

URBAN BISHOPS' PANEL

The Urban Renaissance and the Church of England *A discussion paper.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Seventeen years have now passed since the publication of *Faith in the City*. Subsequent publications, *Living with Faith in the City* in 1990 and *Staying in the City* in 1995 reviewed the progress of the response to the analysis and call for action that made *Faith in the City* such a landmark document. However, during the last five years, some fundamental changes have been occurring in the way we address the needs of our urban communities. Accordingly, during 2001 the Urban Bishops Panel embarked on a process to present to the House of Bishops, and later to General Synod, a paper to act as a contribution for the development of a policy framework for the Church's urban mission.

1.2 This document outlines the challenges and opportunities facing the Church in its mission and ministry in the urban communities of England at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Its formation owes a great deal to a residential meeting of the Panel with the Chief Executives of three local authorities; the recent *Faith in the City* Conferences which have explored issues of mission, ministry and resources in the urban church; and the experience of the Panel in their ministry and leadership in urban communities. The discussion at the House of Bishops, in January 2002, underlined a number of concerns shared by the Bishops, particularly: recruitment, training and deployment for ministry in urban (and rural situations); national church resources and maximising the

opportunities for participating in strategies for change at local, diocesan, regional and national levels.

1.3 The Church is being invited into many new partnerships and patterns of engagement, alongside other faith communities. This needs to be underpinned in terms of the Church's resources and theological thinking. The Government says its vision of 'an urban renaissance' depends on individuals and communities playing their full part. This paper is offered a part of the discernment of the role the Church can play. In the Panel's discussions we identified six principles to inform, enthuse and underpin our involvement in strategies for urban regeneration and renewal:

Our churches are communities of and for the area and the people who live there.

Our faith is concerned with the welfare of people, community, sustainability, and justice.

Our faith engages us in developing and sustaining hope and vision that things can be different (even against the odds); this is also a calling to analyse, understand and critique the structures, policies and programmes we encounter.

Our struggle for God's reign (on earth as it is in heaven) compels us to the advocacy and empowerment of those who are excluded and whose voice is rarely heard, to accompany them and form alliances with them and others who work for the same purposes.

Partnerships are a vital sign of a common humanity, and involve a mutual commitment of vision, authority and interest.

Regeneration is a spiritual matter.

(A fuller explanation of these principles can be found in Appendix 1.)

1.4 We hope therefore that this document can provide the foundation for a wider debate and consultation in the Church and urban networks with an eye to a fuller report in 2005 - the 20th anniversary of *Faith in the City* and the date set by the Government for its strategic review of urban communities in England.

1.5 Our approach and the discussion at the House of Bishops indicates a need to be aware of the broader context of ‘traditional’ urban mission and ministry – this involves a sensitivity to the needs of rural communities, as well as the interconnectedness of urban society – including the sub-urban, the rapidly changing city centre communities etc. The Church’s thinking must understand the complex interaction and interdependence of all communities in a predominantly urban society. The terminology we use, not least our definition of ‘urban’ presents us with a significant challenge.

1.6 This paper is not an attempt to present a complete review of the Church’s engagement in urban communities. We hope to first establish how the urban scene is different to that addressed by *Faith in the City*, particularly in regard to the Government’s social and economic policies. We will highlight four concerns which need urgent attention in the Church’s own life, and then examine the opportunities that the Government’s

‘urban renaissance’ offers to the Church at various levels. We are aware of other issues and aspects of the Church’s mission which are not addressed directly in this paper, some, such as schools and work alongside young people, have received significant attention in recent reports to Synod and are directly connected with the concerns behind this paper. We would hope that a comprehensive overview that draws all these areas of work together will be possible in the future.

2. THE CHALLENGE AND THE CONTEXT

2.1 We believe that the Church of England needs to think differently in the light of the changes that are affecting our urban communities and congregations. In many ways these changes become apparent in the events which make it into our news headlines. The eruption of violence on the streets of northern cities during the summer of 2001; the low turnouts in the general local elections; the crisis in the relationship between urban and rural populations: all point to a time of critical opportunity and challenge for the Church.

2.2 The terrible events of 11th September raise significant questions about our perceptions of the otherness and diversity we encounter in the city. We must not however let these events and feelings damage the struggle to build good community relations or our ability to reach out to our neighbour whatever faith community they belong to. Subsequently, as bishops we have been drawn into a wide variety of initiatives in civic leadership in the effort to rebuild good relationships across our communities.

2.3 Further it is expected that the 2001 Census statistics will show a picture of a dramatically changed urban landscape. Some of this will be due to new approaches to urban policy and

physical regeneration, other factors will include shifting patterns of migration, employment and higher education, apparent in city-wide and regional changes.

