report likewise helped our Church to own the significance of those parts of the Body of Christ which were apt to be marginalised and ignored. Now they were to be for some years the centre of attention. Theological colleges set up contextual urban training projects, poor and rich parishes made links, resources were diverted, and things urban were celebrated.

The recognition of the Church as the Body of Christ, with each part dependant on the whole, is fundamental. The quality of the relationship between the UPA and the wider Church is a supreme test of the life of the whole body.

Faith in the City p.100

6.2 It was realised, just for a while, that urban life pulsated with opportunity, often swarmed with vitality, youth culture, music, international food and a challenging theology in the making. Here the Church was struggling to work with the Spirit in the building up of God's Reign, or Kingdom, 'on earth as in heaven'. A Kingdom theology compelled local congregations to advocacy for, and empowerment of, those who were excluded and whose voice was rarely heard, forming alliances with them and others who were working for these same Kingdom objectives. The Report challenged the Church and the then government to address the situation, and to test the quality of our society by how we treated our urban poor.

6.3 As a result of all this, we can now point to many urban congregations and celebrate them with confidence as places where prophetic engagement in community accompanies a robust and sustainable congregational life. These congregations are an abiding, challenging presence in places where people easily despair. They express deep Christian values and a faith that things can be different, with vision and confidence in the Spirit's gifts to sustain the welfare, peace and prosperity of urban communities. They are signs to all that the Church is committed on a very long-term basis to the creation of civil society and citizens who have a determination to play their part as salt and yeast in the midst of their communities. They participate in

redemptive activities, the offering of forgiveness and the cancellation of debt, encountering God through acts of solidarity and compassion. In many ways the Church is now more dynamic in poor communities, and much of that is due to the resources that have been made available since 1985 at national, local and diocesan levels to enable serious engagement to take place. This is apparent in and through parish ministry and mission, the development of lay ministry and local ordination schemes, the support for community development and projects, the decisions to support rather than terminate urban congregations, the creative use of church buildings, and the development of diocesan urban strategies and forums. Our parishes are the most natural points from which the Church will engage, for the urban congregations will mostly be comprised of residents and tenants from within the area, bringing a corporate understanding of human community to bear upon often fragmented localities. Our local urban congregations are a wonderful gift of the Church to urban communities and have been encouraged by *Faith in the City* to be more intentionally just that.

6.4 At the same time we are aware of the fragility of much of this activity. The challenges are so great, the issues so complex, and the depth of evil and suffering so profound that some programmes have collapsed, whilst others barely survive. Many have argued that the theology and spirituality of the *Faith in the City* report was far too hidden and should have been far more explicit. Perhaps it should have called more overtly for a long term covenant between the urban parishes and the wider Church, sustained by repentant prayer in addition to a concentration on generous mutuality in resources and support. Empathy has not always translated into clear strategy and policy at diocesan or national levels. This is compounded by the structural barriers to mission in the Church's legal, institutional, and geographical systems which militate against the agility needed if the Church of England is to operate with the flexibility required amidst the rapidly changing, pluralistic cultures we find in our urban areas.

6.5 Some of the precariousness of our urban witness stems from the fact that much depends on financial interdependence within and between dioceses, and this in turn depends on understanding and commitment from those who are especially responsible for stewardship and management of our Church's resources. In addition, ailing

buildings, unrealistic expectations, a failure in local co-operation and strategy all contribute to a culture in which urban clergy and laity feel overwhelmed and unable to engage in the transformation of their congregations and communities.

6.6 The formulation of a national and interdependent strategy is made all the more difficult by the pressures that are now upon us to compete for the resources that are nationally available. We note that some Regional Development Agency statements are couched in extremely competitive terms which appear to pitch their own Region against the others. We can sense the same competitiveness between English cities where those in close proximity rise at the expense of those nearby. The Church as well as the State should guard against this competitiveness standing in the way of an integrated national strategy or else we may find vulnerable urban communities and congregations going to the wall.

6.7 Whilst congregational decline in some urban settings has been redressed through the presence of minority ethnic Christians or middle-class incomers, other parishes have become so weak that they find it increasingly difficult to engage at all with their locality. This is particularly true of those Christian congregations in areas where other major faiths dominate. Parochial history, demography, staffing and morale, all help to determine the potential of each parish, and some parishes, whilst outwardly appearing quite strong, still see their ministry only in terms of the domestic and residential issues of their community and do not even seek to engage with the industrial, political or commercial structures of their locality. Patterns of ecumenism are similarly dependent on context, with new styles of collaboration and understanding emerging through engagement with local realities. Such factors as these suggest that it is time for us as a Church to revisit the question of the appropriateness of our local urban parish, deanery and diocesan structures, and the strategies for engagement they assume.

6.8 Following *Faith in the City* and the formation of the Church Urban Fund, the Church found it had greater confidence to engage with government on issues of social policy. Whilst under the Conservative administration this engagement was often confrontational, there were some positive developments, such as the creation of the Inner Cities Religious Council within the Department of the Environment. The

Church was brought into dialogue with the Labour Party while it was still in opposition and under Bishop David Sheppard a number of ecumenical meetings marked out the Church's hopes of the new government. Those meetings stressed the need for a much longer-term commitment to urban renewal, the naivety of a top-down imposition of solutions, and the need to take an holistic view of the issues of exclusion, poverty and urban blight. These and ongoing discussions and submissions since 1997 have fed into the work of the new government's Social Exclusion Unit and the formation of their Urban White Paper strategies.

7. Urban Policy under New Labour

7.1 The Labour government came to power in 1997 on a wave of democratic enthusiasm for the recovery of the language of community and values. It spoke of human society, care and inclusion, together with the promise of a review of urban policy and integrated measures to address 'social exclusion'. The Church warmly welcomed that agenda whilst continuing to analyse the policies from the perspective of critical and engaged partnership. The publication in November 2000 of the government's Urban White Paper – *Our Towns and Cities: the future*, together with the work of the Social Exclusion Unit and its document *A New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal*, published in January 2001, seem to offer new ways of approaching the shaping of our towns and cities through brave but sensitive design, economic restructuring, environmental and transport measures, as well as addressing the increasing economic disparity within and between urban neighbourhoods.

'Our aim is to make urban living a positive experience for the many, not the few; to bring all areas up to the standard of the best; and to deliver a lasting renaissance.'
John Prescott, launching the Urban White Paper.

' new vision of urban living

Our vision is of towns, cities and suburbs which offer a high quality of life and opportunity for all, not just the few.

We want to see:

- people shaping the future of their community, supported by strong and truly representative local leaders;
- people living in attractive, well kept towns and cities which use space and buildings well;
- good design and planning which makes it practical to live in a more environmentally sustainable way, with less noise, pollution and traffic congestion;
- towns and cities able to create and share prosperity, investing to help all their citizens reach their full potential; and

- good quality services - health, education, housing, transport, finance, shopping, leisure and protection from crime - that meet the needs of people and businesses wherever they are.

This urban renaissance will benefit everyone, making towns and cities vibrant and successful, and protecting the countryside from development pressure.'

Our towns and cities: the future. Delivering an urban renaissance. TSO, November 2000.

DRAFT

'Our vision is that within 10-20 years, no-one should lose out because of where they live, where power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many not the few.'
Tony Blair, January 2001.

'The vision of *The New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal*:

- In all the poorest neighbourhoods to have common goals of lower worklessness and crime, and better health skills, housing and physical environment.
- To narrow the gap on these measures between the most deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the country.

'There is a stable economy, an unprecedented investment in public services, and tough targets to deliver in the poorest places. Communities, local services, business and voluntary and faith groups are ready and willing to participate.'

The New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal. Social Exclusion Unit, January 2001.

