PRESENCE
AND
ENGAGEMENT

The churches' task in a multi Faith society

FOREWORD

The seeds of this report have taken almost four years to germinate. They were first planted by Michael Ipgrave, who was then the Inter Faith Adviser to the Board for Mission and Secretary of the Inter Faith Consultative Group. We were aware of the huge changes affecting the interfaith scene in the light of 9.11 and the key role many parish clergy played along with Faith Leaders generally in keeping their communities together. But we were also aware of the demographic changes that were having a profound effect on the ministry and mission of parishes in the inner areas of our major cities. We needed to offer some reflection to the Church on the implications of these changes for the fundamental raison d'etre of parishes serving in these areas. What did it mean for the parish church to be 'there' for all the people, when in some parishes more than 50% of the people belonged to communities of faith other then Christian? As the Church of England we needed to reflect more deeply on our ecclesiology. What in this context, is the distinctive call of God to us as the established Church of the land? Michael's title, Presence and Engagement, is a beautifully succinct way of expressing our dilemma and suggesting an answer. However the more we reflected on the task before us the bigger it became.

Providentially for us, Guy Wilkinson, the former Archdeacon of Bradford, became free and was able to give two and a half days a week to this initiative. In developing the project he brought with him immense IT skills, a facility for statistics, a deep knowledge of the Church and a method of undertaking the work that would enable this initiative to be built on into the future.

We agreed we should start where the action is, at the local level, in the parishes. Our research has identified 900 parishes in 35 dioceses where 10% of their population is of Faith communities other than Christian and 600 where 10% are from any one or 25% from any combination of Faith communities. It is an issue therefore for the whole church. We saw it as important to see what these parishes were doing and how they were responding to the changed context of their ministry and mission.   We wanted to identify where there is good practice and share that across the regions. It is this research, which forms the basis of this report, rather than too much opinion from those who do not inhabit this context. We owe Guy a huge debt of gratitude. Very few people have the experience skills, and imagination to have brought Presence and Engagement to this point in the Church's journey.

Guy was assisted by an advisory group consisting of Simon Bessant, Michael Ipgrave, Dominic Mughal, Denise Poole and Andrew Wingate, and myself with whom Guy shaped the project. We are grateful for their time, commitment and wisdom.

All of us involved in producing this report hope it will assist the Church as a whole, not only those in the Presence and Engagement parishes, to be open, generous, and welcoming to our sisters and brothers from Faith communities other then Christian. Within the providence of God there is nothing to fear. There is only enrichment as the responses to our questionnaire reveal. We hope too everyone will be encouraged by the stories we tell, particularly those living in P&E parishes. There is some marvellous engagement going on. In addition we hope the report will be a resource to those parishes and that Advisers in both Ministry and inter Faith will build on the networks of P&E parishes at diocesan and regional level that have now been established.   But above all we hope that confidence in God will grow as we gain deeper insights into the distinctive contribution the Church of England has to make to these communities of faith with whom we now share our national life and seek to develop with them a shared hope in a common future.

The Rt Revd John Austin, Bishop of Aston
Chair, Inter Faith Consultative Group
Mission and Public Affairs Division
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INTRODUCTION

The Inter Faith Consultative Group has over many years engaged in researching , discussing and seeking to draw the attention of the wider Church to a range of issues arising from our increasingly multi Faith contexts. The present report continues this work. It speaks consciously from a Christian and particularly a Church of England perspective, but it is also offered to people of Faiths other than Christian and to the wider world, as a work of research, reflection and action on matters of importance to us all. We seek in this report to be open and honest about our internal reflections in the belief that transparency and openness are key elements in the development of mutual trust.

The report follows a broad structure which begins with a reflection on the background of the past twenty years or so and an assessment of some of the issues that arise. Without such a perspective, it is hard to appreciate the significance and scale of the developments that have and are continuing to take place.

The second section sets out a series of questions and three themes: identity, confidence and sustainability, which formed the basis of our research and underlie the questionnaire and the consultations.

The report continues with a description of the 'Presence and Engagement' process that we have followed in the past eighteen months. We have sought throughout to root our work in the voice of the local church and we are keen to show how we have attempted to achieve this.