2.4 In 1985, *Faith in the City*, the report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas, brought issues of poverty, racism, policing, housing – and issues of urban ministry and participatory structures to the centre of the Church of England's life. Nearly twenty years on from *Faith in the City*, the Church of England has the opportunity to review and reimagine its engagement with urban communities in a very different political, economic and social context. We would hope that the urban policy developments within government suggest an eagerness to engage with issues of urban decay, poverty, sustainability and planning which was not evident in previous administrations. This is accompanied by a new holistic approach to urban issues which goes beyond previous crude attempts to define and concentrate our understanding of 'the urban' solely in terms of poor communities (caricatured in 1998 by the Government's Social Exclusion Unit as 'Worst Estates').

2.5 In this new context it is vital that the Church does not lose its commitment to the mission and ministry that is rooted in the poorest neighbourhoods, as it reaffirms the significance of those congregations and communities as integral to its life and witness. At the same time the Church needs to understand its presence in all communities (sub-urban, post-industrial villages, rural, 'informational-boom towns', city centres) as interrelated in its prophetic engagement in the social life of the nation. A commitment to urban mission and ministry can only be entered into on a long-term basis, it is far more than a short-term crusade or burst of activity. The challenge facing the Church of England is whether it is able to lay foundations for

its presence and witness in the twenty-first century that enable it to address deep rooted situations, as well as engage directly and consistently with change as it happens in our society.

If there are sinful structures of exclusion and social deprivation these are not limited to particular districts within cities but effect, perhaps I should say 'infect', the city as a whole both as built space and human community. [...] '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 Shelldrake, *Spaces for the Sacred*, SCM 2001: p. 166)

3. UNDERSTANDING THE GOVERNMENT'S URBAN POLICY

3.1 The Labour government came to power in 1997 promising a review of urban policy as well as integrated measures to address 'social exclusion'. The recent Urban White Paper – *Our Towns and Cities: the future. Delivering an Urban Renaissance*, and the Social Exclusion Unit's *New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal*, offer new ways of approaching the shaping of our towns and cities, through design, economic restructuring, environmental and transport

measures, as well as addressing the increasing disparity between neighbourhoods in our urban areas. Both documents hint at the vital involvement of 'faith communities' in the life and renewal of urban living. A plethora of schemes and programmes – most noticeably New Deal for Communities; Sure Start; and Heath and Education Action Zones have all begun to make an impact, though at times the complexity of the current regeneration scene can be disempowering. We hope that the advent of the "single pot" bringing together eleven key sources of funding will enable a more strategic approach to emerge, as it is co-ordinated on a regional basis.

3.2 The DETR's *Indices of Deprivation 2000*, along with the annual reports of, what has been, the Department for Social Security, and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's annual reports *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion*, have suggested a changing demography in patterns of poverty and social exclusion. The detail now available allows a better understanding of deprivation among different groups and regions, and challenges some of the received assumptions about different locations, and the dynamics of multiple deprivation. This will be improved with the publication of the 2001 Census findings.

3.3 A greater awareness is apparent of the experience and potential of different minority ethnic and religious communities. Community demographics have meant that some cities and towns are becoming majority minority communities, though this is not always reflected in presence in and access to civic structures. Non-Christian faith communities are beginning to raise issues of resources for community development with the Government – often through the DTLR's Inner Cities Religious Council. The Home Office report on religious discrimination has begun to raise the issue of

religious discrimination on a community as well as an individual basis. The Local Government Association guidance on faith communities greatly assists in this area. The McPherson Report has highlighted the need to address institutional racism at all levels of public and private institutions. 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).

3.4 A greater awareness of regional identity and relationships has been fostered through the creation of Regional Development Agencies, and an enhancement of the role of Regional Government Offices. The former is now expected to take the lead in the allocation of resources for area-based regeneration. Regional performance is considered vital in the context of Europe where many nations have cohesive regional economies, and more regular distribution of resources and population. As bishops we remain concerned about increasing regional disparities in terms of economic performance, employment, house prices and media profile; as well as the treatment and inclusion of faith communities in regional strategies. London continues to stake out its place as a global city in a context that places other British cities in completely different leagues. Significant questions exist concerning London's ability to develop appropriate strategies for regeneration and redistribution within itself, and its relationships with other places in the UK and abroad. We are increasingly aware of the European and global dimensions to issues of employment, corporate culture, migration and notions of belonging, identity and home.

4. SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

The Archbishops' Council

4.1 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 that face the Church now and in the years ahead. 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 co-ordinated 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 initiatives which impact upon them. 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.