Both documents hint at the vital involvement of 'faith communities' in the life and renewal of urban living and the forthcoming Local Government Association guidance on faith communities' involvement will assist greatly in this engagement, especially

now that some of our cities and towns are becoming majority 'ethnic minority' communities.

Other government initiatives have addressed issues of racism in a new and urgently needed way. The Report of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry has highlighted the need to address institutional racism at all levels of public and private institutions, this has been carried through by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 which emphasises the a positive duty of public bodies to promote race equality through the promotion of the equality of opportunity and good relations between people from different groups. The Home Office's work on religious discrimination promises to treat seriously the reality of discrimination in line with European legislation. The reports on *Community Cohesion*, following the disturbances in Oldham, Burnley, Bradford and Leeds highlight the urgency of addressing wider issues of alienation and division in our cities. ('Community Cohesion' will be a key concept that we will need to engage with from a theological perspective).

Community cohesion...is about helping micro communities to gel or mesh into an integrated whole. These divided communities would need to develop common goals and a shared vision. This would imply that such groups should occupy a common sense of place as well. The high levels of segregation found in many English towns would make it difficult to achieve community cohesion.

Community Cohesion: A report of the independent review team chaired by Ted Cantle, Home Office, December 2001

7.3 The government has significantly committed itself to tackling child poverty and the DETR's publication, *Indices of Deprivation 2000*, has suggested a changing and more complex demographic patterning of exclusion and poverty. We also welcome the advent of the Geographical Information System which we comment upon later in this document (cf. paragraph 13.5)

7.4 A plethora of schemes and programmes – most noticeably New Deal for Communities, Neighbourhood Renewal, Sure Start, and Heath and a variety of other Action Zones, have all begun to make an impact, though at times the complexity of

the current regeneration scene can be disempowering for all but the most bureaucratically minded. A new commitment to long-term sustainable policies has been welcomed by the urban Churches who know only too well from their own experience that it takes twenty years of sustained work before we can track measurable results. Welcome too is our government's call for 'joined-up policies' – for an holistic approach to the issues – but we do question just how holistic and joined-up is the plethora of initiatives which they are propagating.

We would express apprehension about some of the rhetoric that is used regarding exclusion and deprivation, and, most of all, we have concerns that the style of regeneration envisaged in all the documents and strategies will still fail to meet the deeper human needs which Christians hold to be fundamental for human renewal, as we have already stressed in this paper. We therefore see that the Church of England has a distinctive contribution to make in partnership with the government's welcome intentions.

7.5 This government's newly stated policies go beyond previous methodologies which sought to define and concentrate on 'urban priority areas' attempting rather to articulate the interdependence of areas within cities and beyond. This acknowledges the complexity of the causes of concentrations of poverty and social exclusion and their connection with other parts of the city, nation and global economy.

If there are sinful structures of exclusion and social deprivation these are not limited to particular districts within cities [...] 'Urban Priority Areas' are what they are, socially and economically, because of wider cultural failures concerning the nature of what it is to live publicly and the definition of human life as interdependence, the lack of a philosophy of humane environments, of community and the like. As a corporate expression of human self-definition, the city as a whole is a statement about the boundaries and potential of what it is to be human.

Philip Sheldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred*, SCM 2001: p. 166

7.6 We are committed to taking this call for holistic understandings of society very seriously but are not always convinced that we see this government intention being

realised. We note for example that some of our city's boundaries are so tightly drawn that they no longer match the footprint of that city's relational extent. Nearby suburban and rural areas often house those who earn their wealth in the city but take it from the city to their own surrounding neighbourhoods, thus decreasing the tax base of the city's revenues. With that wealth goes also residential expertise, educational facilities, and many other services which can be supported by those more wealthy communities. As the city seeks to enlarge its political and economic boundaries in order to survive, surrounding authorities often fight against that encroachment but in the process both the city and its environs stand to lose, since without the tax base and resident wealth the city will die, and if the city dies then its footprint must suffer. Many bishops are seeking to play a part in sub-Regional Partnerships which can be bigger than the city and bring together representatives from the urban, suburban and rural communities in order to facilitate a more holistic and sustainable approach to decision making.

7.7 The tension between what is best understood as local and best as global is an issue writ large across many a conflict, but the Christian gospel proclaims that whilst the local incarnational individual or community is all important, it is Christ in whom all things cohere, and the doctrine of the universality of the Church likewise rivets our attention upon the wider causes and implications of all that is properly local. Paul's epistles stress the interdependence of the Body, alerting Christians once again to the need to honour different gifts within the Church, and so correspondingly, to adopt an holistic appreciation of the connectedness of society. But human beings are fearful of diversity and difference, and it requires a repentant and welcoming spirituality in order for us to become more open to the wider picture. Partnership and cohesion is thus a spiritual exercise and is perhaps spoken of without due caution by politicians who do not recognise its complexity and its challenge to human defensiveness.

7.8 As we have mentioned, one of the worrying results of our competitive global economy is the degree to which localities find themselves set over against one another. We have already drawn attention to how an individual city will compete with others for market share, but we also note that localities within cities often begin to polarise as one section becomes fashionable whilst another is forgotten and decays. Some see this 'dual city' phenomenon as simply an inevitable consequence of market

forces in which wealth and poverty increasingly polarise but we believe that whilst welcoming the benefits of a market economy it is also important not to let market forces determine matters which are not within its competence. We call for a more thorough-going debate upon how a market economy can be managed so that social wellbeing and the common good can be safeguarded appropriately. Christians believe that human beings have been made to live together, not die separately. Salvation for one person or group at the expense of another is no salvation at all.

7.9 Some of these tensions are played out in the urban privatisation of what had previously been public space, the development of gated and secure residences, patterns of gentrification, the subjugation of the rural and the pollution of certain localities which are not sufficiently valued. We therefore hope to see government regeneration programmes and delivery of services even more co-ordinated and much more alert to the hidden geographical interrelationships which abound in society. We are glad to see however, an increasing awareness of the relationships and tensions between areas of deprivation and wealth; between suburbs and inner urban communities; between mono-cultural and multi-cultural communities; between age groups, interest groups and occupations; between the urban and the rural. This vision for an holistic awareness challenges the Church too to look at its own strategies in order to avoid piecemeal, fragmentary thinking.

7.10 In the hope of encouraging a wider strategic sense in policy and delivery the government has created Regional Development Agencies, and an enhanced rôle for Regional Government Offices. The former is now expected to take the lead in the allocation of resources for area-based regeneration. This regional perspective makes us increasingly aware of the European and global dimensions of issues of local employment, corporate culture, migration and notions of belonging, identity and home. We remain concerned about the increasing regional disparities in terms of economic performance, employment, house prices and media profile. We also fear that the proliferation of un-elected quangoes, which feature so regularly in regional politics, may serve to disempower and disenfranchise the people who will be subject to these issues.

7.11 The Church is uniquely placed to play a part here in viewing regions from a broader base than the financial, business and local government perspectives that appear at present to be driving much regional policy. We are responding to the new regional emphasis through the establishment of regional Church bodies which, in some areas, are proving to be instruments of regeneration in themselves, making the links between regional level and our work at pavement level. We even begin to wonder if it is any longer possible to operate effectively as an urban parish priest without some such connection into the regional or sub-regional, particularly now that so much regeneration resource is allocated from there. Our regional Church bodies must therefore have very effective methods of communication between these levels in order to facilitate the parishes in their mission.

7.12 It is also vital that our engagement at this level is undertaken with our ecumenical partners and increasingly with our colleagues from other faith communities.

