



Contemporary Christian Mission in UK Urban Communities

Interim Report to E2010 Commission VII from
UK Urban Mission Congress

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September 2009

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Published by:

Urban Mission Development Project
 Wilson Carlile Centre
 50 Cavendish Street
 Sheffield S3 7RZ

www.urbanmission.org.uk

on behalf of the UK Urban Mission Congress (*Jesus in the City*)

www.jitc.org.uk

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(supported by the Evangelical Coalition for Urban Mission with The Methodist Church)



The **Methodist** Church 

Introduction and process

The UK Urban Mission Congress Trust holds a triennial event for local urban mission practitioners (lay and ordained) called *Jesus in the City (JITC)* next due in 2010 (see Further Information on p.22 and Appendix Two or visit www.jitc.org.uk). The JITC Executive agreed with Edinburgh2010 that it should link in to the Study Process via Commission VII as its theme for *JITC Belfast 2010*. The JITC Executive set up a process of listening to evidence on the themes and questions for Commission VII which began in June 2008. Apart from the speakers at these events, the comments were made anonymously¹. This is because speakers were sometimes challenging their traditions' orthodoxies and they do not want that reported. Some organisations turned down the opportunity to be part of the formal listening process for similar reasons. The learning from these events has informed some of the author's statements. The events where there was agreement to be 'heard' are listed in Table One below. The majority of the events were non-aligned or non-denominational and most were hosted by Christian social action/urban mission agencies for people working in local urban contexts. Thus, although some reference will be made to publications, the material in this Report is almost entirely drawn from the events whose organisers had agreed that they would be part of the listening and evidence-gathering process.

Four members of the UK Urban Mission Congress *JITC 2010* Executive attended the events whose organisers had agreed to take part in this listening process. Two gave a time slot for structured discussion, but in most cases the rapporteurs simply listened to what was said at the event and noted responses under the Commission VII study Themes and Questions. Additionally, an Urban Refreshment Day in Wales, planned jointly with (CYTUN) Churches Together in Wales, Gweini (a Project of the Evangelical Alliance Wales); and the Catholic Justice and Peace Networks for Cardiff Archdiocese and Wrexham Diocese, was organised specifically to look at the Themes, through the lens of illustrative case studies of mission in the urban context in Wales.

Those reporting were – Erica Dunmow, Advisor, Urban Mission Development Project (the author of this paper), Bishop Roger Sainsbury, President Frontier Youth Trust and Chair *JITC 2010* Executive; Andy Wier, *JITC 2010* Executive member, Community Regeneration Consultant; Katy Armstrong, Networks Support Officer, Urban Mission Development Project; Michael Eastman, Secretary, Evangelical Coalition for Urban Mission. Their initials appear against the meetings they attended.

Table 1

<p>Structured discussion at: Urban Mission Forum, Youth at risk in the City, London, October 2008 [ME, ED] Methodist City Centre Network, Spring meeting, Darlington, February 2009 [ED] Adfywio'n Trefi -Urban Refreshment – a day of conversation and prayer about mission in the 21st Century, Newport, Wales, June 09, [RS, ED]</p>
<p>Formal listening: Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion, Pre-Lambeth Urban Workshop, June 2008 [RS] National Estate Churches Network, day conference, London, October 2008 [ME, ED]</p>

¹ Where there are directly attributable comments or evidence from a particular event, these are endnoted with their full title for the first reference and by a short-hand title thereafter, unless clearly identified in the text.

National Estate Churches Network, day conference, Manchester, October 2008 [KA]
 David Stevens, Leader Corrymeela Community, Churches Community Work Alliance Meeting, Belfast
 November 2008 [ED]
 Ann Morisy, Community Theologian, Methodist City Centre Network Conference, November 2008 [ED]

Urban Theology Collective, St Deiniol's Library, December 2008 [AW]
 London Urban Theology Project, Westbourne Park, London, December 2008 [ME, ED]
 Scripture Union Scotland, Beauty for Ashes Conference, Dundee, February 2009 [ED]
 Catholic Association for Racial Justice Urban Network, February 2009 [ED]
 Christian Response to Unemployment Day Conference, Frontier Youth Trust and Trinity College, Bristol, February 2009 [RS]
 Yorkshire and the Humber Urban Mission Network, Spring Meeting, Sheffield, March 2009 [KA]

Informal listening:

The author attended several other gatherings that did not agree to be a place of formal consultation or which had not been approached to be so. These are unattributed to protect the confidentiality of the gatherings.

In order to relate the Commission VII Themes and Questions to UK urban mission practitioners, Erica Dunmow (on behalf of the JITC Executive) undertook some work on interpreting them and linking them to examples of the practical issues faced in the UK urban mission context. Table 2, below, is the framework that was used. At each of the events reported on the listeners used a standard report form to gather responses. One special day event – Adfywio'n Trefi – Urban Refreshment, held in Newport, Wales in June 09 was organised specifically on the Commission VII themes. In order to cover the themes in one day, they were grouped into four 'Streams'. These are also indicated on Table 2. In some respects, grouping the Themes into Streams appears to lose some of the richness of response, but in reality, many of the issues faced by the urban mission practitioner are very interrelated and therefore aggregating them is more true to life.

Most of the process was one of listening rather than directed discussion. This meant that the most difficult and contentious topics were largely avoided. Question 4 was deliberately not addressed in Wales at the Urban Refreshment event. In the Welsh context, meetings across the traditions/denominations are held less frequently than elsewhere in Britain, and the seeking of common ground was felt to be more important for the process than discussing an issue that could highlight denominational and ecclesiological differences. Likewise, the full text of Question 7, which touches upon issues of sexuality that are very divisive in the current UK Christian context, was only covered in the Methodist City Centre Network meeting where the discussions were structured. Urban Refreshment and the Scripture Union Scotland event covered the third more general question about ill-health.

This lack of engagement with the most contentious issues demonstrates how hard it is for churches to tackle their difficulties and remain in fellowship with each other. The Welsh event usefully addressed problem in their answers to Question 3.

Table 2

Commission VII - Christian Communities in Contemporary Contexts Themes and Questions	JITC's UK Streams and ideas for practical topics	Adfywio'n Trefi – Urban Refreshment's Streams
<p>Poverty, suffering and marginalised communities 1. How do adjectives of Christian community such as discipling, healing, witnessing, contextual become lived realities in today's world?</p>	<p>1. Growing Christians in tough communities - development of Bible study materials and discipling etc. for urban contexts - use of story-telling in faith development - getting the gospel priority for poor and oppressed people back on the agenda - growing leaders from within more deprived communities – indigenous leadership</p>	<p>Stream 1. Faith into action (Question 1)</p>
<p>Globalisation 2. What is involved in being the church in the cities and mega-cities of today?</p>	<p>2. Church in the city centre – the complexity of town/city centre ministries</p>	<p>Stream 2. Who benefits ? (Questions 2, 5 & 6)</p>
<p>Christianity and socio-political action 3. How can the local church be an agent of the kingdom of God and a source of healing and reconciliation?</p>	<p>3. Christians as agents for justice and reconciliation – the churches' response to youth violence, including Street Pastors and similar initiatives - family reconciliation work - restorative justice</p>	<p>Stream 4. Who do we work with ? (Question 3)</p>
<p>Identity, gender and power 4. What is the true identity (the "core DNA") of the church? How does it manifest itself in different denominations and cultures?</p>	<p>4. Identity and urban church - fresh expressions, church without walls, emerging church, and other new forms of Christian presence, 'church' planting etc.</p>	<p>Not put</p>
<p>The interface of migration, diaspora and ethnicity 5. Ethnicity – the tension between homogenous and multi-ethnic churches. 6. Church life in Diaspora communities</p>	<p>5. Ethnicity and urban church - models of hospitality from urban contexts - positive examples of black and white-led churches in mission together 6. Mission across cultures - cross-cultural and reverse mission - asylum and refugee congregations - new Black-led churches - the changing role of the Afro-Caribbean-led churches</p>	<p>Stream 2. Who benefits ? (Questions 2, 5 & 6)</p>
<p>HIV/AIDS, church and mission 7.– Does Christian mission bear some responsibility for the spread of the virus? How can mission contribute to the struggle to stop the pandemic? What other forms of ill-health call for particular attention from practitioners of Christian mission?</p>	<p>7. Healing in our cities - projects with sex-workers - the Christian response to self-harm and other risky behaviour - mission to drug-users and mentally ill people</p>	<p>Stream 3. Spirituality and wholeness (Question 7)</p>

This paper will follow the Commission VII Themes and Questions and then draw an overall conclusion.