4.2 In the light of this and the Government's policies, we seek to draw attention to four key areas in of concern:

i) Public Ministry in urban areas

4.3 The ministry of the Church is the 'frontline' of its engagement in the lives of urban communities. This is a shared responsibility, underpinned by long history of congregational life and leadership. We believe, however, there is a need to raise the profile and esteem of the Church's public ministry in difficult urban situations – this is a task for Bishops, for diocesan policies and strategic support, for colleges, courses, and schemes – it is critical if urban ministry is to be perceived

as a challenging, rewarding and well-supported opportunity by those in training or in other ministries within the Church. We are aware that similar things might be said of public ministry in rural communities.

Training

4.4 Considering professional ordained ministry in urban areas raises issues of selection, training, appointment and on-going support. No data exists about the candidates entering training regarding their perceived models of ministry, their expectations about the nature or location of their envisaged ministry – or how that changes during exposure to different communities during training. For many urban ministry concerns an area of uncertainty and rumour, far from the models of congregational life or social context in which they feel confident or secure. Notable changes in attitude and expectation can take place during the period of vocation testing and training – allowing candidates and ordinands access to good role models in imaginative ministries with sufficient time and awareness is essential – pre theological college ‘gap years’ and contextual placements are key to this.

4.6 We believe that any changes in recruitment, discernment and training must allow opportunities for Christians with less formal education 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 them, they bring essential experience into the leadership of the Church.

4.7 Attempts by theological colleges to provide some urban encounter within training has had varied success. Because of the location of urban training away from colleges, centres are

sometimes marginal to college life, as well as being under-funded and under-resourced. Styles of academic theology can mean that students are not equipped to develop contextual theological tools during placements. We are aware that the acquisition of good methodological tools for contextual theology can bear fruit wherever that person's ministry is eventually situated.

4.8 The increasing use of courses may mean that there are less opportunities for many ordinands to explore aspects of ministry which may demand a certain level of exposure, this may mean that Post Ordination Training and Continuing Ministerial Education may need to be settings for urban ministry skills to be developed. (This may however be too late for some ordinands to realise what they have to give and what the urban context can offer). The Panel would welcome the exploration of the possibilities for a national centre for urban training and theology, to develop pre- and post-ordination training opportunities. This could be attached to an existing urban scheme or education project; it may be possible to develop this within the proposals of the interim Chichester Report for regional centres and specialisms.

Enhancing ministry in the urban context

4.9 The Panel is aware that difficulties have been experienced by some dioceses in filling vacancies in urban priority area parishes. We regard it as essential that dioceses review how their recruitment and support of urban clergy connect. Peer-support, as well as support from within the diocesan structures is increasingly important, particularly as there are fewer assistant clergy acting as immediate colleagues. The development of teams, co-operatives, and local groupings

is essential. Much urban ministry, lay and ordained, will be supported by ecumenical alliances and shared work.

4.10 The changing nature of the role of parish priest in the urban context poses one of the greatest challenges for those developing in-service training and support. Involvement in community initiatives carries greater responsibilities than ever – not least the traditional roles of school governor or local charities. Clergy still remain the sole professional living in many areas, with unique insights about places and people. Assumptions about role will mean that clergy are used as honest brokers between the community and other bodies working in the parish, similarly clergy will find themselves representing the church on management and development boards, which often lack local grassroots representation. (We should be aware that this can have the danger of disempowering emergent local leadership in many areas of community life). Again there a need for continuing training that allows reflection on practice as well as the acquisition of new skills and perspectives.

4.11 We would hope that rural/area deans, archdeacons, cathedral clergy, and bishops also wish to pay attention to their own training needs regarding the changing urban context of ministry. This will include the analysis of their roles across cities and in the regional setting, as well as the ecumenical and interfaith dimension of such engagement.

4.12 We hope that many of the above concerns will be addressed in the review currently being led by the Bishop of Chichester.

ii) Finance and Resourcing

4.13 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 in the City p. 110)

4.14 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 see the need 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.

4.15 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.

4.16 To enable a better understanding of these financial issues alongside patterns of deprivation, and the ministry of the Church we consider the designation of *Urban Priority Areas* to still be important, not least for the work of the Church Urban Fund. We are also aware that the OXLIP 1991 scoring system has outlived its usefulness. We would therefore ask that the Archbishops' Council Statistics Unit and Division of Finance to collaborate with CUF and the Urban Resources Unit in developing guidelines for designation using the *Indices of Deprivation 2000*, and also provide a clear document concerning the use and accuracy of statistic, such as the *Indices of Deprivation* in the Church's distribution of resources, as well as restatement of the theological imperatives for such mutuality.

iii) Church Urban Fund

4.17 The Church Urban Fund was created on the recommendation of the *Faith in the City* Report. The Review Group, set up in 1999 by the Archbishops' Council, whilst celebrating so much that had been achieved through this admirable venture, also raised issues of concern. From the 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 engage in 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.