The fourth section illustrates this desire by offering a series of twenty four stories drawn from the questionnaires and Consultations and offered in the words in which they were given. There are other series of stories in the report, notably on the 'shock of change' and in relation to the discussion on conversion.

We then move to a presentation of some of the main contextual elements that have come to our attention: the shock of change, the extent of the multi Faith context, the diversity of the religious communities and issues of neighbourhood separation.

This is followed by an analysis of a series of perceptions, drawn mainly from the questionnaires, of the situation of local churches in multi Faith contexts and by a further section focussing particularly on the perceptions of the clergy.

Section 8 picks up on four issues for the Church which have seemed to us to lie behind many of the perceptions and expressed needs: perceptions about the tasks of the local churches in multi faith contexts; the need for renewed equipping and training, including some comments on the outcome statements of the Hind process; and finally issues in relation to theological and scriptural reflections and how this relates to developing a clearer sense of purpose in the local churches.

Finally we highlight a number of opportunities for the Church, although we hope that these might also be seen as opportunities to many beyond the Church as well.

We have included a glossary of many of the terms we have used in an attempt to bring some clarity to the way in which we have employed them.

We have used many sources for our work, including questionnaires, stories, anecdotes and census data analysis. Naturally these different types of data carry different weight, but we have sought to root our analysis in the perspectives of the local churches in multi Faith areas. The report must be seen therefore as less a systematic overview of all aspects, and more as a presentation of and comment on the work of the local churches.

Our intention therefore is that it will raise many more questions than answers, and that it will cause dioceses, deaneries and parishes to address or re-address the complex but important range of issues raised.

What we heard and found sometimes surprised us, sometimes encouraged us and occasionally disturbed and made us anxious for the future. But overwhelmingly our perception is that where there is faithful and committed engagement, we found more hope than anxiety, more creativity than stagnation and more generosity than resentment. The net effect is a reaffirmation of the way in which the gospel continues as ever to be alive, attractive and compelling when we engage with it in the context of otherness and diversity. Not only are others changed, but just as important, we ourselves are changed, enlarged and energised. The churches in these neighbourhoods are therefore real gifts to the Church which we do well to appreciate.

The mandate for this work lies firstly at the level of the Church and in particular through the Inter Faith Consultative Group, the Mission and Public Affairs Council and the Archbishops' Council. At a second level, its justification lies in the record that it offers of the actual experiences of local churches across the country which seek to be faithful to the work entrusted to them. At a third and perhaps foundational level, the report attempts to reflect upon some aspects of the mission of God as it applies to multi Faith areas. The greater part of the report is concerned with bringing to the attention of the wider Church a range of perceptions, observations and stories from the mainly Anglican churches which minister amongst communities of people of faiths other than Christian.

The report focuses on these churches and their contexts because they are increasing significantly and will extend further; because they represent many issues that are strikingly new for local churches in this country; and because they connect the local and the global in many sharply focussed ways. Furthermore, the situation and experiences of these churches are important learning and teaching opportunities to be offered to the whole Church

We have concentrated particularly in the report on observation and have limited our commentary on them. Our hope is that this approach will enable the local situations to speak for themselves and will encourage many questions to be raised and explored organisationally, experientially and theologically: what do our observations mean for the institutional arrangements of the Church locally, for dioceses and for the Church nationally? What might be the ways in which local churches can be encouraged and affirmed and strengthened in their ministry and mission? And most important, what is God doing through the presence of local churches in the midst of people of other faiths and to what mode of engagement is God leading? The word 'presence 'points to our incarnational theology and the word 'engagement' to our pentecostal theology, asking the question: "in what ways is the Spirit calling churches and individuals to engage with the new diversities?"