1. Poverty, suffering and marginalised communities:

How do adjectives of Christian community such as discipling, healing, witnessing, contextual become lived realities in today's world?

Ann Morisy² and David Stevens³ both spoke about the contribution that individual Christians can make to the wellbeing of their communities by their attitudes to life. Morisy talked about the importance of countering anxiety by the use of humour and looking at the world with 'softened eyes', as one would a baby. Stevens, addressing the particularities of Northern Ireland, spoke of the need to respond to cynicism and a growing sense of disillusionment in the peace process within the more working class communities with the 'counter voice of hope'. Both of these positive attitudes can be seen as fruits of the Spirit. It is vital that discipling enables people to see beyond the scare-mongering voices of the media and elsewhere to give a grounded sense of the possibilities of the future. We have to live in the kingdom that is imperfectly here but with trust that it can move closer towards the perfect hereafter. As the National Estate Churches Network Manchester conference put it we have to: 'empower people to look outside the box' and 'raise their eyes beyond their surroundings'⁴. Speakers at their London event talked of the local church as 'a place of continuity and welcome in communities where there is a very high turnover of population'⁵. This is a vital thing where in some areas there is a population change of over 20% change per year. The Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion made reference to the parable of the Good Samaritan as a key discipling model saying that 'it will involve us...crossing boundaries of faith, culture and race'⁶. This cross-cultural mission works in many directions.

It is interesting that the specific issue of rising unemployment was absent from the formal Commission VII Themes and Questions. Stevens⁷ spoke of how the Protestant working class was the most marginalised group in Belfast because they had a higher rate of unemployment from the traditional ship-building and other heavy industries. The Frontier Youth Trust has a clear view that where communities are marginalised there is 'rapidly rising unemployment, impacting particularly on the young'⁸. The church also compounds marginalisation in its leadership selection and training processes. Vocations seem more easily recognised from white and/or middle class people and congregations, which means that many of our urban church leaders are effectively engaged in cross-cultural mission. The mainstream churches are gradually becoming aware of the need to grow leaders from within the indigenous working class population especially where churches serve those communities. Urban Expression, The Message Trust's Eden Projects (both urban church planting initiatives) and the Pioneer Ministries developments within the Church of England and Methodist Church are beginning to address this. The older Afro-Caribbean origin denominations of the black majority churches (BMCs) in the UK are also beginning to take very seriously the issues of cross-cultural mission where they aim to serve the general population (sometimes white majority) in the areas where their (gathered) congregations meet for worship.

² Ann Morisy, Community Theologian, Methodist City Centre Network Conference, Swanwick, (MCCN Swanick) November 2008

³ David Stevens, Leader Corrymeela Community, Churches Community Alliance Meeting, Belfast November 08

⁴ National Estate Churches Network (NECN), day conference, Manchester, October 08

⁵ National Estate Churches Network (NECN), day conference, London, October 08

⁶ Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion, Pre-Lambeth Urban Workshop (EFAC-Urban Workshop), June 2008

⁷ David Stevens, CCWA Belfast

⁸ Christian Response to Unemployment Day Conferences (CRU-FYT & Trinity College), Frontier Youth Trust and Trinity College, Bristol, February 2009

Two papers at the Urban Theology Collective addressed the need for the churches to model good ways of relating to avoid marginalising groups⁹. John Higgins said that ‘the church needs to rediscover what it once knew about protecting children’ and Lesley Ann Bailey spoke of the importance of churches as a place of support and welcome for children with disabilities and their families.

Some gatherings talked about the very human processes involved in being good disciples. The Yorkshire and Humber Urban Mission Network made reference to the difficulty of getting older, white Britons, to talk openly about God, and then to integrate that talk with everyday life¹⁰. The churches in this context need to encourage meeting to ‘eat, talk and pray’ and to help people move from simply ‘engaging with church activities to engaging with God’¹¹. The Methodist City Centre Network event in Darlington spoke of ‘walking the streets, sharing pie and peas in Peterlee and curry and halal pizza in Bradford’¹². One of the characteristics of urban congregations is they are often much smaller in numbers than suburban congregations. Speakers at the Urban Theology Collective reiterated what many in such settings know, that it is the faithfulness in worship and witness of such organisations that enable them to undertake the quietly effective transformative work of good news, working ‘with, not just for’ local communities.’¹³

The people attending the Urban Refreshment Welsh event spoke about the key place that prayer has, and how a growing number of inter-church and inter-denominational projects are grounded in praying together: ‘it was acknowledged that years of prayer has predated the work done together’ by churches tackling homelessness in Wrexham¹⁴. They talked also of the healing that comes about ‘when people were affirmed and then given a purpose.’¹⁵ This event saw Isaiah 61:1-2a (quoted by Jesus in the Nazareth synagogue¹⁶) as a key paradigm on which to base the outworking of Christian community. The Methodist City Centre Network spoke about ‘the need to put first the needs of those who are suffering most’ and that we need to look at ‘the assets within the people and the community – [e.g.] resistance, health and hope, informal groups of support’¹⁷. Another helpful theological notion is that of incarnation. ‘Incarnation is messy, and we make a mess, but we carry on despite this and must give each other permission to make mistakes too’¹⁸, and together seek forgiveness.

The notion that mission needs to be an integrated process including practical action, proclamation and community/civic engagement best done with other churches, is gaining much greater ground in the UK through initiatives such as *HOPE 08* and the earlier *United We Stand* process of the Evangelical Alliance UK. This includes congregations that might previously have concentrated on

⁹ John Higgins ‘Child Protection’ and Lesley Ann Bailey ‘Transformed Lives – Transformed Families’, unpublished papers both presented at Urban Theology Collective (UT Collective), St Deiniol’s Library, December 2008

¹⁰ The Methodist Church produced a very helpful booklet ‘Time to Talk of God’ in 2008 that has opened up this sort of conversation much more, and the Church Action on Poverty ‘Just Church’ course and the Tearfund/Livability Community Mission ‘Just People’ course are two valuable resources.

¹¹ Yorkshire and the Humber Urban Mission Network (Y&H UM Network), Sheffield, March 2009

¹² Methodist City Centre Network Spring meeting, Darlington (MCCN Darlington), February 09

¹³ UT Collective.

¹⁴ Adfywio’n Trefi -Urban Refreshment – a day of conversation and prayer about mission in the 21st Century (AT-Urban Refreshment), Newport, Wales, June 2009

¹⁵ Stream 1 Theme 1, AT- Urban Refreshment, Wales

¹⁶ Luke 4:16-21

¹⁷ MCCN Darlington

¹⁸ Stream 1 Theme 1, AT-Urban Refreshment, Wales

personal piety and individual conversion realising that ‘Jesus was proactive and reactive: we need to stop being just reactive. [So] we need to be more prophetic, speaking out to get agendas/rules changed...we need to find out whose voice is heard and talk to them’¹⁹. It can be an uphill struggle to disciple lay people from one form of Christianity to another. It can also be tough to broach the God question with people in the UK context. The Yorkshire & Humber Urban Mission Network spoke of the challenges in working with people who do come into church premises: how we should try to ‘move [them] from engaging with church activities to engaging with God and receiving the Good News’²⁰.

2. Globalisation and the reproduction of hierarchies -

What is involved in being the church in the cities and mega-cities of today?

City centre ministry has been summed up by the Methodist City Centre Network, which specialises in this area of mission, as demonstrating ‘the love of God as seen in Christ, for all who live, work and spend time in the city centre’²¹. One of the most interesting questions that was raised under this Theme was ‘What does “community” mean in the city centre?’²² Ann Morisy talked of the flows in and out of city centres and how the church in that setting can be a place of encounter with the separate flows and a place of bringing those flows into connection with each other²³. This can be especially challenging in providing various sorts of worship that feed the spirituality of those different groups and still enables them to feel part of the wider body of Christ²⁴. The Urban Theology Collective however, felt that the pattern of movement is not uniform across the communities of a city and that ‘there is a risk of overstating ...the declining significance of “the local”’²⁵. While this may be true of new developments around city centres, attachment to the local within many urban neighbourhoods remains strong.²⁶

One of the most challenging flows is obviously that of the migration of people, but more hidden but just as powerful is the flow of money. Several respondents were clear that engaging with this is the business of mission. A youth worker felt that churches should be ‘campaigning for governments to change economic priorities and to agree living wage targets’²⁷. However churches do not have common answers. David Stevens talked of the tensions between Catholics and Protestants in N Ireland both because they were differentially impacted by economic pressures, but also because they wanted different economic models as solutions²⁸.