4.18 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 that continuity is to be advantageous, then a significant effort to raise funds must be set in place by 2004. 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 poor urban parishes. It would then become all the more urgent for the Church to reorder its mainstream priorities regarding ministry training and provision, education, buildings, administration, and mission initiatives, to better reflect its commitment to poor communities. 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 original mandate of the Fund – *to strengthen the urban presence of the Church* – makes the Fund a key resource in the Church's mission. We endorse this original mandate and recognise that those responsible for the Fund will be entitled to expect some

clear articulation of the Church's policy for its urban engagement in the coming years.

iv) Urban Resource Unit

4.19 The concern for a sustainable presence and witness in our urban areas is behind the proposal for an Urban Resource Unit as a clear location for policy, analysis and engagement. The Unit would support an Urban Strategy Group drawing together those with an interest in strategic urban work in areas of mission, ministry, public policy, as well as the Church Urban Fund. Government policy, urban mission and theological practice, collaboration and partnership would all be part of the brief of the Group which would monitor and inform the urban engagement of the Church. The Unit now forms part of the Archbishops' Council's *Discerning the Future* proposals, as part of the Community Affairs cluster. (A fuller explanation of the proposal can be found at Appendix 2).

4.20 A possible agenda for the Unit would include issues such as those raised by the Cattle Report on *Community Cohesion*, to monitor the progress of the Government's policies in relation to the Urban White Paper, to support the development of the international network on urban mission, to collaborate with those responsible for work on the Church and the environment, and look at the strategies for training and ministry to support the Church's sustainable presence in urban areas.

4.21 The programme outlined by the Government's Urban White Paper envisages a significant review point in 2005, with a report and summit 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 Unit and its accompanying Group could provide the essential impulse for such a piece of work with the Church's key resources for this work being strategically networked.

5. GRASPING THE OPPORTUNITIES

5.1 Recent government documents assume a wide based participation in its strategies for urban renewal. As well as being in the hands of various levels of government, it '...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'. (UWP p.137).

5.2 This is a challenge for us to be looking to our own need for change and resourcing, to look at our contribution and strategies in relation to the social, economic and demographic context we find ourselves in and the changes to our neighbourhoods that are envisaged

5.3 What is our vision of an urban renaissance? What resources do we have to enable our participation, and our capacity to be built? What is our strategy for appropriate and sustainable ministry, presence, and witness in UPAs? In what ways can the Church of England grasp the opportunities for participating at local, diocesan, regional and national levels?

The parish and deanery

5.4 While there are different theologies of ministry and mission in the Church of England the focuses of these have always been the Church's engagement through the parish

system in local community life, and its engagement as a national church with wider society and national life. The latter is at its best when informed by reality of the former.

5.5 Urban renewal, like the Church's mission, is essentially focussed in the local context. An analysis of that context – its opportunities and challenges - is a vital to informed mission engagement. Parish audit exercises were critical in the initial response to *Faith in the City*. Changing communities, the availability of new data and the new opportunities afforded to communities means that the auditing exercise should be an ongoing exercise for the local church. The use of Geographical Information Systems and Social Audit methods are useful tools in developing strategic thinking in parishes and dioceses.)

Opportunities include:

P1 revisiting their parish audit exercise, obtain statistical information concerning the parish (acquainting themselves with the profile of the Wards in the parish by using the *Indices of Deprivation*) and identify significant changes in the community and Church; and significant involvement of members in local programmes and initiatives;

P2 developing a strategy for engaging with the parish community, and in local programmes and initiatives;

P3 identifying key community stakeholders and give opportunity for them to engage with the congregation and/or PCC;

P4 identifying areas for resource sharing and co-operation at local, ecumenical and deanery levels.

The diocese

5.6 Dioceses need to identify who their key personnel are that relate to regional, city-wide, local / unitary authorities. These may be bishops, diocesan staff or regional church appointees. These contacts will vary according to local contexts and histories; and, as has been said already, much depends on the resources and training available to keep those involved informed about the issues in a constantly changing arena. We are also aware that a significant number of our cathedrals are being drawn into urban renewal strategies, and are reviewing their profile and engagement as diocesan and community resources.

5.7 Much of the momentum for urban engagement in the Church of England has come from dedicated networks, particularly those designated as Diocesan Urban Link Officers and those responsible for supporting projects in UPAs. The role and resources available does vary between dioceses and regions. If diocesan strategies are to be effective the role of the urban officer, under whatever title, needs to be taken seriously as a mechanism through which essential agendas and concerns are connected, and needs and strategies in this area reviewed on a regular basis. As we have already noted networks remain vital to the exchange of information and practice between diocese and regions.