8. The Church of England - 'Outward Looking, United and Confident'

8.1 Seeking to actualise a vision of the Church of England as 'outward looking, united and confident' the Archbishops' Council has identified four themes to direct its work and reflect perceptions of the needs and challenges which face us all now and in the years ahead. All four themes are relevant to the an emergent urban strategy for the Church:

1. *To assist the Church to speak and act prophetically on the issues of the day, particularly alongside those who are marginalised*
2. *To co-ordinate a strategy for encouraging and equipping Church members to further the task of evangelism.*
3. *To welcome and encourage young people....*
4. *To encourage the development of lay and ordained people in faith, discipleship, leadership, mission and evangelism.*

<p><i>Since 1999 the Archbishops' Council has sought to give a clear strategic sense of direction to the national work of the Church, informed by an understanding of the Church's opportunities, needs and resources</i></p>	<p>CofE Yearbook 2001</p>
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8.2 This serious commitment of the Archbishops' Council to strategic thinking and planning is further detailed in its paper GS Misc 650 (July 2001) in which it calls for the encouragement of broad collaborative action coordinated with local initiatives to address social exclusion and poverty. It asks for full support for those Church leaders tasked with speaking for the Church on these matters, ensuring that the socially excluded and marginalised are included as full partners in urban initiatives. It further expects the Church to engage in programmes of learning in order to understand and confront racism both in society and in its own life.

9. A Theology that Engages

9.1 When Christians engage with contemporary urban living they are immediately challenged by new insights and questions which demand theological attention. It is fascinating to see that so much of the urban vocabulary has theological provenance, but we must reclaim words such as 'regeneration', 'mission', and 'renewal', rediscover the positive meanings Christians have invested in such words, and remind those who now use them of their deeply challenging content. God has a purpose and hope for our cities and for our urban communities, and the Church must learn to give theological expression to that for all to hear. We are clear that those who live within urban areas should be involved in the making of decisions that will effect the lives of their communities, so likewise we will find that the most authentic urban theology is created by those who actually live there. The Church however has been in the habit of calling upon those who are at a remove from the experience to comment theologically upon urban issues only to find that those with hands-on urban experience believe these comments have not fully grasped the realities of urban living. This may be compared with planning consultants who gain from giving their advice on urban issues without having to live with the consequences of their policies. Theological consultants must therefore learn to tread wearily and work always in community with urban practitioners.

'Theology in the most deprived areas of our cities has to be a living reality which encounters the harshest suffering and forms some of the deepest maturity in the Christian life.' The Archbishop of Canterbury 1995

9.2 In recent years urban studies has come of age, but rarely have our own theologians and congregations found ways to engage with this burgeoning discipline. Likewise, local authorities and non-governmental organisations employ many thinking professionals who know their communities thoroughly from the inside – many of whom are Christians who find few opportunities to connect their faith and professional lives in their home churches. We believe the Church is very well placed to encourage new partnerships and covenants amongst such groups and with our congregations so that our urban mission may be more fully resourced by the interplay of urban work and reflection. Such experienced and informed networks would form not merely theological circles of urban concern, but circles of influence for urban change and renaissance.

The good influence of a true faith and the bad influence of a false faith pervade all life; in a thousand subconscious ways faith moulds or checks both thoughts and desires. But its influence alike for good and evil is, of course, enormously increased if there is a regular and sincere practice of devotion. For then the whole heart is opened for the God to whom worship is addressed to enter in and take possession. If the idea of God with which you fill your mind is that of a proud being, or capricious, or vindictive, your own character will be more marked by pride or caprice or vindictiveness in proportion as your worship is genuine and deep. The great perversions of conscience recorded in history are nearly all due to religion... Just because religion is the greatest power in the world, touching men's souls at a depth which nothing else can reach, it can, if it is perverted, do greater harm than anything else.

William Temple

9.3 In the early nineties, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Urban Theology Group drew experienced theologians and urban practitioners together to provide some important theological reflection on the Church's urban engagement at that time. Similarly, much fine theological activity was provoked at pavement level by *Faith in the City*, but little of this was fully integrated into the further thinking and mission strategy of the mainstream Church. Since then there has been a new emphasis upon

globalisation as it impacts on urbanisation, a deepening concern about the inter-faith dimension and reflection on environmental sustainability. What now is the future of this theological enterprise? How are the strands to be gathered up and integrated into the next stage of urban theology as we begin to see several different modes of reflection emerge? The increased complexity of the urban scene seems to be mirrored by a growing plurality of theological approach. The 'middle axiom' style of *Faith in the City* must now take its place alongside new modes of reflection based largely upon contextual and incarnational models. We would want to encourage the Church at large to learn from its own urban experiences of God and also be made more aware of the new, exciting theology that is being created by urban theologians. Biblical studies, historical theology, systematic and ethical theology are all being rejuvenated by these new insights.

'Christian difference is [...] not an insertion of something new into the old from outside, but a bursting out of the new precisely within the proper space of the old.'
Miroslav Volf 'Soft difference' www.northpark.edu/sem/exauditu/papers/volf.html

9.4 Amongst the many issues which have energised this urban theological reflection is the fact that there is in urban experience so much that works against abundant human living. In urban centres, vast resources of money and personnel are expended daily, the quality of service delivery is constantly determined, health, housing and education issues are fought over, and politics is open to manipulation by personalities and parties. And where so much power is on offer, idolatry, injustice and selfishness can be rampant. In these circumstances we have become more theologically astute about structural sin. We learn to combat the forces of darkness with repentant prayer, courageous action for social justice, and a bright vision for urban community.

9.5 Likewise, the local engagement of the urban Church in a range of projects and through its own search for relevant worship, nurture and proclamation, raises significant ecclesiological issues about the right nature of the relationship between the different structural levels within the Church – parochial, diocesan and national – as well as between the Church in different places. The outcome of that theological debate has implications for the distribution and control of resources, financial interdependence, and for our understanding and development of leadership.

Likewise, issues of environmental sustainability, pollution, transport, water, land-use and waste disposal pose significant theological questions of justice, stewardship and participation.

Death and resurrection issues loom large in urban experience. Strength in weakness and weakness in strength are the daily fare of urban ministry. The housebound woman frozen in poverty proves to be a powerhouse of visionary and loving prayer for the community she looks at constantly from the top of her high-rise tenement block. The wealthy financier in the business district is locked into making decisions at work which he knows to be so unethical that he says he simply cannot attend his local Church any more.

9.6 Urban entrepreneurs and city financiers are not helped by the fact that the Church has largely failed to offer a worthy theology of wealth creation. We preach of a creator God who makes us in God's image but regard with suspicion those who would use those same gifts to make abundant wealth for society. Augustine of Hippo suggested that human beings have been given the gift of desire so that we may seek the beauty of God with all our heart. We hope therefore that our cities might play their part in this seeking after that beauty by becoming wonderful works of human creativity where energy is devoted to the pursuit of belonging, the design of beauty and functionality, the collegiality of industry, and the furtherance of the wellbeing and fulfilment of its inhabitants. However, we fall far short in our endeavours and our desires become misplaced as idolatry although the originating intention to create a community of wealth and good things has surely been God-inspired. Those Christians who people the economic power-houses of our cities need the resources of theology as much as any others if they are to manage ethically and creatively their part in our urban life together.

10. Christian Engagement in Urban Areas

10.1 The prayerful, theological endeavour which we have described, must be at the heart of every Christian community and especially for those living amidst the challenges of the urban scene. Tensions in some communities since 11th September 2001, have meant that the question of what makes for 'good' religion as opposed to

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'bad' religion has been in the minds of thinking people and social commentators. It is clear that bad and theologically uninformed religion can lead fanatical adherents to perform antisocial and malign acts. It is interesting to note that Jesus singled out the quest for 'good' religion as something of prime importance in his own day, and likewise today religion is under judgement.