City centre ministry often involves having a place at the civic table – including local cross-sectoral regeneration partnerships (called Local Strategic or Community Planning Partnerships in the UK). But in such contexts it is possible to let the ‘churches’ mission sink beneath the waves of

¹⁹ NECN-Manchester

²⁰ Y&H Urban Mission Network

²¹ MCCN Darlington

²² Y&H Urban Mission Network

²³ Ann Morisy, MCCN Swanick

²⁴ MCCN Darlington

²⁵ In this context, this means that which is done locally, not the informal English word for a public house !

²⁶ UT Collective. Teachers serving schools on the Manor Estate, Sheffield, a social housing area with four generations of unemployment 3 miles from the centre, often find that school trips can be the first time their pupils have been to the city centre (author’s knowledge).

²⁷ CRU – FYT & Trinity College

²⁸ David Stevens, CCWA Belfast

regulation²⁹. Also, just as in matters of theology the churches do not speak with one voice, so their engagement with civic and secular structures is not uniform. Civic and secular authorities want a 'one-stop' place of conversation, but we are doing a disservice to the complexity of our understandings of mission if we let one strand in the church hold the ring. The trick is to find a way of being connected in our differences. The Evangelical Alliance Wales set up a network called Gweini in the early 2000s to provide an interface with the local authorities. This began as an initiative to serve the whole Christian community. It gradually became clear that whilst on simple issues, such as the need for a shelter for homeless people, it was fairly easy to work together, on the more complex policy matters less so. Some parts of the Church of England see social care changes as an opportunity to contract with central government as a welfare agency³⁰; other traditions want to retain their prophetic independence. The 2007 Report *Faithful Cities*³¹ looked at what was happening in the urban in the UK and saw the lack of commitment from the established churches to resource and prioritise urban mission as a problem. The Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion held an urban mission workshop as one of its Lambeth 2008 pre-Conference events. The workshop produced a set of priorities for urban mission for the Anglican church in the 21st century³² (see Appendix One). One of the strong comments from that event was that the churches 'must seek the welfare of our cities and this will involve holistic, incarnational mission'³³.

Although the Urban Theology Collective warns of being seduced into the current rhetoric about the UK being post-religious or post Christian as 'spirituality is one of the greatest issues of our day³⁴', the movement of people around our cities mean that some historic churches no longer have a large congregation. Such churches are looking to creative ways of enabling the buildings to be held in trust for the local community. The challenge raised, at the London Urban Theology Project, by a lay Christian working as an architect with an interest in this area, was when to decide to do this. She considered when churches should create a resource such as social housing on the site, and when to pass on the resource, perhaps to a newer denomination.³⁵ The response from those newer churches is that more constructive conversation with the property authorities of the historic denominations on this would be helpful³⁶, to avoid the new denominations being simply left with the problem buildings of the historic churches. This again reflects one of the difficulties of doing mission in a joined up way.

One paper at the London Urban Theology Project (presented in a re-edited form at Commission VII's conference in December 2008)³⁷, speaks of how our churches are in danger of replicating the

²⁹ NECN-London

³⁰ See Francis Davis, Elizabeth Paulhus, Andrew Bradstock *Moral but no Compass: Government, Church and the Future of Welfare: A Report by the Von Hugel Institute commissioned by the Rt. Rev'd Stephen Love, Bishop for Urban Life and Faith* (Chelmsford: Matthew James Publishing, 2008)

³¹ The Archbishops' Council *Faithful Cities: a call for celebration, vision and justice* (London: MPH and Church House Publishing, 2006)

³² 'Anglican Ten Commandments for Urban Mission' developed at Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion, Pre-Lambeth Urban Workshop (EFAC-Urban Workshop), Trinity College, Bristol, June 2008

³³ EFAC-Urban Workshop

³⁴ UT Collective

³⁵ Bernadette Cunningham 'Church buildings – legacy or liability' unpublished paper for London Urban Theology Project (LUTP), Westbourne Park, London, December 2008

³⁶ Conversation between the author and pastors in the West Yorkshire African Caribbean Churches Council, 2007.

³⁷ Erica Dunmow 'London overview from the provinces', personal, unpublished paper presented to London Urban Theology Project December 2008; Erica Dunmow 'The challenge of indigenous leadership in the UK urban mission context', personal unpublished paper presented to Edinburgh 2010 Commission VII Study Themes Conference, December 2008.

hierarchies of society in the way that they select and train leaders. Jesus' action was counter to this: relatively uneducated men were given the instruction to 'Follow me', a phrase usually used by rabbis to call people to a process of intensive 'yeshiva' training. But even in the Gospels the tension around leadership is there from start to finish. Simon Peter, a relatively poor fisherman, the first-called, fishing in the shallows by hand, is challenged for leadership by James and John, richer men whose father has hired crew for their boat³⁸. Right up to the Last Supper Jesus has to tell them that hierarchy is not what his style of ministry is about.³⁹ Maybe the fact that it is Peter who is finally given the shepherd's role (not a Pharisee's or judge's one) is because Jesus knows his gut instinct will be to look out for poor people, yet Peter himself cannot quite believe it.⁴⁰

The ideas about civic engagement in this Theme were powerfully summed up by the Christian Response to Unemployment event, which stated that the churches civic engagement must be on 'caring for the unemployed, assisting in job creation projects, campaigning for governments to change economic priorities and to agree living wage targets'.⁴¹

3. Christianity and socio-political action:

How can the local church be an agent of the kingdom of God and a source of healing and reconciliation?

Attendees at the Welsh event⁴² were invited to select Biblical or other spiritual resources as part of their responses to the Commission VII Themes. Those looking at Theme 3 used the passage in John's Gospel where Jesus encounters the Samaritan woman at the well⁴³ as a paradigm. It is one of the longest encounters between Jesus and someone who is not one of the Twelve. The passage was felt helpful in the following ways. Firstly, the Samaritan woman is not initially the recipient of Jesus help – Jesus asks her for help. Secondly, she is an outcast person who is asked to provide support for the person from the dominant culture that often oppresses her people. Three: Jesus knows who she is in terms of her unorthodox relationships but does not refuse to engage with her because of that. Four: Jesus witnesses to spiritual truths in a way that connects them to practical action. Five: the woman becomes one of the first evangelists – passing on to others what she has experienced and believes about Jesus. The passage spoke to the group of honest and integrated engagement and about reversing the usual pattern of Christians being seen as always the providers.

Social cohesion is a current buzz-word within the UK government circles at the moment and faith communities⁴⁴ are seen as one of the providers of the 'bridging social capital'⁴⁵ that is expected to help create neighbourhoods in which individuals from diverse backgrounds feel comfortable with

³⁸ see Mark 1:16-20

³⁹ see Luke 22:24-30

⁴⁰ see John 21:15-21

⁴¹ CRU- FYT and Trinity College

⁴² AT- Urban Refreshment, Wales

⁴³ John 4:7-42

⁴⁴ This is the term that the UK statutory bodies use to encompass followers of all the major world religions, calling each religion – its authorities and followers - a 'faith community'.

⁴⁵ A term coined by Rob Furbey and Marilyn Macey in their work for the Commission for Urban Life and Faith: Robert Furbey and Marilyn Macey *Religion and urban regeneration: a place for faith?* (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2005). It refers to the fact that communities have helpful human resources (social capital) when they make links (bridges) to other communities or between sections of their community.

each other. Some of the leaders of the new Black churches, such as Revd Nims Obunge, a founder of Haringey Peace Alliance are seen as important players within London in delivering this policy. Engagement across communities does not mean hiding our faith: 'we are a value-based Christian organisation and we are not going to hide this in working with Government'⁴⁶. In the past, churches most involved in civic engagement and social action often let this become separated from faith-sharing and discipleship – a process of 'mission creep' – that they are now beginning to mend. Attenders at the Methodist City Centre Network felt that keeping Christian distinctiveness entails 'developing a vision from within Kingdom values'⁴⁷, arising within the local context, enabled by the church's response⁴⁸. *Faithworks* and the Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire & the Humber also commissioned a qualitative study about what makes Christian presence effective⁴⁹. Their preliminary findings showed that the place of prayer was more important to many of the 'presences' than having a formalised approach to their Christian ethos - i.e. living a faith and integrating our talking to God about social action, has more impact than statements about how we will work⁵⁰. The 'Effective Christian Presence and Enterprise Report' also found that some people did come to faith through their engagement with the 'presences', and that the biggest impact was had on the faith understanding of staff and Management Committee members, especially those who were initially of no faith.