5.8 As well as link and project officers, industrial mission and social responsibility officers have played a significant role in enabling the Church to respond to a rapidly changing scene. Because of existing networks and patterns of communication this has enabled crucial relationships to be built up at regional and sub-regional levels. More recently these have been augmented by officers appointed to enable dioceses or consortia of dioceses to respond strategically to the

opportunities for partnerships across cities and funding, particularly from regional and European sources.

Opportunities include:

P5 promoting awareness of these issues and develop the capacity of its senior staff and key practitioners to understand and respond to the emerging urban agenda;

P6 reviewing the role specification of its urban link officer;

P7 developing and implementing a diocesan urban strategy – dealing with issues of resources, training, staffing, support in urban parishes; with particular reference to ecumenical working;

P8 reviewing parish and deanery boundaries in relation to existing and developing communities;

P9 developing a process identifying and supporting appropriate engagement with government programmes and urban renewal schemes;

P10 enabling parishes to monitor and apply relevant statistical data, beginning with the *Indices of Deprivation 2000*, and GIS;

P11 developing and contributing to regional networks relating to existing and emergent regional bodies and agendas;

P12 developing resources and support for urban laity and clergy; encouraging greater co-operation and peer-support for those working on their own.

The Region

5.9 The Church is uniquely placed to provide an overview of regions from outside business and local government perspectives. The interests of rural and urban communities can be advocated by the churches. 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 which acknowledges the inter faith dimension.

Opportunities include:

P13 identifying strategies for better liaison between those engaging with regional government bodies within and across regions;

P14 addressing issues of capacity building for denominational staff and faith leaders.

The National Church Institutions

5.10 It is vital that the Archbishops' Council and the other National Church Institutions give urgent attention to the future of a dynamic and sustainable presence through ministry and engagement across the neighbourhoods of our towns and cities. This includes strategic planning in theological training for ministry in the contexts that have been described, as well as serious consideration needing to be given to the implications of the current allocations policy for financial situations for dioceses coping with a large urban conurbation undergoing rapid change.

5.11 The Urban Resource Unit, in collaboration with the Urban Bishops' Panel, needs to be developing a critique of the formulation and impact of urban policy. (This may happen

through advocating the communities where these policies must have an impact.) It is vital that the dialogue with policy makers is maintained at regional national levels. This will involve ‘shadowing’ and ‘monitoring’ the process of the UWP, looking at its impact in the communities that concern us; feeding into the debate of the Urban Summit in 2002; in regional forums; the ICRC and elsewhere. The Church will need to build on its engagement with what has been the DETR, with the new Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions. This will include developing contacts at ministerial level and the new units responsible for urban policy and neighbourhood renewal.

The opportunities for the Archbishops’ Council include:

P15 formally considering how it responds to the programme outlined in the UWP, and the need for a parallel process to produce a comprehensive report to mark the twentieth anniversary of the publication of FITC in 2005.

P16 developing an appropriate group (the Urban Strategy Group) to monitor and enhance the Church’s engagement with urban communities;

P17 ensuring that the new national Urban Resource Unit can adequately address the theological agenda that the Church’s urban engagement provokes.

P18 continuing to advocate financial interdependence between dioceses, with an emphasis on resources for a sustainable Christian presence in the poorer urban communities;

P19 ensuring that the strategy being developed by the Division of Ministry through the Chichester Report gives proper emphasis to training needs for ministry in urban communities;

P20 considering the need for a national centre of excellence for urban training and theology, to develop pre- and post-ordination training opportunities;

P21 requesting the Division of Church and World (or its successor) to examine the issues relating to the Church as part of a ‘faith communities sector’, its role relating to the creation of social capital and Christian discipleship;

P23 requesting the Statistics Unit and the Division of Finance to collaborate with CUF and the Urban Resources Unit in developing guidelines for designation using the *Indices of Deprivation 2000*; and to provide a clear document concerning the use and accuracy of statistics, such as the *Indices of Deprivation* in the Church’s distribution of resources, as well as restatement of the theological imperatives for such mutuality;

P24 continuing the dialogue with the trustees and Urban Bishops Panel over the future of CUF and the need to enhance its future financial viability.

Conclusion

5.12 The language of renewal, regeneration and renaissance speak of the spiritual dimension to the reordering of our cities. It is language which belongs to the theological categories by which the Church witnesses to God’s involvement in and concern for every aspect of human life. The Church seeks to be part of the healing, redeeming and transforming of neighbourhoods especially in our most deprived urban areas in order that they take their part in the arena of social justice which is the Kingdom of God.