As a spiritual leader, I want to acknowledge that the religions of the world must also take up a challenge. We must put our own houses in order, so that we are never seen to be providing a religious mandate for acts of terrorism. We must build on the best of our faiths, not the worst.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Westminster Abbey, Dec 2001

10.2 In Britain there is a growing social engagement by the majority of churches in mission and ministry, although some find the transition from social welfare provision to being advocates for social justice a difficult adjustment. This welcome pursuit of active engagement in human urban community as part of Christian discipleship requires of the local Church appropriate adult education programmes, catechesis and courses of training. The few organisations who provide training of quality, such as Unlock and the Urban Theology Unit, are to be affirmed and emulated. There are also many professionals, teachers, business managers, local government officers and so on, who live at a distance from deprived urban settings and yet impact upon those communities in their everyday lives. We need to raise their awareness of this urban interconnectedness and train Christian professionals to think of their Christian faith and witness in these structural terms as well as simply to confine it to their private lives.

10.3 Whether or not our urban environments are sustainable into the longer term is an issue which is now to be addressed at all levels. It is certainly on the agenda of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and local Christian communities often seek to witness to this issue in their careful management of resources, use of Church buildings, their engagement in clean-up schemes, access programmes and Local Agenda 21 projects. They can raise awareness of this issue of

sustainability during local planning application enquiries and by participating in neighbourhood watch schemes and the like.

10.4 A very important factor in the sustainability of a locality's wellbeing is the presence in the community of qualitative schools. Parents will leave a neighbourhood in pursuit of their children's education, taking with them their family resources and commitment to the community. The Church's commitment to provision of quality education in poor urban areas is essential to their sustainability as communities. The emphasis of the Dearing Report on 'inclusiveness and distinctiveness' (3:36) in the creation and development of Church Schools points to the importance of those schools as part of any urban strategy. The growth of Church Schools in our urban communities provides nurture for local Christian families and direct support for our deprived areas. Consolidation and expansion (Ch 5) must demonstrate the Church's commitment to those in most need at both primary and secondary levels. The stress in Dearing on 'expanding provision in areas of economic and social hardship' (5:20) encourages us in that aim. The Church of England should also encourage the establishment, where appropriate, of 'inclusive and distinctive schools' by other faith communities as part of its commitment. We must be open to the debate on faith-based schooling, arguing that every such school must be inclusive in its admission policies, and promote mutual respect and regard across the community it serves.

10.5 The Christian education of children in our urban congregations can sometimes be hampered by lack of appropriate supportive resources. The prevalence of teaching materials which are clearly not suitable for children from impoverished circumstances, minor ethnic backgrounds or single parent families-means that the work of groups such as the CURBS (Children in Urban Situations) project which produces appropriate resource material need to be more widely known . Urban congregations often find themselves offering to children who attend without their families their only experience of play, supportive adult friends, and even proper physical sustenance, and in all this congregations need appropriate resourcing.

10.6 The issue of youth provision has concerned the Panel over a number of years. The decline of the youth service has made the provision scarcer. Poor young people may find access to the few facilities still operating too expensive or alienating.

Christian youth organisations have done sterling work in schools and have offered support to some congregations who offer evening and holiday club provision for young people, but as local authority provision has been progressively reduced, fewer congregations seem to offer clubs and support to young people who will not attend events of an overtly proselytising Christian style. We would ask congregations to include in their provision more 'open' and detached youth work and for dioceses to support them in this challenging ministry which is often to highly marginalised young people. The government's new *Connexions* programme which draws together services for young people offers a new integrated model which is mandated to address issues of social exclusion. The Church needs to discover the opportunities collaborate with this new approach, not least encouraging church members to offer their time as mentors

10.7 Some of our towns and cities are being transformed by the building or development of new higher education institutions and campuses. Sometimes the city is at a loss to adjust to the new life and culture which the students bring. In poor urban areas it is also very noticeable how low standard urban housing can be used by colleges as student accommodation. But single students are notorious for utilising housing for dormitory purposes and not playing any part in the sustaining and wellbeing of the local community so local congregations should seek to impress upon students their responsibility towards the host community in those areas where this has become a major cause of the deterioration of the locality.

10.8 Our younger people are in the van of lifestyle changes that are affecting the wider community. Because national and international capital flows are deregulated and labour solidarity has been eroded, employment patterns have had to become more flexible and early career experiences are therefore often varied and short-term. People now have to be prepared to move from one area to another, reskilling as they go. This has significantly affected housing requirements and partnering trends and the postponement of family formation. Young couples, and even older mobile families, will often show little interest in the localities they inhabit for these temporary periods and communities suffer as a consequence whilst Church congregational life and mission seek to adjust to the new flexible patterns of living.

10.9 It is astonishing how many urban congregations are active in supporting needy groups, such as those struggling with substance abuse, homelessness or refugee status. Poverty continues to be gender specific and local congregations can often be a great refuge and sanctuary for women in difficulties. Seeking charity and government funding and support for programmes such as these can be notoriously complex and problematical, and dioceses should seek to do all in their power to share best practice and advice.

10.10 In recent years faith has become a significant issue of identity for minority ethnic communities, particularly those which find themselves increasingly marginalised in social, political and economic terms. Inclination to participate in the life of the wider community and regeneration initiatives varies greatly from one faith community to another, with some wishing to engage in this way but finding it difficult to broker initial access to programmes and decision-makers. Recent events in a number of northern cities have focussed attention on the needs of these communities, and upon the exploitation of these tensions by fascist and racist organisations. Christian churches and personnel have also been targeted either as minority faith groups in their own right or for their courageous stand for cross-cultural understanding and respect. The complexity of these issues demands that dioceses run faith and racism awareness programmes for urban parishioners and for those localities where parishioners normally have little opportunity to gain awareness through daily experience of the new complexities of our urban multi-cultural life.

10.11 The Urban Bishops' Panel has expressed concern on a number of occasions about the lack of government clarity regarding the involvement of faith communities in regeneration. The National Action Strategy Plan and Urban White Paper both contain positive statements about the rôle of 'faith communities' but neither define the term and often it appears alongside mention of 'ethnic minority' and women's groups. It is reported that some regional officials have assumed that these 'faith communities' do not include the Christian Church. At least three different expectations of the Church's rôle in regeneration projects seem to be envisioned in the Social Exclusion Unit's documentation. First, along with other faith communities Christian churches are sometimes seen as volunteer service delivery agents, offering packages of care. Second, we are sometimes assumed to have significant resources

which can benignly be exploited for delivery of services, such as plant, institutional structures, staff and members. Third, we can be viewed as authoritative and authentic communities from the area who, through involvement in partnership, may add legitimacy to a programme and ensure that programmes in deprived areas are influenced or led by the community. However, any prophetic voice which we may wish to claim is usually interpreted as unacceptable proselytising. The authenticity of churches as groups rooted in the local community has been stressed greatly in recent years but we must guard against losing our integrity and rôle in advocacy within deprived communities by allowing ourselves to be conscripted as merely service delivery agents by local authorities. Our participation should not be at the expense of critical engagement. A greater awareness should be developed enabling the whole congregation to own engagement in local programmes and initiatives, and contribute to a wider analysis of its contribution and accountability within the neighbourhood.

11. Ministry and Leadership in the Urban Context

11.1 To begin to determine the form and style of ministry and training which the Church of England will need if it is to engage with urban communities in the twenty-first century, it is instructive first to acknowledge that we already have a distinguished and long history of urban congregational life and leadership. Out of those traditions have developed a broad base of experience and understanding of the realities of urban ministry, its joys and its sorrows. It teaches us that leadership in urban parishes and communities, whether ordained or lay- clergy, readers, pastoral auxiliaries or lay officers must be comprised of men and women of prayer who have a vision of God's love for their people and the place they inhabit. They must know the spoken and body languages of the people around them, be fearless but canny, be collaborative by nature, have an astute sense of the sacramental presence of God in things, and know something of how to help Christian adults learn together. Some will be entrepreneurial whilst others will quietly affirm others. Most will be streetwise, and all will have a robust sense of humour. Most should be drawn from within the community itself. Within the leadership there needs to be those who are seeped in the biblical and sacramental traditions of our faith and able to bring those traditions to the service of the congregation in mission. There must be a determination to listen to the insights of the indigenous people and to pray for the empowerment by the Holy Spirit

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of those individuals and groups who represent the best that the community offers. From this description it may be recognised that we do not see ministerial leadership as only the function of the ordained, but ordained ministers will be crucial to the wellbeing of the Church in these areas as those who preside within the local community of Christians, always bringing the wider perspective to bear upon the important particular insights and activities of the local congregation.