Education has long been an area of contribution by the churches in the UK – indeed what is now the state system, grew out of the 19th century church-based Sunday Schools that provided basic literacy and numeracy and technical skills, as well as religious instruction. There is current controversy as to whether faith schools (the official government terminology is 'schools of a religious character') are contributing to social cohesion or not⁵¹. This was the topic of one of the papers at the London Urban Theology Project meeting in December 2008, and of a major discussion at the Urban Network of the Catholic Association for Racial Justice meeting in February 2009. The former, looking at the specifics of the inner London context from an Anglican perspective, concluded that Church of England primary schools were better at reflecting the range of diversity in the population of their catchment area than C of E secondary ones were. Most tended to use the syllabus for RE set by their local Schools Advisory Committee for Religious Education (SACRE – an interfaith body that advises each local authority on these matters), and aimed to serve the local community with good education rather than primarily aim to train new Christians⁵². The (mainly Catholic) CARJ Urban Network discussed the 2008 Runnymede Trust Report into Faith schools and community cohesion.⁵³ Here there was agreement that the Catholic Schools were aiming to provide specifically Catholic teaching to their pupils but a recognition that this did not have to be incompatible with social cohesion. This is partly because concepts such as

⁴⁶ NECN-Manchester

⁴⁷ The word 'k/Kingdom' in phrases such as 'kingdom values' or 'kingdom building' or 'kingdom processes' is used by a growing number of Christians in the UK context as shorthand for an approach to mission in which different traditions and denominations work together for wider community benefit, rather than in the self-interest of their own church/congregation. It does not mean that they are not seeking to encourage people to be followers of Jesus but that they acknowledge that seekers might find other churches more congenial to them.

⁴⁸ MCCN- Darlington

⁴⁹ *Effective Christian Presence and Enterprise* (London & Leeds: Faithworks and CRC, 2008)

⁵⁰ Ian Drummond, Y&H CRC, Interim Findings Conference for Effective Christian Presence and Enterprise research, Bramley Baptist Church, Leeds, January 2008

⁵¹ In England, the Church of England, Roman Catholic and Methodist denominations all provide schools that are part of the state system (i.e. do not charge fees like the private schools) and receive state funding, but have greater control over their selection procedures than the state schools.

⁵² Henry Everitt 'Faith Schools: Blessing or Curse?', paper presented at LUTP December 2008

⁵³ Rob Berkeley with Savita Vij *Right to Divide? Faith schools and Community Cohesion*, (London: Runnymede Trust, 2008)

respect for the dignity of the person, the common good, and social justice are a key part of Catholic Social Teaching post Vatican II⁵⁴. Two recent internal Catholic reports also showed that 80-85% of their pupils thought that their school encouraged respect for different races and religions⁵⁵. The matter is made more complex by the range of issues that affect cohesion – race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, disability etc. On some issues the school might advocate a more clearly inclusive stance than others – e.g. Catholic schools often have a better than average representation of African-Caribbean and working class pupils than other schools in their area, but some have no non-Catholic pupils.⁵⁶ The Church of England has voluntarily opted to retain 25% of their school places for non-Anglicans⁵⁷; a very few Catholic schools based in areas with high Moslem populations are specifically allocating places for non-Christians, but there was considerable disquiet at the CARJ Urban Network meeting about the idea that any compulsory quota system be imposed⁵⁸.

If churches themselves are divided, how can we aim for reconciliation in the wider community when we have not healed ourselves?

The Urban Refreshment Welsh event tackled this struggle with internal tensions. The group looking at Theme One (Stream One) presented two cases where living the reality of healing in the community was - by the process of a breadth of denominations working together - modelling healing and reconciliation in action. Gweini, a project of Evangelical Alliance Wales, working with a Church in Wales priest, has supported the development of an interfaith Street Carers network in Cardiff. In Wrexham, local government action is 'pushing churches into carrying out God's will...through it the churches are finding their mission. The civic authorities see that this initiative is good and have responded generously to it. Churches offer something extra – the dimension of love: God's love for us and our love for others.'⁵⁹ They also talked of the need for perseverance and continued hope when action failed.

The group at the Welsh event looking at Theme Three (Stream 4) also examined this issue of the need for internal reconciliation in the body of Christ. Matters of women in leadership and the place of gay and lesbian people are deeply divisive for some traditions and between traditions in the UK. The group felt however that mission could not simply be put on hold until these issues were resolved, as service to the community is an imperative. Churches had to find a way of acknowledging their brokenness and disagreements, and then seeking the common, 'Kingdom' ground to enable them to serve together despite the differences.⁶⁰

One of the key issues that is impacting upon the UK urban scene is the re-growth of the level of unemployment, which causes disjunctures between people in communities that then need to be healed. A paper written by Roger Sainsbury⁶¹ - recently retired as Chair of the Centre for Youth Ministry (which coordinates training for Christian youth workers) and one of the JITC Executive

⁵⁴ Catholic Association for Racial Justice Urban Network (CARJ-Urban Network), February 2009

⁵⁵ 'Ethnicity, Identity and Achievement in Catholic Education' (2003) and 'Formation for Citizenship in Catholic Schools' (2006) both written by the Catholic Education Service, cited at CARJ-Urban Network

⁵⁶ CARJ-Urban Network

⁵⁷ Everitt, LUTP December 2008

⁵⁸ CARJ-Urban Network

⁵⁹ Theme One, AT-Urban Refreshment

⁶⁰ Stream 4, AT-Urban Refreshment

⁶¹ Roger Sainsbury 'Back on the Road to Wigan Pier' (private paper, 2009)

members acting as listener collecting evidence for this paper - examines the likely impact of growing unemployment on young people. Dave Wiles, CEO of the Frontier Youth Trust is quoted in Roger Sainsbury's paper as saying to his regional staff that 'I think we need to be very concerned about the sense of failure and low self esteem that is impacting young people who are unemployed now in 2009.' One of Frontier Youth Trust's local staff in Devon reports: '[The young people's] career aspirations [mechanic, labourer, farm worker] whilst not being high are for them simply not achievable. This has led to antisocial behaviour that spirals quickly... violent behaviour towards peers, and a complete loss of hope and self esteem...[T]hese are boys who would usually settle down in the adult world quite quickly, and who are socially able and keen to work. Unemployment strips away any belief, purpose and hope at a time in these young people's lives they need it most.'⁶² The 1980s produced ample evidence of the corrosive and divisive effects of unemployment. This was strongly confirmed by two black unemployed young Christians from East London in their response to Roger Sainsbury's paper on unemployment⁶³. Niall Cooper of Church Action On Poverty, quoted in Sainsbury, says that Government policy in recent years has 'been built on the assumption that there is work available, and the question is how to enable various 'disengaged' groups...to get [it]. This strategy is now out of date...'⁶⁴

The Church of England sees that an early response is needed 'not only because their immediate career hopes are dashed but because.... it can critically damage their sense of belonging within a social contract which encourages civic engagement and community relations.'⁶⁵ The 2009 February Synod called for wealthier parts of the church to respond, and challenged the church to do better at integrating the practical responses to the spiritual, theological and worshipping life of the local church, so that social action should be seen as part of discipleship. One of the Christian projects set up since the 1980s to educate local congregations for that engaged spirituality is Livability's Community Mission Team (formerly the Shaftesbury Society). Reports such as *Angels and Advocates* by the Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire & the Humber; the Catalyst Trust's *Urban Mission Toolkit*; and the work of Unlock in producing discipling materials that are real about the demands of urban poverty, are all valuable resources that should mean that the church is far better equipped to take socio-economic action in the local community than it was 30 years ago.⁶⁶

The Urban Mission Forum in the autumn of 2008 took as its theme 'Youth at risk in the City'. It was held at a point when the extent of the recession was less obvious. How much greater will the risk be once the recession bites deep? The discussions highlighted the need for the church to counter negative stereotypes, especially those of young people. One person called the church 'an agent of counter-cultural mission to the community.'⁶⁷ Several spoke of how the churches needed to 'focus on the factors feeding violent gang behaviour rather than the factors feeding gang membership.' Some felt that the church needed to critique society as a whole as there was a danger of 'dysfunctional children being taught by dysfunctional adults.'⁶⁸ The keynote speaker was Dr Joe Aldred, Minority Ethnic Affairs Officer of Churches Together in England, reporting on CTE research

⁶² Chris Turner, quoted in Sainsbury 'Back on the Road to Wigan Pier', Chapter 1

⁶³ Roger Sainsbury, personal communication with the author, 2009.

