

FAITHFULNESS IN THE CITY

Ed John J Vincent

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JJV:

No master plan for the bottom - no monochrome societies, only diverse ones.

Urban Sprawl:

Classic Inner City:

Former manufacturing areas:

Housing Estates: 1,370 run-down estates, including 18,000 excluded kids, two-thirds heads of households in Social Housing have no job, 73% incomes under £200pw. (Poverty Audit: London New Policy Institute, Dec 2002)

Regen money don't help locals, no consultation, councillors from out of town. Housing office closed; developer pulled out..

Clergy threatened: Pushing me out: car radios gone, phoned police again but.., I can't support because I need it myself! Diocese did not understand. Driven out by vandalism and threats.

2. Nerissa Jones, Wood End Coventry: We have to act like Victorian clergy, providing money for fuel and food.

Youngsters trashing cars. Over quarter of population of estate under 16 yrs. Offered come-on drugs cheap. Third of properties void so gets Director of Housing from City to come round: "His smooth self-confidence and arrogance did not appear to be dented much, but i hope he was unimpressed, both by what he saw, and by his Department's level of activity."p36. Torch the vicarage if the Residents' Association goes ahead which might challenge their illegal activities. Couple and child in flat with no gas and hot water connected – no one believed them so no one came to connect it!

5. Derek Purnell. Newton Heath, Manchester

Small but complex mix. Disparaged. Ministry hindered "by domination of the power structures of the Church by middle class people, like me, most of whom live in the suburbs," +James Jones. Right to feel misunderstood. Because we share common language don't think we have common cultural understandings. Even the local churches often function on middle class model so miss the mark. Often made up of those who had done quite well in working class terms or even had already moved out and returned Sundays. When their children married they moved away to give their kids better start in life.

Church sees its members as resource for church activities.

Statutory agency people reinforce 'us and them', whilst locals don't always communicate well and sound aggressive.

Model of Yeast – small number in the mix has effect (Urban Presence)

Crucial Issues:

Can I escape this place?

Can my situation be transformed?

Where can I find community?

An inquirer takes you inside their culture and it must be holistic mission, answering those three questions.

They want encounter with God, and realistic engagement.

6. Peter Howard. Youth work. Frankie's Cafe Bar.

Children are 'the poor'; often abandoned by parents – like sheep without shepherd; children are burdened; they are hungry – let them 'feast'; locals help out – foolish shaming the wise; non-church help – women help Jesus; entertaining angels?

7. Chris Baker: Milton Keynes

New Town 1963, target of 250K popn. Planned dual carriageways but isolated social housing estates with all the problems & 'new town blues'(lack of belonging). So ecumenical was not comforting. But Ecumenical Churches built without analysis. "classical case of placing the latest theological thinking and theory before analysis and reflection." (p90) Landscape cries out for landmarks and identity but churches were lack-lustre designed not to dominate! Five marks of New City mission:

Needs rootedness in community; needs symbols of spirituality; partnerships to grow naturally; care with other of the local community; counter cultural critique. BUT technology assumes non-spatial community and this is not what they crave.

9. Geoff Curtiss: Hoboken

Jesus practice: 'Give them something to eat', 'or when did I see you naked?', 'do not prevent children', 'who are my brothers..?' 'lamp on the lampstand' (hospitality); 'Treasure of price' (bridge the economic divides of people) ; 'a hundred fold' (BBO)

JUSTICE: Herzog.

Torah for social justice to create moral community. Primary characteristic of |God's work. Even the Gentiles are welcomed into it says Paul. Justice and power relations.

11. Elaine Appelbee: Bradford

P164 'Powerful Whispers' hearings. Encounters give heart not just head knowledge; powerful realised that 'bottom up' was just not true; saw the damage they'd done to community through regen; gap where bottom and top failing to connect; worked on Magnificat agenda together and formed plans. Linked up districts and communities with common agendas [but Vincent says they had external funding and expertise]

12. Multi-faith work: very anxious about having their own faith compromised; more content to work on actions together than discuss faith issues.

13. Peter Atkinson: EXILE

Decanted into new estates – deported. Exiles from culture measuring worth financially. Also exiled from rest of Church if you are a Christian. Brueggemann based reflection from OT > *Cadences of Hoe: Preaching among Exiles* (Louisville John Knox Press 1997) pp4-11.

Need to grieve: Blackbird Leys felt slighted when press painted them all as joy-riders.

Overcoming Rootlessness: being orphaned, enact memories.

Overcoming Despair: Find identity from within, not prevailing culture. Creation faith that God is at work despite appearances. Do not be defined by wider society. Liturgy 'as if'.

Addressing absence of God. Nothing sacred anymore. Sacramental life. Baptism. Sacred Space.

Moral questioning: our exile is not our fault although they say it is.

Self-preoccupation: Stories of encouragement to carry on and look outward.

Enduring: Remember whose you are – prayer and bible.

14 Ann Morisy: Suburbia

Suburban living like a play-pen, stifling hearing and seeing. Conscientisation of middle class (she does not use the phrase) Paulo Freire's 'deep literacy'.

16 JJV Action, then the story, then witness, then testimony then theology. Help suburbia with experiences.

Church Unity and Interfaith is m/c luxury amidst the chaotic pluralism. Just keep going is difficult enough!

"Every project a congregation; every congregation a project."