At the end of the report we speak of "opportunities" for the Church where we had initially thought to use the word "challenges". It is true that God challenges us to move out from self containment and self contentment, as God did uniquely in Jesus. But the word could be taken to imply a confrontational or defensive perspective and behind that, to imply that otherness is seen essentially as threat rather than opportunity. We have therefore chosen to think in terms of opportunity as providing the proper word for an incarnational and pentecostal approach. Opportunity for what? Opportunity to learn more about other human beings around us, especially those sincerely engaged in seeking God. Opportunity to present our Christian understandings of God by the lives we live and the words we speak. Opportunity to contribute to the common good and above all, opportunity to learn more about trusting in God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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CONTENTS

1. REFLECTIONS ON PRESENCE AND ENGAGEMENT

Locality and context

1. To speak of Presence and Engagement is to speak of locality and context. We exist always in relation to others around us who impact upon us and condition the context in which we live and work and have our being. Human beings are always present somewhere, in some relationship with place and therefore with others who occupy the same spaces, whether at work, residentially or in leisure.

2. Presence can be largely passive, a simple acceptance that this is where we are, without any meaningful recognition of the relationship between our presence, the presence of others and the real presence of Christ who seeks constantly to bring human beings into relationship with each other in love. But the Spirit of God is constantly seeking to move us on from the fact of presence to the action of engagement – engagement as a public sign of our commitment to the wellbeing of the world and to the discovery of the Kingdom in the midst of the places where we are present.

3. To be present and engaged is to be incarnated, to be present in particular time and space, with the possibility of speaking particular words and taking a range of actions. Presence as incarnation is a gift of God, full of the possibility of abundant life; that is the purpose of incarnation – 'I have come that you might have life and have it abundantly' (1).

The mission of God

4. To speak of presence and engagement in general is therefore to speak of the part that Christian people understand themselves to play in the mission of God to which all human plans and projects are subordinate. This part is played out in a thousand different contexts across the country and the globe – in as many contexts as there are people in community. The Church has a vital part to play in the mission of God as the body of Christ in the world. But the mission of God is not dependent on the Church, nor is it restricted to its institutions. The Spirit blows where it wills and inspires whom it wills and we cannot pretend to understand where it comes from or where it goes to. But we should be able to recognise the fruits of the Spirit in the world where we see them, whether flourishing or tentatively struggling to appear above the undergrowth. Wherever we find love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control, there we may securely know that God is at work. Our task then is to move out from the places where we are present both bearing fruits and ready to find more in our engagement with others. To find the fruits of the Spirit in others, however unexpectedly, and to respond gladly as if we hear a gentle calling of our name, is to recognise Christ in others and to find a resurrection moment full of new possibilities.

The changing contexts of presence

5. The contexts within which the local church has been present have changed dramatically in the past 150 years physically and culturally through the urban and industrial revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They have continued to change, perhaps more rapidly than ever, with the technological and communications revolutions of the past quarter century leading to profound changes in the ways in which people relate to each other in their social existence.

6. There has been a vast reshaping of rural communities in response to changes in agriculture and to the increasing perception of the countryside as the place of leisure for the urban and suburban communities. And there has been a no less substantial reshaping of the urban environment under the impacts of globalisation, increasing fluidity in social relationships, rising prosperity for many and rising educational, material and spiritual poverty for many others. These developments have led to a fragmented urban society of a thousand 'communities' defined by age, wellbeing, religion, ethnicity and cultural origins and much more besides.

The presence of other Faith communities

7. A particular feature of the changing, mainly urban context, and the one with which this report is concerned, has been the development of substantial communities of people originating in other

parts of the world. These are communities which identify themselves strongly with one of the world religions, particularly Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism, and have taken their place along with existing long established non Christian Faiths such as Judaism. Worldwide Christianity has also been strongly represented, with substantial communities early on from the Caribbean and more recently from West Africa, the Philippines and the subcontinent amongst many others.

8. In many cities from the 1970s, neighbourhoods developed in which people of these communities gathered together and developed their communal institutions and social relationships. In doing so many made a very substantial contribution to the renewal of an already decaying inner urban infrastructure, to commercial life, to the strength of the National Health Service and in general to the provision of a greatly increased social capital. The contribution of the Gujerati community in Leicester typifies this contribution but there are endless further examples. For other communities settlement has involved gathering in communities – a tendency which is found well beyond the minority Faith communities, to create a degree of security and reassurance. This in turn has sometimes developed into a substantially self contained way of life often significantly disconnected from the mainstream of society. These communities have grown by continuing immigration and by increase in family size. Their neighbourhoods have become more extensive by expansion and by the largely negative response of the pre-existing communities who have to a substantial degree separated themselves by movement outwards to the suburbs and beyond. There are many strands to these developments which remain dynamic and fluid: the arrival of substantial new refugee and asylum seeking communities; widely differing rates of educational and material development between communities; substantially unsettling impacts of western culture on gender roles, on religious observance and on cultural norms.