⁶⁴ Niall Cooper, CEO Church Action on Poverty, quoted in *Back on the Road to Wigan Pier*, Chapter 4.

⁶⁵ *Implications of Financial Crisis and Recession*, General Synod Paper GS 1719 February 2009 (Church of England)

⁶⁶ Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire & the Humber *Angels and Advocates* (Leeds: CRC, 2003); visit www.catalysttrust.org for their Urban Mission Toolkit and www.unlock-urban.org.uk for their resource materials

⁶⁷ Urban Mission Forum (UM Forum), *Youth at risk in the City*, London, October 08

⁶⁸ UM Forum

into the churches' response to youth violence. Aldred said how important it is not to assume that gang members are 'morally deficient': such responses, he maintained, plus calls for punitive measures to respond to drug dealers, lack 'both compassion and understanding' and that the 'church must move away from [such responses] if it is to be "salt and light" and constructive peacemakers [sic] in our communities.'⁶⁹ He challenged the church to redeem the idea of 'gang' – one respondent said, 'after all Jesus belonged to a gang.'⁷⁰ The group also called for a theology of childhood – do we see young people as God does and treat them accordingly ?

This Forum, along with a growing number of Christian commentators and other people at the events where we listened, talked about the churches needing to take pre-emptive action with secular and other decision-makers as well as engaging in service provision. One person said: 'A lot of what we do [now] is to pull people out of the river where they're drowning – this doesn't quite resonate, but it is important. When is it time to go upstream and stop them falling in, in the first place?'⁷¹ The Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion talked of the local church as 'an agent of the kingdom of God by encouraging the ministry of prophetic evangelism in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets and Jesus'⁷². Speaking out against unjust structures is also good news for poor people.

Robert Beckford and Rev'd Calver Anderson spoke at the Birmingham Urban Theology Forum in March 2009 about the African-Caribbean perspective on this issue. Calver Anderson gave positive examples of work with disaffected young people from within the Black churches. However, one questioner asked why there are fewer socio-political actions coming from within the African-Caribbean community now than in the 20th century. Beckford responded that he felt that the community has lost much of its hope. There is surely a major indictment here of the mainstream denominations who have often sidelined and ignored the ethnic minority and Black Majority Church⁷³ offering to Christian mission in Britain. This is finally shifting. In September 2007 a group of African pastors in Glasgow brought together the mainstream denominations to model a powerful, holistic piece of mission action where whole-hearted proclamation of the gospel was fully integrated with political action⁷⁴. (See Section 5 below for more on the minority ethnic communities' impact on mission.

But socio-political action by churches is fraught even when the desired outcome is clear and consensual. People at the Yorkshire & Humber event spoke of the need for 'training on project development, organisational development, business skills and planning'⁷⁵ if church-based social action is to be effective and credible with secular authorities. The solutions to problems are not

⁶⁹ Dr Joe Aldred, Dr Sophie Hebden, Dr Keith Hebden *Who is my neighbour? A church response to social disorder linked to gangs, drugs, guns and knives* (London: Churches Together in England, 2008), 43

⁷⁰ UM Forum

⁷¹ UM Forum

⁷² EFAC-Urban Workshop

⁷³ Black Majority Church (BMC) is a term used in the UK context to denote a denomination where the UK leaders are generally from the Black communities, even if internationally that is not the case. They are often Pentecostal.

⁷⁴ In September 2007 an informal grouping of African pastors held a Saturday afternoon event in George Square, Glasgow, marking the 200th centenary of the abolition of slave trading. Performances by a very wide variety of Christian musicians (Black rappers, a Korean classical choir and a white hillbilly group - all singing Christian material) were interspersed with short addresses by the leaders of all the major denominations talking of how the church had campaigned against slavery because freedom for captives was part of Jesus' message of salvation. They also urged people to sign a petition being taken around the Square to ask the Scottish Executive to change regulations affecting current trafficked people.

⁷⁵ Y&H UM Network

always agreed either. David Stevens talked of the economic factors that have fuelled the sectarian Troubles in Northern Ireland⁷⁶. The Protestant communities, previously reliant on heavy shipbuilding industry are being hollowed out and feel deeply under threat. The Catholic communities have in general done better, and it is harder to motivate congregations in middle class areas to take the actions to make the peace process real on the streets. The priests also have less authority within the more affluent communities. But there is also a growing number of disaffected poor, young Catholics and Protestants, who also have only nominal links to the worshipping community and influence of the church, who are in danger of glamorising and emulating the sectarian activists of the past. As is so often the case, it is not the actively observing Christians who are engaging in the violence.⁷⁷

4. Identity, gender and power

What is the true identity (the “core DNA”) of the church? How does it manifest itself in different denominations and cultures?

This issue was addressed by only one of the gatherings that were formally listened to, but it is a topic of current interest in the church planting and fresh expressions⁷⁸ field. The key factor that is often used to identify whether a group of Christians are operating as a church is whether and how a group expresses its commemoration of the Lord’s Supper. Urban congregations are often small and some meet in houses rather than formal church buildings. They can sit light to some of the liturgical regulations of their churches in order to express their fellowship together, and have for over 20 years developed creative liturgy and the alternative forms of being church. These are now being experimented with in other settings through the ‘church without walls’⁷⁹ and fresh expressions movements. Many congregations in urban settings feel they have been pragmatically doing just this for many years, but Ian Duffield in his paper to the Urban Theology Collective⁸⁰ said that doing things differently wasn’t the only way that the church can grow, and ‘undoing the parish system, abandoning existing structures or reinventing the wheel’ were not necessary for more effective evangelisation. The Collective concluded that ‘ “If you do simple things well, the church will grow” – e.g. building up existing congregations, being outward looking, using natural social networks.’ An urban youth worker in the Elim Pentecostal church agreed that for his young people their Wednesday meeting was church and his leadership would accept that. He felt that sharing cake and juice together at the close of a meeting was a valid ‘communion’⁸¹. Higher church ecclesiology finds that harder to deal with. The Sheffield Centre, the Church Army’s research unit, is wrestling with this issue. New groups pastored by their non-ordained evangelists often want this

⁷⁶ David Stevens, CCWA Belfast

⁷⁷ CCWA Belfast

⁷⁸ *Fresh Expressions* with a capital ‘F’ and ‘E’ is a project run jointly by the Church of England and Methodist Church to develop more culturally relevant forms of church; when used with a lower case ‘f’ and ‘e’, this means such an alternative congregation not necessarily formally accredited as such by the *Fresh Expressions* project.

⁷⁹ ‘church without walls’ is a term more commonly used in Scotland to refer to new forms of ecclesiology.

⁸⁰ Ian Duffield, ‘Parish churches and their future: Church vocation in the Church of England’, unpublished paper presented at Urban Theology Collective, St Deiniol’s Library, December 2008

⁸¹ Private communication with the author after Scripture Union Scotland event.

person to celebrate communion with them.⁸² In this context, and that of lay-led youth groups, the ancient Christian custom of agape is very helpful, as it is in ecumenical services.⁸³

The difference in worship style, between the incoming African-Caribbean Christians and the indigenous white British worshippers, was one of the factors leading to the setting up of the new Black Majority Church denominations in the 1960s and 70s. Similar factors affect the more recent immigrant Christians to the UK from Ghana, Zimbabwe etc., who often prefer to worship in their own language and style, whilst still wishing to retain their Anglican, Catholic or Methodist etc., identities. See Section 5 below.

One of the points many people made is that the other key element of the DNA of being church is community mission engagement - what the Anglican Evangelical Fellowship event called 'a fierce commitment to staying in our urban areas'⁸⁴. We should have a 'mission-shaped church not a church-shaped mission.'⁸⁵ This is a slightly vexed issue at the moment in the UK where proposed changes in the law mean that churches are having to prove that their community engagement is part of their religious function and therefore consistent with their religious charitable aims and objects. As one person at the National Estates Churches event in London put it: 'It's really important to retain Christian distinctiveness and not become a social/community work "clone". This means being prepared to be open about the place of prayer etc. in the life of a project and its staff.'⁸⁶ Those churches that have previously shied away from social action 'must repent of our sins of proclaiming a truncated privatised gospel in our cities, based on selective texts and not taking the whole of Biblical revelation seriously'⁸⁷. The Methodist City Centre Network event summed this up by saying that the church is always 'Christ-centred inclusive, adaptable [motivated by] love for the good of the world' but that 'it is different in every context' and that 'it was always intended to be so'⁸⁸.