5.13 This paper is a modest initiative in stimulating the beginning of a debate within the Church of England about how the Church should renew its vision for this task at the start of a

new century. It points to four major areas of concern for the immediate future, and it suggests a range of initiatives for consideration at parish, diocesan, regional and national levels. Above all, it is written out of the practical lived experience of bishops engaged in pastoral and teaching ministries in many of the urban dioceses of the Church of England. Our hope is that as we learn to adjust to the new opportunities we now face, and as we develop appropriate partnerships for responding, we shall make our contribution to the experience of the city as the place of encounter with the Risen and Ascended Christ.

✠Tim Leicester
Ascension 2002

APPENDIX 1

REGENERATION AND PARTNERSHIP – PRINCIPLES & THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

A1 With increased opportunities for involvement in government led programmes, the Church needs to examine critically the theological and missiological foundations of its engagement. In Britain there is a growing social engagement by the majority of churches, in urban mission and ministry, (though many find the transition from social welfare provisions to being advocates for social justice a difficult one to make). All parts of the Church need a greater cultural awareness of their potential and impact, and the need to pursue active engagement in human community as part of Christian discipleship. Why then is it appropriate that a congregation, or other Christian body, should enter into agreement with others to deal with the material/physical development of an area or community?

1. ENGAGING IN REGENERATION

A2 We would propose six principles which should inform, enthuse and underpin our engagement in and with urban communities.

- *Our churches are communities of and for the area and the people who live there.*
- *Our faith is concerned with the welfare of people, community, sustainability, and justice.*

- *Our faith engages us in developing and sustaining hope and vision that things can be different (even against the odds); this is also a calling to analyse, understand and critique the structures, policies and programmes we encounter.*
- *Our struggle for God's reign (on earth as it is in heaven) compels us to the advocacy and empowerment of those who are excluded and whose voice is rarely heard, to accompany them and form alliances with them and others who work for the same purposes.*
- *Partnerships are a vital sign of a common humanity, and involve a mutual commitment of vision, authority and interest.*
- *Regeneration is a spiritual matter.*

Our churches are communities of and for the area and the people who live there

A3 In many urban situations the congregation will be residents and tenants within the area that is under regeneration. The Church of England's parish system still gives it a geographical interface with distinct communities, neighbourhoods and localities. The involvement of the Church as a constituent part of that community will be a natural sign of the commitment of people of faith, not to their own betterment but to mutual struggle influencing values and outcomes in the endeavour to improve an area and empower its people. That presence within a community is probably the most natural point from which the Church will engage. Often the Church

will be able call on skills, expertise and resources not available through other sources from within its own local resources or from wider networks.

Our faith is concerned with the welfare of people, community, sustainability, and justice.

A4 Fundamental to involvement is the commitment of the Christian faith to all that is life giving and enhancing. Implicit to the Church is a corporate understanding of human community that through mutuality and solidarity the strong parts of the body should care for and strengthen the weaker. A commitment to understanding and struggling with issues of social and economic justice are central to the Judaeo-Christian ethic – a significant characteristic of this is the emphasis placed on the human dimension of poverty – the person experiencing poverty is to be assisted as a brother or sister (Matthew 25), to devalorise people and the places they live, is to lose sight of the image of God in which they were created and God's realm in which they live. Those corporate dynamics in the Church mean it is impossible to compartmentalise faith and life. Those Christians whose professions shape our urban areas, yet who do not live in those communities, need to be brought into dialogue on these faith concerns with the congregations and faith communities in the areas where they intervene, plan or act as consultants.

Our faith calls us to engage in redemptive activity, developing and sustaining hope and vision that things can be different (even against the odds); this is also a calling to analyse, understand and critique the structures, policies and programmes we encounter and engage with

A5 The activities associated with regeneration may be understood as redemptive. Renewal and regeneration offer the possibility of hope and change within a situation of powerlessness and hopelessness. Transformation is possible drawing on the deep resources of the context, not the intervention of experts and consultants:

‘...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’

<http://www.northpark.edu/sem/exauditu/papers/volf.html>

A6 These activities seek to claim dignity, inclusion and resources for individuals and communities which are maligned, excluded and impoverished. They move those involved towards a different future, the vision of a different future (*a better place* – Hebrews 11.16) should offer insight into the strategies through which it might be achieved; as well as critiquing the order which make people poor, the faith calls us to enable people to engage personally and directly, to do all that is in their power to change their situation. Intervention without understanding the subtleties and aspirations of a community’s life is not acceptable. Enabling communities, through capacity building, to play a key role in their own regeneration has become a crucial strategy for those accompanying people in these processes. The assumption that experts and consultants will know what is best for a community remains apparent in strategies of some local authorities and faith-based welfare groups. In many places the Church’s engagement with regeneration programmes has been a key component in the efforts to keep activities people-focussed, raising questions of values, particularly in areas where great emphasis has been put on the built environment and the

business community. The partnerships into which the Church enters must be open to analysis and criticism.