Diversity and cohesion

9. The development of this diverse 'multicultural' society has been both welcomed and feared. Since the 2001 disturbances in the Northern towns there has been an increasing concern for 'cohesion'. Cohesion is seen as the glue which might bind this diversity together and create a commonly accepted framework of citizenship cutting across the many and varied strands of Faiths and belief, ethnicity and culture (2).

The public face of Faith

10. Through this period, and significantly related to the growing presence of other Faith communities, there has been a quite remarkable and sustained growth in the place of 'Faith' in public policy and discourse. This has been encouraged notably by government particularly in relation to urban regeneration and neighbourhood renewal policies (3). These have increasingly recognised and encouraged the potential role of religious communities and a whole public policy language in relation to 'Faith communities' has developed. In the academic world there has been a burgeoning of religious and inter religious studies (4); there continues a lively discourse about the impact of Faith communities on the formation of social capital ; over 200 inter Faith forums and councils have come into being (5); social analysis has become increasingly religiously literate and able to separate religion, culture and race; and in departments of the State specialist units such as the Inner Cities Religious Council and the Cohesion and Faiths Unit have been formed.

The shadow of September 11th

11. Across all these developments and conditioning many of them in the public mind, especially in relation to the Muslim communities, lies the shadow of September 11th 2001 and its aftermath. The military actions in Afghanistan and Iraq and the consequential worldwide impact of security concerns and fears have added a further layer of anxiety. These are the deep dark waters of fear of the other which lie beneath very many of the policies and activities of individuals, communities and public authorities at the present time, and which mould the perceptions and responses of so many.

The Church's response

12. In relation particularly to the development of other Faith communities, but also to urban issues more generally, there have been many imaginative and creative responses by the Church of

England in a multiplicity of ways at local, diocesan, national and international levels. The publication of 'Faith in the City' (6) in 1985, was key to a new phase. Although it did not give much explicit attention to the place and role of other Faith communities, it nevertheless gave impetus through the subsequent formation of the Inner Cities Religious Council and through the work of the Church Urban Fund, to a rapidly growing range of initiatives and responses to changing local circumstances. A number of individuals worked tirelessly through the 1980s and 1990s to promote inter Faith understanding and to ensure that the Church of England nationally and through the dioceses was able and willing to play a generous and responsible role.

13. There have been a number of particularly significant responses at the national level by the Church of England to the development of relationships between Faith communities in the past twenty years. Amongst the most noteworthy are these:

   ▪ Three debates in General Synod
      ○ In 1984 on:' Towards a theology of inter Faith dialogue' (7)
      ○ In 1992 on 'inter Faith' worship (8)
      ○ In 2001 on a Private Member's motion: 'Christian witness in a plural society' (9).

   ▪ The Lambeth Conference which in 1988 and 1998 addressed itself to inter Faith issues.

   ▪ The publication in 1995 by the Doctrine Commission of 'The Mystery of Salvation', with its foundational chapter on 'Christ and world Faiths' (10).

   ▪ The work of successive Archbishops of Canterbury in leading the development of dialogue internationally, including latterly the 'Building Bridges' series of meetings of Christian and Muslim scholars and the links developed with Al Azhar.

   ▪ The establishing of a network of Inter Faith Advisers in each diocese and the work of successive national Inter Faith Relations Advisers.

   ▪ The Church's strong support signified by its Episcopal co-Chairmanship, alongside that of other Faith communities, for the development of the Inter Faith Network UK.

   ▪ Core involvement in national bilateral Councils and Forums:
      ○ The Council for Christians and Jews.
      ○ Work towards the formation of the Christian Muslim Forum in England.