The interface of migration, diaspora and ethnicity

5. Ethnicity – the tension between homogenous and multi-ethnic churches

and 6. Church life in Diaspora communities

5. Ethnicity – the tension between homogenous and multi-ethnic churches

The denominations in the UK respond to this differently depending upon their ecclesiology. The Catholic and Methodist Churches tend to work on a chaplaincy model. The former appoint priests from overseas who can provide mother-tongue masses for the incomers. The British Methodist

⁸² Rev'd Dr George Lings, personal communication with the author on his recent, unpublished PhD Thesis – George W Lings 'The Church's Calling and the capacity to reproduce' (PhD Thesis: Cliff College, England, 2009)

⁸³ Agape, or love feast, is where bread and wine or similar simple food and drink is not formally consecrated before sharing, but where there is intentional remembrance of the Last Supper and Christ's presence. The St Hilda's Community in the East End of London was a relatively public radical worshipping community that grew out of the Church of England in the late 20th century that developed the protocol of using a simplified form of reference to the Last Supper when lay people were leading worship, and having full communion only when an ordained person could lead. Agape was still felt to be spiritually valid by those present, but was not liturgically unorthodox in Anglican terms. See *Worship: window of the urban church* (ed.) Tim Stratford, London: SPCK 2006, Chapter 8, for more discussion of this issue.

⁸⁴ EFAC-Urban Workshop

⁸⁵ Y&H UM Network. The reference is to: Archbishops Council *Mission Shaped Church: church planting and fresh expressions of church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2004)

⁸⁶ NECN-London

⁸⁷ EFAC-Urban Workshop

⁸⁸ MCCN Darlington

Church has agreements with its counterpart churches overseas. So, for instance, Ghanaian ministers in the UK act as chaplains to Ghanaian fellowships which meet monthly for mother-tongue services whilst the Ghanaians worship in mainstream Methodist Churches for the rest of the time.⁸⁹ The Episcopal Church in Scotland has a Kenyan born priest acting as a link-person to the African pastors in that city. The hope is that the changing attitudes on race in white British culture will mean that the newer ethnic minority diaspora people will be more warmly welcomed into the historic church congregations than the earlier Afro-Caribbean incomers were, and that the chaplaincies will be a staging post to integration rather than the beginning of separate denominations. But that process may take a long while. Welsh-language churches still existed in London until very recently. It is also not clear that white British people are as accepting of minority ethnic incomers as denominational leaders nationally assume.⁹⁰ Anecdotal evidence from Black Christians suggests that white people still show considerable unease with Black people, even if not intentional racism, especially outside the more ethnically diverse metropolitan areas.⁹¹

Some of the new diaspora Black Majority Churches (BMCs) are playing a different role in the Christian community from that of the older African-Caribbean denominations. In London they are a very big presence and the Redeemed Christian Church of Christ, a Nigerian-based denomination, is the fastest growing church in the UK, currently planting many churches. The economic migrant membership of some of the African diaspora churches are often wealthier than were the immigrants from the Caribbean, and more likely to be middle class professionals. However, others are mainly asylum-seeking migrants, who if they are undocumented are part of the economic underclass in the UK. The extent to which BMCs can engage with the historic churches depends greatly on whether they can afford pastors, and whether they have the confidence to engage. Some of the new Black churches have gained a credibility with government in a way that it has taken the African-Caribbean Churches years to achieve, and are reaping harvest in ground that the Caribbean Christians have had to plough alone for a long time.⁹²

The older Black Majority Churches are beginning to shift their mission to be more generally community focussed not just for pastoral support for African-Caribbean people⁹³. The Church of God of Prophecy is actively training its pastors to engage in this form of cross-cultural mission.⁹⁴ The New Testament Church of God has instigated a major training programme for the whole church called the *Big Move* that is encouraging this more outward-facing ministry. This is a slow process, but there is strong evidence that people in need from within the white population are beginning to see the BMCs as a place of hospitality and support, especially if they are engaging in situations where the historic white majority churches are not.

⁸⁹ This issue was widely explored at a conference convened by the British Methodist Church – ‘Ethnicity, cohesion and the church’, Swanwick, February 2007

⁹⁰ The Catholic Association for Racial Justice is the only denominationally specific agency looking at this issue Other denominations have generally subsumed their race relations’ specialists into more general equalities teams, on the basis that racism has largely been effectively tackled.

⁹¹ Bishop Delroy Hall, Church of God of Prophecy at ‘Stepping Up’ the Annual Reporting meeting of the Urban Mission Development Project, June 09, which looked at the issue of ‘The contribution of Black Christians to the Christian Community in the 21st Century’.

⁹² Dr Joe Aldred, CTE, personal communication with the author, 2008

⁹³ This process is outline in Mark Sturge *Look what the Lord has done! An exploration of Black Christian Faith in Britain* (London: Scripture Union, 2005)

⁹⁴ Personal communication with Bishop Wilton Powell, National Overseer, Church of God of Prophecy, December 2008

The fact that there was no mention of matters relating to either Themes 5 or 6, at the National Estate Churches Network events⁹⁵, was somewhat strange considering that there are diaspora congregations meeting in many historic church premises. Perhaps it is because this largely Black presence is seen as parallel to indigenous mission and activity locally, even where the congregation may have Black members from earlier migrations. This is part of the 'passive' racism of the historic churches still to be tackled. The Evangelical Fellowship of the Anglican Communion event said that 'the church must learn to listen and give a voice to those mainstream society wants to ignore'⁹⁶ and this can be modelled by consciously inviting them to mainstream church activity. There are some very good examples where congregations do come together for major festivals and link with community projects, but this is not so in the majority of cases. The lack of paid or full-time pastors and the gathered nature of these diaspora congregations does make this process harder, so it is not always about a lack of wish for positive engagement on the part of the host community. False assumptions can be made by white churches about differences in ecclesiology and attitudes⁹⁷.

Street Pastors is a ministry spreading across the UK, where older Christians walk the streets of city centres at night to be a responsible presence and offer practical support to young people, coming out of clubs and pubs, often the worse for alcohol and drug consumption. A Black church pastor⁹⁸ set it up, and BMCs are often in the lead in developing it. This model, and similar ones, has been widely adopted by integrated teams across the denominations and is a good example of joint action by homogeneous and multi-ethnic congregations - again coming out of a common, and obvious, mission imperative.

There is therefore a very complex interrelationship of poverty, class and race affecting how and whether Black Christians engage with the Christian community as a whole, and whether congregations are remaining relatively homogenous, or becoming more truly the body of Christ in terms of racial diversity. This means that generalisations are almost meaningless. But it is incumbent upon the historic churches to examine their practice. Churches 'who find themselves with possibilities of partnerships... should proactively and creatively move from passive accommodation of each other to active collaboration'⁹⁹. Slowly this is being addressed¹⁰⁰. Some of the older Pentecostal traditions, such as the Assemblies of God, have done more work on this than other historic denominations, because their headquarters are in the US and they have often have more ethnically diverse leadership and congregations. In the run up to the 2009 local and European elections in the UK, all the denominations spoke out against the racism and the rise of the British National Party. The need for the churches to provide 'opposition to extremism'¹⁰¹ was endorsed at the Yorkshire & Humber event. A mixed group of white and Black Christians at the Urban Refreshment event in Wales, addressing this Theme, talked of the need for white people to overcome their 'suspicion of the stranger' and that the host churches need to 'accommodate

⁹⁵NECN –London and NECN-Manchester

⁹⁶ EFAC-Urban Workshop

⁹⁷ In 2007 an African diaspora BMC church volunteered their choir to sing at the mass celebrating the 10th anniversary of the ordination of one of the first women ordained as an Anglo-Catholic priest in the Church of England. The host church in Dagenham, Essex had no choir of its own. (Author's knowledge)

⁹⁸ Rev'd Les Isaacs

⁹⁹ MCCN Darlington

¹⁰⁰ The 'Ethnicity, Cohesion and the Church' Conference, 2007 showed gaps still to be bridged within British Methodism.

¹⁰¹ Y&H UM Network

difference and give welcome¹⁰². They suggested that the idea that we **all** have multiple identities was a helpful way forward.