Our struggle for God's reign (on earth as it is in heaven) compels us to the advocacy and empowerment of those who are excluded and whose voice is rarely heard, to accompany them and form alliances with them and others who work for the same purposes.

A7 At the heart of the message of Jesus is the declaration of the *reign of God* - a radical reordering of resources, values and attitudes; an active resistance of powers that would divide, distort or exclude human communities. Redemptive activities such as the offering of forgiveness and the cancellation of debt are the essential activities of this new order. There is no dilemma between love of God and love of neighbour but rather a new possibility of encountering God through acts of solidarity and compassion. To raise-up, include and claim justice for the poor is a sign of active partnership with the re-ordering stimulus of God's reign and Christians are encouraged to seek allies to engage in such activity. By living as salt, light and yeast, Christians are called to live real presence through communities that include, strengthen and give integrity to those at the margins. If we are to identify the neighbour we are called to love as anyone who our activity or inactivity can affect, the task becomes truly global.

Partnerships are a vital sign of a common humanity, and involve a mutual commitment of vision, authority and interest.

A8 The rhetoric of partnership is commonplace in the activities and negotiations of regeneration and social development. We should however be cautious about the

prevailing mismatches in many partnerships between the powerless and powerful; the well resourced (and often well paid) and those whose material resources are few. Underpinning each partnership should be clear expectations and an honest assessment of what each partner brings to the partnership and the control that is exercised.

A9 The rhetoric of partnership must acknowledge the need to be aware of how power is exercised. That exercise is as apparent in the ability to call meetings and their location and timing, as it is in access to resources and information. Dynamic and respectful relationships can only be built through the investment of time, thought and care involving a recognition of strengths and weaknesses which seeks to empower rather than exploit the weaknesses of other partners. There is a need to break through old culture of paternalism and philanthropy.

A10 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. This is an aspect of our participation in God's renewing and regenerative activity, we should not be surprised to find others engaged in the same. (Mark 9.40) The practise of *koinonia* in the Church is a sign of the possibility of human community at a profound level, and links us with our doctrinal understanding of God in community as trinity.

Regeneration is a spiritual matter

A11 The economic and design aspects of community regeneration must be matched with strategies which address and engage the human and spiritual condition of the community. This becomes apparent in strategies for the empowerment and participation of local people, as well as the

involvement of faith communities, educational programmes and cultural developments. Amin, Massey and Thrift have written of ‘ the rights of being, becoming and interconnecting in the city; rights which do not flow alone from the ways in which physical space is organised, but also from the developmental and expressive choices given to people.’ (*Cities for the Many not the Few*, Policy Press 2000: p.45) All aspects of regeneration must connect with the history as well as the hopes and expectations lodged in a place. The diversity of many urban areas means that the stories and identities of people in a community will need respectful handling and negotiation; at the same time we should not deny the spirituality of those who live in monocultural areas, often outer housing estates condemned as being ‘devoid of spirit’. Planning theorist Leonie Sandercock writes of the need to ‘resacralize’ the built environment, human communities and ecology of the city as part of participatory planning strategies, which defy the fatalistic acceptance of ‘dumb, featureless public space. (*Towards Cosmopolis*, John Wiley & sons, 1998: p. 219).

‘An essential ingredient of planning...is a restatement of inquiry about and recognition of the importance of memory, desire and the spirit (or the sacred) as vital dimensions of healthy human settlements and a sensitivity to the cultural difference in the expression of each.’ (ibid. 214)

A12 Too often planners have been solely concerned with issues of infrastructure in design assuming ‘community’ will follow and not with engaging the community that will fill that space. A metaphorical removal of shoes must surely be a prerequisite for those who approach the places in which others have found meaning and ‘lodged’ their stories. The spirit of a

place is engendered as much by the community of the present as the stories and creeds are retold and lived there. The use of cultural activities within the regeneration process is often advocated as a way of enabling histories to be shared and enabling new histories to be created in new communities. These exercises can be essential in early stages of reimagining a community's built environment allowing a greater sense of confidence and stakeholding in the planning process to develop. This is an essential aspect of regeneration in communities of difference and diversity. As one of our leading novelists writes: 'If both racism and fundamentalism are diminishers of life- reducing others to extractions- the effort of culture must be to keep others alive by describing and celebrating their intricacy, by seeing that this is not only of value but a necessity.' (Hanif Kureishi *The Guardian* Friday April 5th 2002)

APPENDIX 2

PROPOSAL FOR A NATIONAL URBAN RESOURCE UNIT

Rationale and context

The follow-up process to the CUF Review raises the possibility of re-configuring resources for policy and development work supporting the Church of England's urban engagement. The key groups involved in the follow-up have identified the need for **a locus that enables the clear development of policy and thinking on the urban engagement of the Church**, at present this is fragmented among a number of stakeholders (CUF, BSR, UBP, Church & World etc).