14. These responses have often been developed in partnership with the national ecumenical bodies, notably the Committee on Relations with People of other Faiths (CROPOF) and its successor the Churches Commission on inter Faith Relations (CCIFR). Other Christian churches have also seen major developments, for example with the publication of Nostra Aetate by the Second Vatican Council in 1965, the later Assisi gatherings and the work of the World Council of Churches, as particular landmarks.

15. There has also been a steady flow of scholarly writing from Anglican sources on inter Faith relations. Through a variety of colleges and academic institutions the Church of England and other Churches and Christian organisations have played a significant role in the equipping of a generation of clergy and lay leaders. The Church Mission Society through Crowther Hall, the Anglican and Methodist United College of the Ascension, the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian Muslim Relations and the Centre for the Study of Asian Religions at Birmingham University, the London School of Theology's Centre for the Study of Islam, Heythrop College and the Centre in Cambridge are prominent examples. Connecting the Churches of the Anglican Communion in these matters has been the important work of the Network for Inter Faith Concerns (NIFCON). Through the work and witness of these and other bodies, individuals and churches in this country and across the world have been trained and equipped.

16. All of this and much more has been of importance in developing a stable degree of confidence in the Church of England by other Faith communities. This confidence has been strengthened by a range of local and diocesan actions in support of other Faith communities at times of stress and tension and in relation to particular issues of concern. Such issues have included for example, the presence in communities of racist or other extremist organisations, issues of immigration and asylum, the disturbances in the northern towns and the consequences of the military action in Iraq.

The struggle for continued presence
17. If there has been a cost to this, it has been a sense in local parish churches in multi Faith contexts that their continuing witness, often in the most difficult of circumstances, has not always seemed to be at centre stage in the counsels of the church. The growth of other Faith communities in inner urban areas, combined with other deeper changes in the Church of England and in society generally, has led to a severe impact on the life of parishes in the inner urban areas of most major cities. The Church has sometimes seemed very ready to address important issues of regeneration and renewal as an essential component of local mission and ministry, but more reluctant or nervous to address issues arising from the specifics of local multi Faith contexts. The response of dioceses and the Church nationally to the specific issues and needs of parishes in relation to the other Faith communities amongst whom they live, seems sometimes to have been less than strategic and subsumed into other agendas.

18. Nevertheless, the Church of England has continued to understand itself to be called to be present corporately in all the localities of the country. At the heart of this self understanding is the parish church, a Christian community called to be present and to engage actively with all who live in the neighbourhood irrespective of their Faith or none. This comprehensive presence and duty of engagement with all via the shared charge for the 'cure of souls', has continued to be a foundational distinction of the Church of England and an underpinning of its relationship with the State. The obligation to engage with all and sundry in a neighbourhood, whether through the occasional offices, through pastoral care or by promotion with others of the common good, has been a constant source of re-call out of mere presence towards renewed engagement and rediscovery of the real presence of Christ amongst those who seem to be 'other' to the churches. Maintaining this understanding where a significant proportion of parishioners are of other Faiths is a real challenge and a real opportunity.

19. The struggle to be faithful through the local church to a comprehensive presence and duty of care to all within the parish has been one of the key struggles of the past twenty five years and remains the subject of intense debate today. The shortage of the resources needed, the rapidly changing patterns of settlement, the inappropriateness of much of the building stock and the reducing connectedness of the wider culture to its Christian foundations, all have given rise to questions about the desirability and the feasibility of maintaining a universal geographic presence.

20. The impact of the above issues, and many others, on patterns of religious belief and practice form an important part of the background to the Church's current understanding of its mission. The recent emphasis on 'mission shaped church' and 'fresh expressions' is part of the outworking of this analysis for our time and reflects particularly the need to address the aspects of people's lives which are increasingly not related primarily to a particular locality, but to networks and communities of interest. This is important and is a reminder that presence and engagement is not to be thought of as uniquely to do with geographic locality or neighbourhood and that the Church is right to pay real attention to the post modern ways of being church in the 'network society'. All contexts require authentic presence and an engagement which is in relation to the context, whether geographical, relational or virtual. It has however been observed that recent discussion of mission in the Church of England has seemed to avoid addressing directly issues of mission in other Faith contexts.