‘We should expect local Christian communities...to grow a range of ministries, both ordained and lay, which have emerged from local missionary and pastoral needs.’

‘Too much preparation for ministry is Church and not world focussed’.

Bishop of Rochester- House of Bishops October 2001

11.2 There is an important part to be played in urban ministry by lay Christian professionals. Whilst we stress the importance of a bottom-up and democratic style of decision-making in urban management and Christian ministry, we readily acknowledge that some Christians will have studied the urban and managerial disciplines, be well-placed to enact or influence change, and be ready and willing to work in a servant rôle to the urban congregation and populace, ready to learn from them and adjust their behaviour and strategy accordingly. In this way skilled expertise can be brought to the ministry of the whole Church at many levels. In the boardroom, government office, or at local level, Christian ministry and mission may prosper if well-informed from pavement-level experience and analysed in the light of our Christian gospels. Some of these professionals will choose to live in deprived areas, whilst others will commute from surrounding suburbia. Their readiness to engage in a sensitive and respectful partnership with those in the poorer areas may in turn help to bring new awareness to their own communities and assist a little to relieve what has been called ‘the suburban captivity of the Church’.

11.3 The role of the parish priest in the urban context has been changing over recent years. Involvement in community initiatives carries greater responsibilities than ever – not least in the traditional rôles of school governor or as trustee to a local charity. Clergy now remain the sole professionals who are required to live in the areas they serve, and this brings them unique sensitivities and insights regarding the place and its people. Assumptions by others about the priestly rôle can often mean that clergy are used as ‘honest brokers’ between various individuals and groups working in the parish. Similarly clergy will find themselves representing the Church on management and development boards which in every other way may lack local grassroots representation. This has the danger of dis-empowering emergent local lay leadership, whilst also giving opportunity for the priest to bring that lack to the attention of the project and the recipient community. We believe that research should be commissioned on the rôle of the clergy in appointed and *ex-officio* positions in the public and voluntary sector so that we can see how best to use these opportunities and avoid the dangers.

11.4 Recent years have seen a flourishing of courses and schemes promoting local and collaborative ministry among lay and ordained people, emphasising the parish context and the need for local analysis. Much of this energy derives from *Faith in the City* and pioneering working in East London, Liverpool and Sheffield whilst some has been modified for use in other social settings. Some dioceses offer a number of schemes for different social contexts of ministry, while financial and policy constraints have meant that other dioceses now operate only a single scheme that has sometimes become dominated by sub-urban and rural candidates. Experiments with other ministry styles continue apace in order to search out radical alternative vocational options. Some have valued the training style offered by Community or Citizens’ Organising bodies which specialise in the empowerment and solidarity of local groups across an urban area, and this should be evaluated by those responsible for our theological training and diocesan lay-training strategies.

11.5 One pressing need of urban congregations and ministers today which warrants special diocesan support and care relates to the danger of violence and abuse currently being suffered in urban areas. Spitting, name-calling and physical attack are becoming commonplace for congregations and clergy in some communities, and we would

expect each diocese to make arrangements to log all incidents, including occurrences not reported to the police, so that dioceses may map the hot-spots of abuse and seek to offer extra supports and training in those localities.

11.6 Difficulties have been experienced by some dioceses in filling clerical vacancies, particularly in the Northern Province, and especially in its larger cities. Dioceses do need to review their strategies for recruitment and support of urban clergy. Peer-support through well-managed and resourced chapters and deaneries, as well as support from within the diocesan structures, is increasingly important, particularly as there are now fewer assistant clergy acting as immediate colleagues. Much urban ministry, lay and ordained, will be supported by ecumenical alliances and shared work. The development of teams, co-operatives, and local groupings is essential. The Diocese of Birmingham has gone so far as to agree a policy that no clergy in any of its Urban Priority Areas should serve in isolation from other parishes in the neighbourhood.

11.7 The national Church and each diocese must ask itself what systems of encouragement and support for urban ministry should be put in place to enable a sustained missional impact. Often, local ecumenical work can be affirmed and supported at other structural levels by church leaders and intermediate bodies. Many of the best inter-church relationships are spawned in collaborative work for the community, where local churches put aside their differences in order to address a crying need or issue in the locality. Refugee centres, homelessness projects, care for the elderly, run by Churches Together in the community bring Christians of differing traditions together in meaningful and surprising ways, to the mutual advantage of all. Many urban clergy and congregations find this togetherness a great source of support and encouragement, which sometimes leads to further investigation of shared worship and congregational life.

11.8 Christian people and groups need to be sustained in their urban mission through long periods of time since the Church knows from its long hands-on experience that urban change can only be effected usefully over periods of perhaps ten to twenty years. There has been a courageous tradition of long term ministries, and some clergy have sensed a vocation to offer their ministry as an oblation of presence in hard-

pressed urban environments. We would encourage therefore that for such urban parishes dioceses seek to work to a coherent strategy over a twenty year period of development and planning for consistency and seek to make successive appointments accordingly.

11.9 Likewise, some poorer urban congregations have kept a small but steady light of prayer burning in a forgotten urban landscape, and they too should be encouraged and supported. Nevertheless, it will be important in that encouragement that a high vision of God's hope for the future of the city be paramount. We must never equate failure with faithlessness but nor must we be content with what is when the present falls so far short of the vision. Urban ministry can best be a vocation to a ministry of oblation – or self-offering – when it is also informed by an analysis of the structural as well as the individual urban dynamics within which that oblation is offered. The Church must rally to encourage urban vocations of this seriousness and spiritual commitment.

12. Preparation for Ministry

12.1 Professional ordained ministry in urban areas raises issues not only of ongoing support, but also of initial selection, training, and appointment. It is to be regretted that only occasionally are attempts made, in the early stages of selection, to profile candidates with regard to the nature or location of their envisaged ministry. Such profiling would allow appropriate training packages to be created, allowing candidates and ordinands access to good rôle models and imaginative ministries, and offer students in training sufficient time to drink deep at those wells.

12.2 The problems about styles of training and access to theological education for candidates without a background in formal tertiary education needs to be urgently addressed. The new arrangements for 'pre-theological college training' have not supported candidates from marginal constituencies in the same way as previous schemes. The demise of the Aston Training Scheme and the Simon of Cyrene Institute have reduced the opportunities for minority ethnic Christians, those with less formal education or from urban congregations to develop their inherent resources while testing their vocations. While it cannot be assumed that candidates from such congregations will automatically return to comparable contexts, they bring essential experience into the leadership of the Church and thus enrich it.

12.3 We are painfully aware of the urgent need to recruit more people from our ethnic minority groups into leadership. There is an injustice here which is particularly blatant when we realise that many of our inner urban congregations are now substantially comprised of people from those groups. Despite this fact, and despite their preparedness to organise and run the local church, rarely are they asked to take their place in the wider structures of the Church. The number offering for ordained ministry remains pitifully small despite their evident leadership skills at local level. The Church has often said that it must attend to this unjust imbalance but fails to find effective methods of delivering on the intention. This issue must now be addressed.