6. Church life in Diaspora communities

An asylum-seeking Catholic spoke powerfully at the Welsh Urban Refreshment event about how his faith has supported him spiritually in coping with the traumas not only in his own country, but also the dehumanising aspect of being an asylum-seeker in the UK. A book he read as a teenager, about a Catholic priest coping with solitary confinement under a Communist regime, had helped him greatly – illustrating the sharply isolating effect that asylum status can have on a person. Churches, often absorbed in the practical side of immigration procedures, might also consider the pastoral aspects of supporting traumatised people. One Catholic religious in Wales has developed a ministry providing spiritual direction and retreats for asylum seekers. A social worker, dealing mostly with migration issues, spoke at the same Welsh event how her faith was a factor in encouraging her to engage in this demanding area of work. Like homelessness, work with asylum seekers is one mission area where the churches are almost united in their wish to respond and able to work very effectively together to address the issues. The church must not rest on its laurels in this, but the welcome given is in contrast to the often less supportive secular NGO sector¹⁰³.

The large majority of the events giving evidence for this process had individual Christians of minority ethnicities present: and at four of them presentations were made by people of minority ethnicity.¹⁰⁴ One, CARJ-Urban Network, was hosted by a Black-led agency. One BMC church was approached to take part, but did not have a suitable event for the rapporteurs to attend within the timescale. One of the places of informal listening was run by another BMC. This relative lack of formal Black denominational engagement, and the absence of many new diaspora church voices is regrettable, and sadly shows how integration with all strands of the church has a long way to go, and is not easy to achieve.

7. HIV/AIDS, church and mission

Does Christian mission bear some responsibility for the spread of the virus? How can mission contribute to the struggle to stop the pandemic? What other forms of ill-health call for particular attention from practitioners of Christian mission?

HIV/AIDS in the UK context is largely seen as being associated with sexual behaviour that the church has problems with – same-sex relationships and prostitution – or drug use. Few churches have ministries with sex workers – the Assemblies of God, some of the independent charismatic churches and Catholic missions tend to be the exceptions. Nothing was said about these matters at the events, except those where the Commission VII Themes were purposefully examined. One of the places of informal listening did have a workshop on healing ministry, and there is growing interest in two models in the UK at present – ‘Healing on the Streets’ first developed here in Co Antrim, N Ireland, and ‘Healing Rooms’. It is urban churches, where the need for healing in all its forms is often much more apparent, that tend to be in the lead on this.

¹⁰² AT-Urban Refreshment

¹⁰³ Chloe Clements, Scottish Churches Parliamentary Office, talking of evidence from research undertaken by her organisation. Private conversation with the author, August 2009.

¹⁰⁴ UM Forum, AT-Urban Refreshment, LUTP December 2008, CARJ-Urban Network

Respondents who looked at this Theme at the Methodist City Centre Network said that ‘we need to as churches heal the way we think [about]/view bodies, ill-health and sex in order to address issues of healing’¹⁰⁵. The Scripture Union Scotland’s Beauty for Ashes youth event in February 2009¹⁰⁶ included a workshop on the difficult issue of self-harm¹⁰⁷ by young people. This tended to concur with the MCCN conclusion, and the facilitators said the churches can be very bad at admitting that any of their members behave in this way. Having the attitude that Christians are supposed to deal with their difficulties through faith and prayer alone can make dealing with mental illness and aberrant behaviours very difficult. The facilitators emphasised how important unconditional love is in helping young people address such behaviour. They cited Mark’s parable of Jesus’ encounter with Legion and the overarching emphasis in his ministry of love for one another as being key to healing in such circumstances¹⁰⁸. The church must not emphasise the harsh attitudes of the Old Testament teachings if true inner healing is to be found¹⁰⁹.

The Urban Refreshment day in Wales also addressed situations where healing was needed. The group heard of ill-health faced by asylum-seekers and teenagers, who ‘end up homeless, unable to cope with normal life’s demands – having life-controlling problems, a symptom of mental ill-health’. A pioneering support group project caring for carers of people with mental illness was spoken about. It is led by a retired Catholic health professional. The support group ‘employ... silent group meditation, prayer and sharing personal stories in regular meetings, with no other objective than to listen considerately and prayerfully to each other’. The group ‘agreed that Christian motivation of compassion for those suffering in these various ways is driven by one’s own appreciation for all the good things of life received, by recalling that everyone no matter what they have done or endured is precious in God’s eyes, and is focussed by imagining the afflicted person is Christ’s own face’. The story of Jade Goody (a UK reality TV celebrity from a mixed race, working class background who died of cancer in spring 2009 with a great deal of media interest) was given as an example of this. She is reported to have underlined Isaiah 53 in her Bible ‘identifying with Christ the Suffering Servant during her dying days’. As the Stream One Group Report says, the giving of comfort in such circumstances and ‘Christ’s offer of salvation is helpfully deepened by understanding that the Hebrew root of the word “comfort” means to “make space for someone” Using a Welsh word ‘croeso’ (hospitality in its broadest sense) the group felt that honouring people as guests, and full members of humanity and not de-personalising them were key factors in combating ill health. The guest should be sacred in our tradition through the example of Jesus who says, “I was a stranger and you welcomed me - inasmuch as you did this to the least of my little ones, you did it to me.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁵ MCCN Darlington

¹⁰⁶ SUS Scripture Union Scotland, ‘Beauty for Ashes’ Conference (SUS Dundee), Dundee, February 2009

¹⁰⁷ This is the term used for the process whereby a person deliberate physical harms themselves on a repeated basis, by cutting themselves, punching themselves, swallowing harmful objects/substances etc. with the intent to cause pain rather than to kill themselves

¹⁰⁸ SUS Dundee

¹⁰⁹ SUS Dundee

¹¹⁰ Matthew 25:37 –40, as used in AT- Urban Refreshment, Stream 3

Conclusion

Many powerful examples of contextual urban mission were heard about through this listening process.

The drawing of generalised conclusions is in many ways unhelpful however, because of the very contextual nature of mission in urban contexts¹¹¹. Some were of small, innovative projects started by a few Christians in a local church whose example could be followed in many other towns and cities. Some were about the progress of well established mission organisations. Over and again the rapporteurs heard about the joys of urban mission, but also how isolated and misunderstood its complexities were by the mainstream denominations, often dominated by leaders from churches in wealthier areas. What comes through all the events attended as part of this process, is that if Christ's mission is to be fulfilled by the churches as well as possible, Christians need to be generous and cooperative with each other. Churches must realise that our mission has been inadequate in the past and so we must work prayerfully, aware of our disparate failings, in the Holy Spirit's strength, to discover together what it is that God wants of us. As one person at the Welsh event said, 'several young people in our town would probably be dead by now if we hadn't learnt to work together to serve them'¹¹². Churches that are centred upon Jesus who made the statement about welcoming strangers, and that live Jesus' statement by reaching out in relation to others, followers of Jesus or not, will be best placed to fulfil Christ's mission in whatever context they are based, in this 21st century, as always. Our key question and challenge is: 'How can we work together better for God's purposes?'

Further Work

Discussion of these Questions will form the core of *Jesus in the City*, 12-14th March 2010.

A Study Pack based on this Report, will be sent to all attendees to help them begin to explore the Questions. At the Congress, we will spend the Saturday in separate Streams for each question. We will hear from mission projects in Belfast and elsewhere in the UK who are already thinking and doing work to prepare, we will share our thoughts, listen and pray together to discern how God is speaking to Jesus' followers in the urban areas of the UK.

The outcomes of that process will be incorporated into a further paper to be offered to Edinburgh2010.

We welcome you to come and join us in this exploration in Belfast. More details and a booking form in Appendix Two.

¹¹¹ A point made strongly by the UT Collective, and corroborated by John Ellis, an Anglican vicar who has served the East Marsh Estate in Grimsby, NE Lincolnshire, for over 25 years. He has written simple, powerful discipleship materials for the estate, which he says, would have to be re-written for the neighbouring estate, and any other, in order to speak into the local circumstances. (Y&H UNM Network)

¹¹² AT-Urban Refreshment, Stream 4

Appendix 1

EFAC pre- Lambeth International Congress 2008 Urban Mission Workshop

Anglican Ten Commandments for Urban Mission

1. With over 50% of the world's population now living in cities, urban mission and evangelism must be a top priority for the Anglican Communion.
2. Other issues we face as Anglicans must not divert us from urban mission and evangelism as a top priority
3. The gospel of Jesus Christ that we proclaim as Anglicans in our cities must be good news for the poor - if not, it is not the biblical gospel.
4. Seeking the welfare of our cities will involve Anglicans in incarnational holistic mission.
5. Loving our neighbours as ourselves in our cities will involve Anglicans , like the good Samaritan, crossing boundaries of faith, culture and race.
6. Mission in our cities will involve Anglicans learning to listen and giving a voice to those mainstream society wants to ignore particularly asylum seekers.
7. Anglicans are called by god to assist in building communities of justice, equitable distribution of wealth and shalom in our cities.
8. Anglicans need to encourage the ministry of prophetic evangelism in our cities, in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets and Jesus.
9. Anglicans must repent of the sins of proclaiming a truncated, privatized gospel in our cities built on selected texts and not taking the whole of the biblical revelation seriously.
10. Anglicans are called upon to exercise a fierce commitment to staying in their urban communities, contributing to the flourishing of their cities and raising indigenous leadership.