Neighbourhood based presence and engagement

21. Presence and engagement is therefore at heart a general means of speaking about Christian life and witness, the incarnated, rooted living out of the Christian life in the midst of and alongside the 'other' in any context, geographic or not.

22. It is also possible to speak of presence and engagement in a more specific way, in relation to a geographic neighbourhood, where simply being present is a necessary first step, since without presence there can be no authentic engagement. This is particularly the case if there is to be engagement with what are often intensely localised expressions of other Faith communities. Engagement from outside alone can lead to lack of understanding and empathy and to mistrust. In an increasingly fragmented and fluid society, a stable presence is a powerful counter cultural symbol of the unchanging love of God for humanity. Continued presence in a physical neighbourhood can be a particularly powerful sign with an undiminished potential to be an authentic expression of what it is to engage with otherness from in the midst.

23. In this report therefore, presence and engagement is used primarily to speak of presence in locality and engagement with otherness in that locality. This is not to deny the universality of the concept, but it is to speak of its specific application in a, perhaps the, primary context of most people's lives. However fragmented our lives, divided between residence, work and leisure; however globalised our understandings of time and space; and however virtual and instant are our methods of communication, it remains the case that most people live in a dwelling, walk out of the dwelling each day into a street, encounter other people living in dwellings in the same street or block of flats and have some converse with them, however desultory, arising from living in the same physical space. Most people are aware of neighbourhood in however restricted a sense. It is not without significance that the thrust of much recent public policy has been neighbourhood and local area based. This seeks to respond to the understanding that it is in a sense of local ownership of and responsibility for an area that hope for the future of many urban and other areas lies. It would be ironic if at a time when there is a growing acceptance of the significance of the local geographic community as a counter to the all pervasive globalising and centralising pressures, the church should move away from its historic commitment to people in a place.

24. Whilst accepting the significance and importance of networks and communities of interest, there should be caution about diluting the core understanding of the Church of England as a collection of local geographically defined parish churches held together in dioceses through the ministry of the bishop with a duty of care to all. Of course the historic and inherited patterns and cultures need constant and sometimes profound development and change and 'fresh expressions' should have application to geographic parish based churches as much as to non - geographic. But the sense of locality enshrined in congregations meeting for worship in a known and public set of buildings, is the primary asset of the Church of England which provides the basis of its long term credibility. It is also a primary asset in relation to the work of the Church as other Faith communities alongside us traverse what will no doubt be a long and difficult period of transition.

Diversity and separation

25. There are further, more specific reasons for maintaining a local geographic presence. These are that as our population becomes more diverse, at the same time it is becoming more separated. Those who have a wider perspective and who can afford to choose, those who occupy multiple locations and operate in cyber space – they are able to move out and to choose to be alongside those who are like them so that the other in their lives can be reduced to a minimum. This is the widespread phenomenon of 'middle class flight', of gated communities, of second homes and of multiple car ownership.

26. Those who have less, those who are less easily accepted by the majority, those who hold together for cultural, religious or other reasons stay where they are, are more dependent for better or worse upon neighbours. These are those for whom the quality of the local physical and social environment is the all encompassing reality of their lives. Although they may not have the same

level of choice they have nevertheless also a desire to live alongside those who are alike, those who are not other, who speak the same language, have the same culture, the same Faith.

27. These pressures are creating strong drives towards sifting and separation. Street by street, locality by locality, the segregation of our society is increasing, not only in relation to other Faith communities, but certainly significantly in their case. It is the Church, present in every location, living amongst and with a care for all, which can if it wishes, be the truly diverse body, holding hands with the multiplicity of communities in its neighbourhood. By contrast, communities of interest and the network society more generally can tend to encourage like to associate with like and to separate other from other. Fundamental Trinitarian theology by contrast speaks of the holding together of likeness and otherness.