12.4 Attempts by theological colleges to provide some urban encounter for students within training have had varied success. Present research indicates how marginal some of these projects are becoming to the ongoing core curriculum and life of the colleges. The location of most theological colleges is very far, geographically and sociologically, from their urban project centres, and the centres thereby become so marginal that they attract few or even no students each year. One college however has placed its urban studies centre at the centre of the basic training of all its students, although how long this can be financially sustained remains at issue. Centres of this sort are to be commended but they require dedicated staffing rather than reliance on a local vicar who has a little time to spare. Even more effective would be the search for new models for training in the urban setting and in this regard we commend the pioneering work that has been inaugurated in east Newcastle.

12.5 We are not arguing here for yet another add-on to an already crowded college curriculum, but that urban experience and contextual theology and training should be at the heart of the training as a whole, and for all the reasons argued in this report. Training in racism awareness and diversity is a must for all candidates, as is a deepening understanding of vocation as oblation, and of ministerial theology as a contextual discipline. The very best location for all these important elements of the curriculum is self-evidently the urban since it is here that these factors loom so large and therefore make them easier to engage during the short years of formal preparation for ministry. Some current styles of academic theology mean however that students are not equipped to develop contextual theological tools even during longer

placements. It is a further concern that even some of the urban study centres have not really kept pace with or developed links with the burgeoning world of urban studies in universities, or contextual theology in the churches and seminaries of the Anglican Communion.

12.6 Theological Courses are in theory better placed to inculcate the disciplines of contextual theology but experience shows that this opportunity is not sufficiently seized upon. Also, if a student is not already resident in an urban setting, time limitation on the course may preclude any in depth exposure to the urban. This may mean that we have to depend on the early years of Continuing Ministerial Education to offer settings for urban ministry skills to be developed, although this may be too late to develop the necessary skills and lasting vocations which we desire for the Church. (We would add that we believe that good grounding in contextual methods and approaches can enhance the minister's practice wherever their ministry is located). The Theological Education and Training Committee of the Division of Ministry should review developments in contextual theological training since the 1988 report of the Working Party on Urban Studies Centres: *Theology in Practice*. We would ask the Archbishops' Council to consider the possibility of sponsoring a well-resourced centre for contextual training and theology in each Province, to develop pre-and post-ordination training and reflective opportunities. These centres could be attached to existing urban schemes or education projects and shared by the dioceses, courses and colleges of each Province.

12.7 Finally in this regard, we note that rural/area deans, archdeacons and bishops also need to pay attention to their own training needs regarding the prevailing urban context of ministry. This needs to include analysis of their rôles across cities and in their regional setting, as well as the ecumenical, interfaith and theological dimensions of such engagement.

13. Finance and Resourcing

13.1 In 1995 the General Synod of the Church of England accepted *nem. con.* the findings of the report *Staying in the City*, and its recommendation that the Synod should:

'Request the House of Bishops, the Church Commissioners and the Central Board of Finance to seek a structural mechanism for ensuring the financial interdependence of the Church, so that UPAs do not become dependent either on a bidding process or individual acts of generosity.' (*Staying on the City* p. 110)

13.2 The changing structures of the Church of England in the past five years mean that much of the responsibility for the oversight of a response to this request is now held by the Archbishops' Council. However, it is to be noted that the main thrust of this report is not so much asking for additional one-off funds to be committed to urban mission, but that our overall mindset and mainstream Church policies about money and resources should be increasingly based upon an understanding of the prime needs and opportunities which the urban offers the Church as we face the new century. The Government's Urban White Paper speaks of bending its mainstream funding towards the urban rather than relying on targeted special funds to turn areas of deprivation around. We would ask our Church leaders to adopt the same principle in the resourcing and governance of the Church, turning the mainstream resources towards those churches which engage with the majority of our population (especially where they are poor) and treating special additional funds as precisely and only that.

13.3 In this regard we note that the on-going work of a number of predominantly urban dioceses is now dependent on the equitable assessment of needs and resources of dioceses so that there can be a just sharing of central resources across the country. However this has not always been an easy calculation to agree. The House of Bishops has been clear that the Index of Multiple Deprivation should play a part in determining how the Archbishops' Council distributes the Church Commissioners' grant allocation to our neediest parishes and dioceses. Continued mission and ministry in the neediest urban areas sometimes depends for its very existence on this resource being made available. We should be using the *Index of Multiple Deprivation* as one of the key factors in this distribution, for not to do so sets it apart from national policy in so many other spheres and leaves some of the poorest dioceses and parishes considerably disadvantaged. We also believe that new money made available from the Commissioners to the Archbishops' Council for short-term work should still be allocated to the needier dioceses on the basis of selective allocations. To give any of

this money to better-off dioceses would seem to us to be in breach of the Commissioners' Trust obligations as well as denying a proper overall priority to the poor. Indeed, we believe that mutual support will be necessary if we are to continue to sustain ministry in the neediest parts of our country.

13.4 We are also concerned that when cuts are made in clergy resources and diocesan administration it is often the needier parishes that suffer most. We are concerned that further cuts to these communities from central and diocesan expenditure will only weaken our ability to relate adequately, at national, regional and local levels, to the processes of urban regeneration involving our faith communities. We see this as a vital part of our strategy and wish to register our concern that the ability to be able to deliver could be fatally weakened by radical attacks on expenditure at these points of contact.

13.5 Apportioning resources appropriately requires careful analysis and use of data, and in this regard some dioceses have found the use of the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) a very helpful aid to strategic management. For example, in April 1999, Manchester Diocesan Board for Church and Society, facing the double challenge of urban deprivation and struggling churches, identified the promotion of "effective local churches in effective local communities" as a key goal for its work. From the beginning the strategic potential of GIS technology was envisaged as an important resource within this ambitious project and is being used to such effect that we would recommend each diocese to investigate use of this facility.

Manchester's GIS has been operational since February 2001, but has already delivered under each of the project's four main objectives:

1. To develop understanding of context. Mapping phenomena such as child poverty identifies clearly areas of greatest need across the Diocese. Similar analyses have been used to inform discussion of practical responses, and to support successful funding applications.

2. *To transform internal administrative data “from information to intelligence”. The provision of maps, and the identification and co-ordination of relevant statistical information, have been used to resource those with responsibility for pastoral planning. They are also used to identify and monitor signs of growth.*

3. *To explore connections between church and community information. A simple exercise, such as mapping church schools in relation to areas of educational deprivation, can be used to promote effectiveness in the deployment of existing resources. Others have been used to argue a case for new resources!*

4. *To facilitate engagement between church and community. For example, an overlay of parish and ward boundaries enabled rapid identification of which parishes fall within a particular regeneration area or Local Strategic Partnership.*

The next phase is to provide GIS support for the whole diocesan operation. This will ensure that GIS information for mission planning is up-to-date, and create synergy between mission and maintenance.

13.6 The Church Urban Fund was created on the recommendation of the *Faith in the City* Report. A recent Review Group, whilst celebrating so much that had been achieved through this admirable venture, also raised issues about the recent profile, management and ecclesiology of the Fund. From its debate in November 2000 it is apparent that the General Synod continues to recognise the need for such a resource and has asked the Archbishops’ Council to enter into dialogue with the trustees concerning its future shape and resources. The Fund is clearly a resource more significant than its financial value and is a sign of the Church’s commitment to promoting action alongside people experiencing poverty. CUF funds do need to be used to enable the Church from its local base to take advantage of the opportunities that are now opening up. At the same time there will be an increasing need to be aware of those communities and pieces of work which are less attractive to public and mainstream funding, and which may involve elements of risk or prophetic action. The Urban Bishops’ Panel therefore strongly supports the view that the Fund should continue, and has been part of the dialogue between the Fund’s trustees and members

of the Archbishops' Council discerning the way forward. If a significant renewal of the Fund's resources, through a major appeal by 2007, does not prove possible, then the Church must face up honestly to the serious implications of the withdrawal of the CUF's contribution to our urban parishes. It would then become all the more urgent for the Church to reorder its mainstream priorities regarding ministry training and provision, buildings, administration, and mission initiatives, to better reflect its faith in the city. We therefore believe that the task of finding resources old and new is a task not just for the Church Urban Fund, but for the Church of England as a whole. The Church Urban Fund will be a key resource for the work of the proposed national Urban Resource Unit and a vital participant in its accompanying Urban Policy Forum.