We invite the Anglican Urban Network, the Evangelical Coalition for Urban Mission and the UK Urban Congress executive to refine and comment on these ten commandments.

The flyer features a central illustration of a fisherman in silhouette, standing on a boat and holding a net. The background includes a cityscape with buildings and a large, colorful, abstract splash of paint in shades of green, blue, red, and purple. Numerous black birds are depicted in flight across the scene. The text is arranged in a vertical column on the left side, with the event title at the top and contact information at the bottom. A yellow banner at the very bottom contains the dates and the name of the congress.

Jesus in the City **Belfast 2010**

GATHER
for 3 days with other urban Christians

SHARE
worship, bible study, experiences passions and challenges

BE
encouraged, challenged, informed and inspired

HEAR
from local projects, national agencies, each other and God

SUPPORT
Christians working in urban contexts in Belfast

LOOK
to the future

justice • identity • mission
ethnicity • communities
reconciliation • culture
healing • urban • church

JITC

JITC Administration, c/o 174 Trust, Duncairn Complex, Duncairn Avenue, Belfast, BT14 6BP
www.jitc.org.uk Info@jitc.org.uk Tel: 028 90747114

Jesus in the City is a Project of the UK Urban Mission Congress Trust. The Trust is a charity recognized by the Inland Revenue and registered in England and Wales under the Charity Commission. No. 1046117

12TH-14TH MARCH 2010
6TH UK URBAN MISSION CONGRESS

Jesus in the City 2010

Be encouraged, inspired, challenged and informed

Jesus in the City 2010 is a place where anyone with a passion to live, work and share the good news of Jesus in urban areas can come to meet together.

Come and gather in Belfast with people from across the UK for 3 days to share experiences, worship together, talk together and meet with and hear from specialists in your area of ministry.

The aim of JITC2010 is for you to return informed, challenged, encouraged and inspired to your place of belonging.

Throughout the weekend you will spend time in a Stream related to your specific area of ministry. In this Stream you will meet with others from across the UK in similar situations and hear from specialists from across the UK about what God is saying to them. You will have time to chew over the complex issues surrounding your area of ministry, pray for each other, develop new strategies for your work, hear about new opportunities and resources and visit a Belfast project. You will also have a chance to hear from the other Streams in the main celebrations and meet with other delegates during networking times.

Organisations sending Specialists to JITC2010 include, UNLOCK, Housing Justice, Methodist City Centre Network, Catholic Association for Racial Justice, Street Pastors, Frontier Youth Trust, Urban Vision, Eden Network and many more.

JITC2010 is linked to the World Mission Conference in Edinburgh in 2010. We will be answering big mission questions about 'Christian Communities in Contemporary Contexts' from our practical urban perspective. Our reflections will be fed onto the world stage through Edinburgh 2010.

Regular updates and more info at www.jitc.org.uk

MUSIC FROM THE BRU

Join with Dundee band The Bru to write words/songs that communicate the Word from the streets about the tough issues of mission in the UK.

Stream information

For JITC2010 you will choose one of seven Streams reflecting different areas of urban ministry to participate in. Each Stream will visit a local Belfast project, hear from specialist speakers working in that field and spend time as a group discussing the key issues affecting that area of mission today.

The seven Streams are:

1. Growing Christians in tough communities

Looking at the theme of 'Poverty, suffering and marginalised communities and the challenge that it presents to Church', and seeking answers to the question 'How do adjectives of Christian community such as discipling, healing, witnessing, contextual become lived realities in today's world?'

2. Church in the city centre

Looking at the theme of 'Globalisation and the reproduction of hierarchies', and seeking answers to the question 'What is involved in being the church in the cities and mega-cities of today?'

3. Christians as agents for justice and reconciliation

Looking at the theme of 'Christianity and socio-political action', and seeking answers to the question 'How can the local church be an agent of the kingdom of God and a source of healing and reconciliation?'

4. Identity and urban church

Looking at the theme of 'Identity, gender and power', and seeking answers to the question 'What is the true identity (the "core DNA") of the church? How does it manifest itself in different denominations and cultures?'

5. Ethnicity and urban church

Looking at the theme of The interface of migration, diaspora and ethnicity, and seeking answers to the question 'Ethnicity – homogenous and/or multi-ethnic church?'

6. Mission across culture

Looking at the theme of 'Reverse mission dynamics', and seeking answers to the question 'What is Church life like in diaspora communities (i.e. those communities of people who have moved out from their own country)?'

7. Healing in our cities

Looking at the theme of 'Ill health, HIV/AIDS, church and mission', and seeking answers to the question 'What forms of ill-health call for particular attention from practitioners of Christian mission?'

Only £109 or £99 if you book before 31/12/09

Discounts for unwaged/low waged & students

Provisional Programme

Friday 12th March

9.30am	Registration opens, information stand open
10.30am	Belfast orientation
1.00pm	Lunch break
2.30pm	Opening Celebration
4.30pm	Introduction to Edinburgh 2010
6.30pm	Evening meal break
8.00pm	Structured Networking Space

Saturday 13th March

9.30am	Morning Worship
10.30am	Site Visits and Streams
6.00pm	Evening meal break
7.45pm	Evening Celebration

Sunday 14th March

9.30am	Worship & reflection
10.00am	Streams
11.30am	Commissioning Service
1.00pm	Optional Lunch break

Meals can be pre-ordered through the Congress Caterers or can be bought locally.



Save £5 by booking online at www.jitc.org.uk

Booking your place at Jesus in the City

You can either fill in this form and return it by post or book online by credit or debit card (save £5 at www.jitc.org.uk/bookings).

The Attendance Fee per person includes: the Congress information pack; admission to all Congress events and visits; and two nights hospitality accommodation in Belfast. Meals are not included, and can either be booked in advance to eat at the Congress or bought locally.

There are discounts available – see the booking form below. If you book before 31st Dec 2009 an early booking discount will also apply. You can also volunteer to be a Steward in return for a £30 place.

To help ensure that finance does not prevent anyone from attending, a number of bursaries and travel grants are available, please email info@jitc.org.uk or tel: 028 90747 114 for more details. A group booking discount is also available to groups larger than 4 people.

Travel: Belfast is served by two airports (City and International) both offering flights to a range of UK airports. Flights can be very cheap if booked early so please book your flights as soon as possible to ensure the best possible price.

Title: _____ First name: _____
 Surname: _____
 Address: _____

 _____ Postcode: _____
 Telephone: _____
 Email: _____
 Church Affiliation (if any): _____
 Organisation Represented (if any): _____

- I would like a group booking form
- I would like information on bursaries or travel agents
- I would be interested in becoming a Steward (behind the scenes help with administration, stewarding etc) in return for a £30 place. Please send details.

If you tick one of these boxes you will receive a special application form; do not send any money at this point.

Basic Congress fee per person: £109 (or £104 for online booking)	
<input type="checkbox"/> If unwaged (including students) deduct £40	
<input type="checkbox"/> If low waged or grassroots worker deduct £40	
<input type="checkbox"/> If booking before 1st December deduct £10	
<input type="checkbox"/> If overnight home hospitality accommodation is not required deduct £30	
Total Fee Payable (minimum £30)	
<input type="checkbox"/> I am paying a non-refundable £30 deposit now (Balance due 1st Feb 2010)	
<input type="checkbox"/> I am paying the total now, including £30 deposit.	

Please make cheques payable to 'Jesus in the City' and write your name and postal address on the back.

Return booking forms to:

JITC Administration, c/o 174 Trust, Duncairn Complex, Duncairn Avenue, Belfast BT14 6BP

Overnight accommodation is provided by Christians in their homes. If you wish to make your own arrangements, please visit www.gotobelfast.com. The conference is in the Belfast 14 area.