28. If being present is a necessary condition for engagement, it is certainly not sufficient. The increasing fluidity and change in the physical and social environment and the loss of familiar faces and landmarks, can lead to powerful pressures towards holding fast to whatever remains of what was, a huddling together and a reinforcement of an inward looking attitude. In a determination faithfully to remain present, local churches can become increasingly an isolated presence, grimly hanging on, but largely unrelated to the surrounding context from which they become increasingly estranged. Churches can be present without being engaged and it requires a constant commitment to move on from being present to also being engaged. Of course there are many churches who have broken out from this cycle and there is much to be learned from the ways in which they have achieved this.

Presence and Engagement and the public language of Faith
29. It is from these general perspectives and reflections that what we have chosen to refer to as "Presence and Engagement" has arisen. It is a conscious attempt to reposition discussion in the Church about its ministry and mission in the context of significant communities of people of different Faiths in this country. We have chosen to enter the discussion via the realm of the experience of the local church rather than via any of the many other possible doorways, because some of these risk becoming stale and unfruitful at best, and at worst risk giving rise to a range of new anxieties.

30. There are many more frequently used entry points: of inter Faith relations and dialogue – the commonalities and the differences in belief and practice; from the perspective of our common humanity across religious traditions; from a salvation classification – universal, inclusive, or exclusive; from a concern with public policies on diversity and cohesion; from human rights and equalities concerns; or from an academic interest in the contribution of Faith to social capital.

31. Each of these, and many more, are interesting, important and relevant. They have significant bearing on the core questions of how we live together in community across the range of different Faiths and values. But our perspective in this report is to listen to the voices of the local churches which are present and engaged in the contexts of multi Faith neighbourhoods, to consider their perspectives and needs and offer them to the Church nationally.

32. A further factor has been the development of a language of 'interfaith' or 'Inter Faith', of 'Faith communities', 'other Faiths', 'Faith schools' and even the 'Faith sector', which has developed rapidly and is used very extensively in the public sector, the media and increasingly in day to day usage. No doubt this is a positive reflection of the generally greater awareness of the existence and role of religions in society, but as with all such languages, it serves particular purposes and encourages particular perspectives. There are also risks in overworking some words and phrases in a wider range of uses than they can be expected to bear. The word 'belief' for example, is increasingly being reserved to refer to non-theistic or philosophic systems in counterpoint to 'Faith' as a religious system. In the discussions on legislation against discrimination a distinction in this sense is made between 'Faith' and 'Belief'.

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33. Of course as the place of religions and religious communities has been increasingly accepted by public authorities, their need to consult on a range of policy issues has encouraged the development of a common language and phraseology. But 'Faith' language can tend towards commonalities and away from difference and whilst this may not always be a bad thing, it can lead to a reduced religious literacy and an inappropriate tendency to hold together concepts, actions and groups which are not alike. Such language in the mouths of professionals can become divorced from the language actually used of themselves by churches, mosque communities and others. Furthermore, there are occasions when the language of 'Faith communities' can come to be used or perceived to be used as code for a variety of other issues, including minority ethnic communities and national security considerations.

34. The increasing use of 'inter Faith' within the Church as a generic term for almost anything related to the 'Faith sector', can also be problematic. It can fail to be clear for example about means and ends and to carry the implication that primary interest lies in relating to 'other Faith' communities as an end in itself. In turn this can lead to the perception that this is a matter for experts and specialists in inter Faith or worse to an antagonism based on a sense that 'they' are considered to be more important than 'we' are.

35. For these reasons we have chosen to use the language of 'Presence' and 'Engagement', considering it to be more appropriate for these purposes than the language of 'inter Faith'. The phrase carries a depth of rooted Christian meaning and resonance: 'presence' with its undertones of Christ's real presence with us, incarnationally and eucharistically; and 'engagement' with its hints of close encounter between human beings and with God – encounter which can be both loving and conflictual. The phrase can include 'dialogue' without excluding witness and evangelism; it speaks clearly of the primary purpose of the local church and it speaks of individuals as well as of communities. Of course multi Faith contexts are only one of the whole range of local contexts, and 'presence and engagement' is a phrase relevant to all. But we have used it here particularly to emphasise the perspective of the local Church in multi Faith contexts.

36. We have chosen this perspective for a number of reasons:

   - First, because we believe that the local church in a multi Faith context has very much to offer to the world, locally and nationally from its now extensive experience.