14. Participating in the Urban Renaissance

14.1 The Church of England shares with the national government a vision and a hope for the regeneration and renewal of urban living. Already vast reaches of our cities and outer estates are looking very different because of the impact of regeneration schemes and partnership programmes. One need only remember how London's Docklands seemed forlorn and empty less than twenty years ago and now dominates the horizon as far out as the orbital M25 to realise that our towns and cities are dynamic and changing organisms. Already the government has designated the vast adjoining area out along the Thames Estuary eastward from Docklands as its priority redevelopment target area for the immediate future, and all across the country we are waking up to the impressive impact of this new generation of urban renaissance. It is happening, and the Church must be ready to play its part if the renaissance is to go more than skin deep. For where regeneration programmes have been imposed from on high they have often devastated local communities that have been visited by them, and whilst outwardly all looks bright and new the local community has had its heart and soul wrenched from it.

14.2 We therefore welcome the government's plea that the urban renaissance for which it calls should be based upon the full participation of all those who hold a stake in our urban future. There is a growing awareness at so many levels in our society of the need for very new approaches to regeneration and this awareness is not only emanating from central government initiatives. Those closely engaged with urban life seem only too aware that so many mistakes have been made in the past that we really

cannot now afford to make any more. There is therefore a new preparedness to think holistically and work in partnership, even where it is proving difficult and contrary to past practice. Given the long presence and engagement of the Church in these issues, the renaissance agenda offers us a very welcome opportunity to think and act spiritually, pastorally and strategically with others for the Church and the common good. We do not claim to have special answers but we do know that we have a specific and Christian contribution to make to this fundamental urban debate and we wish to make it.

[The Urban Renaissance] ...will ultimately depend on everyone contributing to change whether as individuals in their own street and neighbourhood, as investors and businesses in shaping the economy of their city, or as local representatives creating the vision for their city.

Urban White Paper p137

14.3 Too often planners of regeneration have been solely concerned with the renewal of the built environment, assuming that ‘community’ will follow. We would however argue that before we seek to ‘engineer’ community in this way, a metaphorical removal of shoes must be a prerequisite for those who approach the places in which others have found meaning and identity. The spirit of a place is engendered by the community of the present and the symbols, creeds and the stories that are retold and lived out in the community. We would therefore advocate the use of worshipful and cultural activities within the regeneration process as ways of enabling past histories to be shared, celebrated or questioned, and new histories to be created for organic communities. These and other exercises can be essential in the early stages of re-imagining a community’s built environment, and allow a greater sense of self-confidence and determination on the part of the indigenous community to take an active and influential part in the process of renaissance of their locality.

‘Outer estates have distinctive characteristics and needs...a strategy for outer estates is critical if the *urban renaissance* is to impact on all areas of urban living. These estates may not be players in the greenbelt vs. brown field debate, but the residents of these areas are as entitled to collaborate in an approach to good design, management and environmental improvement as those who will return to the city centres, to the cafes and imaginatively designed townscapes.’

Urban Bishops' Panel memorandum to the Environment, Transport, and Regional Affairs Select Committee, January 2000

14.4 Our vision of urban regeneration is that those who live in communities should become aware of themselves, their inner hopes and deepest needs, determined to be active citizens in equal partnership with people of good will, and that their physical environment should come to express all that they hope for their community – and that love, peace and justice should infect the governance and community life of their locality and the communities with which they interact.

15. Change through Partnerships

Partnerships should be a vital sign of the common bond of humanity and involve a mutual commitment of vision, authority and interest. Unfortunately this has rarely turned out to be the case in urban regeneration schemes, and indeed 'partnership' was recently defined by one experienced cynic as "the suspension of mutual loathing in pursuit of money."

15.1 It is in urban experience that human difference and otherness abounds in its greatest profusion, and this means that urban partnerships often have to take place across the deepest chasms of cultural and social difference and expectation. Good, sustainable partnerships in these circumstances are only possible if they have a rare spiritual depth and integrity. Partnership is an aspect of the dynamic mutuality (*koinonia*) that should be apparent in the Church's own life and mission as it supports the poorest, seeks the justice of God's Reign, and celebrates the contribution of every part of the Body of Christ which is his Church. This is an aspect of our participation in God's renewing and regenerative activity for the whole world, and the Church's practice of this *koinonia*, as a sign of our participation in the loving mutuality of the Holy Trinity, should be a sign of the possibility of human mutual sharing at a profound level.

15.2 This is not to say that partnership is easy for the Church, for we may find that our stance of 'critical solidarity' becomes impossible to maintain because we are

expected to participate in partnerships and programmes that are destined to reshape our cities but which express values diametrically opposed to our own. But this is not an excuse to withdraw in order to keep ourselves ideologically pure, but a self-critical warning to be canny in our partnerships with those key stakeholders who form our urban communities and with whom therefore strategies must be developed. There may of course come times when withdrawal is our only option but wherever possible we must learn to be prophetic and critical and yet realistic about what is achievable. For many years the Church has built a reputation as an honest broker and a capacity builder, a key provider and creator of space in which encounter and negotiation can take place. The praxis of the urban Church is therefore a vital component in community renewal, as partnerships learn to listen, analyse, and negotiate with mutual respect through the tensions, contestations and the creativity that are brought to the table. There is a significant role already being taken as long-term community strategies are formulated within the new Local Strategic Partnerships. In some places these new forums have actively sought the expertise and experience of local faith communities. Elsewhere questions remain about the perceived motivation to root strategic thinking outside of local government control.

‘No one knows a place better than the people who live and work there. They must be at the heart of the process to develop a strategy that will work in their area. That is why Local Strategic Partnerships are the key to our strategy to deliver better towns and cities.’

‘Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) will bring together the local authority, all service providers (such as schools, the police and health and social services), local businesses, the full range of community groups and the voluntary sector. They will:

- develop a Community Strategy to cover the local authority area. This should look at all aspects that contribute to quality of life together; identify strengths and weaknesses; and set out a long-term vision that has been agreed with all the key stakeholders;
- agree priorities for action and monitor local performance against agreed local indicators taking into account national and regional targets; and
- co-ordinate the work of more local or more specific partnerships dealing with particular neighbourhoods or issues.’

Urban White Paper p.34

15.3 Our rôle will often be to ensure representation and support in these regeneration partnerships for those usually denied access to power, and for this we will need to break through old cultures of paternalism and philanthropy. Some who are used to making decisions for community without criticism will find it very difficult to listen to the outbursts of anger and frustration or even the horror which some will need to express if the real voice of the oppressed within the community is to be heard. We must nevertheless hold to our belief that if death and despair are not properly faced, then no lasting resurrection or renewal can take place.

15.4 On the other hand, local practitioners and residents may not be ready to hear the voices of the developers and planners, for these are the very people who in the past have silenced and marginalised them, leaving them to look on as their communities were devastated and redesigned around them. It may be that the significant events of 2001 in British and US cities have helped urban professionals to own something of their vulnerability – the urban vulnerability which has been the everyday experience of other, poorer, urban citizens. Usually, however, consultants and other business professionals will need help coming to the table where their policies will receive criticism and judgement. All too often they have in the past antagonised communities by receiving vast pay and profits for their investment and advice from the very funds that were intended to be of direct benefit to the communities over which they have opined. There will be a need for forgiveness and proper repentance.