Following the publication of the *Urban White Paper* and the *New Commitment to Neighbourhood Renewal* the Church is presented with unprecedented opportunities and challenges to engage with the renewal of our urban communities. In this context the Church needs to review and reimagine its engagement with urban communities in a very different political economic and social context. The Church must be encouraged to renew its commitment to the mission and ministry that is rooted in the poorest urban communities, as it reaffirms the significance of those congregations and communities as integral to its national life and witness.

During 2001 the Urban Bishops' Panel have embarked on a process to present to the House of Bishops, and later to General Synod, a framework for the Church's urban engagement. It is hoped that the follow-up process to the Church Urban Fund will clarify aspects of the responsibilities for leadership on

these issues in the Church. These proposals are concerned with providing a framework for strategy and policy within the national Church Institutions.

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.

Framework

The Urban Resource Unit would hold together three elements:

- 1) A resource unit or 'think-tank'-assuming the current role of the community and urban affairs officer within BSR and some of the development and policy work which has appeared within the CUF;
- 2) a strategy/policy group giving a lead on the Church's engagement in urban issues; and
- 3) the promotion of 'joined-up' thinking across the NCIs and CUF on urban issues.

Maintaining the Church's capacity to speak with authority

An urban resource unit would maintain capacity and knowledge on urban issues as it monitors and develops an overview of government policy, and resources the Church through its national and local presence. This would involve maintaining expertise in the following areas:

- government policy in relation to urban regeneration, social exclusion, urban development, community development (additional possibilities – e.g. housing/homelessness, regionalisation would depend on the review of responsibilities as part of the *Discerning the Future* process);
- 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;
- overview of work and resources within the NCI structures – at present located in BSR, CUF, ICRC secondee, UBP, BoM, CMEAC, Ministry Division, diocesan networks etc.
- key issues identified by the policy group: e.g. multiculturalism /diversity /exclusion; the sustainable presence of the church in UPAs; urban-rural; changes in employment; urban environment etc

Networking, communications and capacity building

A key aspect of the Unit's work would be the interface with networks and the development of resources. The development of links ecumenically, and with urban practitioners and educators is important. These activities might include:

- dissemination of information to Bishops, diocesan Link Officers, SROs etc (development of appropriate networks given the need to review the

role of the link officers in a rapidly changing urban scene).

- mechanism for collating and disseminating information and good practice concerning parish and diocesan engagement and strategy
- annual day consultation on urban policy (similar to day on UWP held Feb 2001)
- FITC Conference (recognising the need to review format, purpose etc after 2002 conference)
- *Urban Bulletin* (currently a print publication, produced by an ecumenical consortium)
- capacity to develop collaborative working and research
- liaison with ecumenical partners, voluntary sector partners etc.
- links with urban practitioners, specialists and activists; and those involved in urban education in theological colleges, adult education and FE.
- appropriate international links, incl. Anglican Urban Network.

Programme

An initial five year programme would need to draw on the above and the paper developed by the Urban Bishops' Panel. It is likely that the key activities would be:

- monitoring govt policy, church's engagement etc.
- engagement with government policy through the UWP and neighbourhood renewal processes / identification of areas for collaboration
- development of resources based on the church's practical engagement, best practice, risk taking etc
- monitoring the sustainability and survival of UPA presence and witness
- resourcing through publication, consultations
- research project leading to 20th anniversary of FITC

Resource implications

The proposals assume the merger of funds previously reallocated by the Archbishops' Council of part of the grant for administration made to CUF.

Staffing would need to comprise at least one officer of SEO status (or above), supported by an assistant officer of either secretarial or (H)EO status. There may be a case to explore the use of interns. The strategy group would have a maximum of eight members and meet on three occasions each year.

In addition to staff /members costs there will need to small development fund for research and consultations.

Place in NCIs/management/accountability

In *Discerning the Future* the URU is placed within the Community Affairs cluster of 'The Church's Mission and

Public Affairs'. This places the Unit sensibly in relation to the rural affairs work, and alongside the Committee on Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns. A possibly unifying element is that all three have specific concerns with how the Church's mission and ministry effects and is manifest in the lives of particular communities, and the structural and cultural barriers that need to be overcome for the Church to be an effective witness to the reign of God.

Clarification needs to be established concerning the role of any new policy group in relation to the UBP regarding policy and leadership on urban issues.