15.5 The Church can be well placed to bring powerful players into relationship with the powerless for it is often the only organisation which straddles both camps. However, the Church too has played its part in demonising professionals and the organisations for which they work, and there is a need for those involved in urban theological practice to engage seriously with those involved in commercial and financial activity to develop a better understanding of economic activity and wealth creation from a theological perspective. This must also engage with issues of the persistence of poverty, environmental sustainability and alternative economic strategies. It is clear that a market economy has brought us substantial material benefits and enables complex transformations to take place so that value may be added to matter in a competitive but relational atmosphere. It enables creativity to burgeon and wealth to be recycled.

15.6 On the other hand, the market is also severely limited in what it can do and tends to commodify all in its path – it gives everything a price but not necessarily its proper value. Controls are therefore essential so that the market does not bludgeon those who may be powerless within it. The growth of the global market place, networking across the globe from city to city, impacts our urban environment as never before and the Church, aided by its theologies of catholicity and incarnation, must assist those who work within it to analyse, critique and control it for the benefit of all. They too must be brought to the partnership table, although their presence will result in power imbalances which are all the more complex and difficult to manage. We would also commend the holistic approaches of agencies such as the New Economics Foundation on social capital and economic reform.

We believe that the chief problem for our cities is not some ‘inevitable’ global economy, it is not the lack of new forms of corporate organisation, it is not lack of enthusiasms for new working practices and it is not the absence of clustering. The problem is lack of political will and above all the lack of willingness to extend to the economies of the cities the same democratic rights that could be found in their political systems. Why do we need to think of capitalism and the market as remorseless, inevitable forces in our lives – not to be disrupted – when the rest of our lives are increasingly constructed as choices? Only because we are willing to cede them this mastery.

Amin, Massey and Thrift, *Cities for the many and not the few*, Policy Press 2000 p.30

16. Points of engagement and access

The parish and deanery

16.1 Urban renewal, like the Church’s mission, is essentially focussed in the local context. An analysis of that context, its opportunities and challenges, is vital to informed mission engagement. Parish audit exercises were critical in the initial response to *Faith in the City* but the availability of new and more telling data and the new opportunities afforded to communities for neighbourhood-lead renewal, means that community auditing should continue to be an ongoing exercise for the local

Church. The use of Geographical Information Systems and Social Audit methods are essential to strategic thinking in parishes and dioceses. Some urban deaneries are experimenting with new structures, more ecumenically attuned, and geographically redrawn to relate more appropriately to Local Authorities and focused upon Local Strategic Partnership agendas.

16.2 Urban parishes know that they need to 'travel light' if they are to become flexible in response to a fast changing missional environment, but all too often they feel that their needs and cultures are not understood or taken account of by diocesan structures and the administrative and legal constraints and traditions of the national Church. We welcome the continuing efforts to simplify our church infrastructure as part of our determination to overcome their barriers to mission.

Bishops, Diocesan Staff and Regional Appointments

16.3 In recent times our bishops have been concerned and active regarding many of the issues which have been raised in this paper. Some bishops have lead debates and been directly involved in urban industrial and financial issues, have sought to effect multi-faith partnerships, and have been on the streets at times of both urban conflict and celebration. They have taken time to study together issues of urbanisation and globalisation as well as the attendant problems of environmental sustainability. The influence of our bishops' attendance at the Lambeth Conference, when they met bishops from cities across the globe, was evident in the setting up of a new Anglican Urban Network, whilst the domestic challenges which the Church of England faces with regard to financial provision has brought a concerned focus to their discussions on how our urban mission and ministry can continue to be properly resourced.

16.4 Each diocese should now identify and work in partnership with key urban personnel and networks in order to locate expertise and experience in the various aspects of urban life and mission. Much of the momentum for urban engagement in the Church of England has in the past emanated from these dedicated networks, particularly the web of those designated as Diocesan Urban Link Officers and others responsible for supporting projects in Urban Priority Areas. If diocesan urban strategies are to be effective the rôle of the Urban Officer, or whatever title is preferred, also needs to be taken very seriously as a mechanism through which

essential agendas and concerns are networked, and through whom urban needs and strategies are reviewed on a regular basis. As well as link and project officers, industrial mission and social responsibility officers have played a significant rôle in enabling the Church to respond to this rapidly changing scene. These networks have more recently been augmented by officers appointed to enable dioceses or consortia of dioceses to respond strategically to the opportunities for partnerships at Regional and sub-regional levels, and to access urban funding available from Regional and European sources.

Regional work

The Church is uniquely placed to provide an overview of regions from outside business and local government perspectives. The churches in regional forums can draw on expansive grassroots networks while advocating the interests and interdependence of rural and urban communities. There is however a need for greater liaison between those engaging with regional government bodies within and across regions. It is vital that this level of engagement is undertaken in an ecumenical context that acknowledges the interfaith dimension.

National Bodies

16.5 The Urban Bishops Panel and the Church's national offices must continue their critique of the government's formulation and delivery of urban policy. It is vital that the dialogue with policy makers is maintained at regional as well as at national levels. This will involve monitoring the process the Urban White Paper; looking at its impact in the communities that concern us; feeding into the debate of the national Urban Summit in 2002; continuing to work with the Inner Cities Religious Council and elsewhere. The Urban Bishops Panel will need to build on its engagement with the Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, fostering its contacts at ministerial level with the new units responsible for urban policy and for neighbourhood renewal across the nation.

The proposed Urban Resource Unit, and its forum, should enable the appropriate co-ordination of the Church's urban interests at a national level. (The exact location and interests will be established following the Guildford review of the Church and World

Division.) The Unit should provide a locus that enables the clear development of policy and thinking on the urban engagement of the Church.

16.6 An **Urban Resource Unit** would maintain capacity and knowledge on urban issues as it monitors and develops an overview of government policy, and the resources of the Church through its national and local presence. This would involve maintaining an overview of the following areas:

- government policy in relation to urban regeneration, social exclusion, urban development, community development (additional possibilities might include housing/homelessness, regionalisation, and local government). There should be particular emphasis on the development of policy following the publication of the Urban White Paper;
- church engagement in urban areas, including ministry, mission, theological practice, world church links, support and financial interdependence etc. including the Church in dialogue and partnership with government and statutory agencies and an overview of work and resources within the NCI structures;
- key issues identified by the policy group : for example these might include multiculturalism /diversity/exclusion; the sustainable presence of the church in UPAs; urban-rural; changes in employment; urban environment, etc

The programme outlined by the government's Urban White Paper envisages a significant review point in 2005, with a report on the state of English towns and cities. 2005 is also the twentieth anniversary of the publication of *Faith in the City*. It would be apposite to be thinking now about an appropriate way to mark that anniversary and assess in a comprehensive way the condition of the Church's urban presence and witness. The proposed Urban Resource Unit could provide the essential impulse for such a piece of work.

16.7 The Church of England, lead by the House of Bishops and resourced by the Archbishops' Council must continue to develop coherent strategies for sustainable and effective mission and ministry across our towns and cities, and in particular in areas of multiple deprivation and exclusion. The language of renewal, regeneration and renaissance is already part of our Christian language, but rather than simply voicing urban concerns we must develop new ways of addressing them.

God has a purpose of hope for urban society – and it is based on the fact that every single human being has been made in the image and likeness of God, and that Christ has died for them regardless of their desert, and wishes for them life abundant, free from mar and misfortune.

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16.8 Since the publication of *Faith in the City* the urban Church has witnessed growth and abundant opportunities. The momentum which that report inaugurated was not however sufficiently sustained and this paper has argued that our Church should now renew its vocation to urban mission and ministry. This requires a new appreciation of the urbanising nature of our British society and a repentant vision for the future. We have argued for an urban renaissance in which the Church reclaims its healing, redeeming and transforming tasks and with this vision before us the Urban Bishops Panel will seek, during the next five years and beyond, to set clear objectives and recommendations for a Church seeking to build on its established priorities and reputation in urban communities and responding to these unprecedented challenges and opportunities.