   - Secondly, because it is at the local level that the stable foundations of a peaceful society of Faiths will be constructed.

   - Thirdly, because the multi Faith context is now the real context in which a substantial and increasing number of parishes and proportion of the population actually live.

   - Fourthly, because there are major implications for those parishes for which this is not their context.

   - Fifthly, because there are now real risks that the Church will retreat from maintaining its presence in these contexts under the multiple pressures of reduced resourcing, a loss of an inclusive parish perspective in favour of a membership approach; and a retreat from true engagement with the other at least from the perspective of presence in the midst.

   - Finally, because the task of the local church is to reflect in the daily life of the people in streets and houses, the offices and shops, the schools and pubs, the love of God for all through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ – and no less amongst people of other Faiths than amongst anyone else.

2. THE QUESTIONS BEING ASKED BY THE LOCAL CHURCH

37.   What are the questions with which local churches in multi Faith neighbourhoods wrestle? We began in the early stages of discussion on the Presence and Engagement project by seeking to identify some of these as a means of framing our approach to the local church. In doing so we identified twenty which seemed to us important to address in developing our enquiry and to demonstrate the frame of reference within which we have sought to understand the context of the local church. We certainly do not claim to have provided systematic answers to these. Rather, we hope to accomplish four things:

- To raise the profile of these important issues locally, in the dioceses and nationally.

- To affirm the significance for the whole Church of the ministry of local churches in multi Faith contexts.

- To raise questions which need to be considered together by the Church.

- To offer some pointers to ways in which the local church can be sustained in its presence and encouraged in its engagement.

Twenty questions

We hope that the twenty questions that we identified will not only indicate our perspective, but will be a help in discussions locally in working towards relevant strategies and policies.

38.   Ecclesiology

(i)   What self-understanding of the local Christian church informs an engaged presence as a minority among people of other Faiths?

(ii)   How do Anglicans of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds relate to the religious diversity of the parishes in which they live and worship?

(iii)   How do churches minister to people affected by rapid social change while engaging positively with the new contexts which such changes bring?

(iv)   How do Anglicans work positively and creatively with Christians of other traditions in the local multi Faith context?

39.   Mission

(v)   How do Christians share the good news of Jesus Christ sensitively and effectively with their neighbours of other Faiths?

(vi)   In what ways do the Bible and Christian teaching give guidance for local churches seeking to engage with their multi Faith local societies?

(vii)   What expectations of church growth are realistic in parishes where the majority of people identify themselves as belonging to other religions?

(viii)   What is the purpose of establishing dialogue locally with people of other Faiths, and what enables this to happen?

40.   Resources

(ix)   How does the parish as a worshipping congregation relate to the parish as a base for community involvement?

(x)   What are the challenges and opportunities faced by parish clergy and other ministers in relating to majorities of other Faiths?

(xi)   How far are resources pooled ecumenically to maintain a lively Christian presence among people of other Faiths?

(xii)   Are the current buildings the most appropriate to enable Christian engagement with local communities – and if so, how are they best used?

(xiii)   What part does a local church's involvement with church or county schools play in its engagement with people of other Faiths?

41.   Regeneration

(xiv)   How do local churches work with people in other Faith communities in partnerships for the flourishing of their neighbourhoods and gain knowledge and understanding of the sociological and demographic realities of their changing multi Faith neighbourhoods?

(xv)   What practical steps help parish churches to build up a sense of cohesion in religiously multiple areas?

42.   The wider Church

(xvi)   What reshaping of ecclesiastical structures and processes can help to enable actively engaged Christian presence in multi Faith areas?

(xvii)   How can dioceses and parishes best use scarce resources (especially people and finance) to sustain local Christian presence and engagement in multi Faith areas?

(xviii) How can the Church train and equip people with the right skills and capacities for ministry in multi Faith parishes?

(xix)   How can locally based engagement with other Faith communities form a part of overall strategy within dioceses and the Church of England?

(xx)   How can the experiences and insights of churches in multi Faith parishes be shared more widely in the Church?

Identity, confidence, and sustainability
43.   Behind these questions, and summing up the core anxieties that in one way or another face most local churches, are three cross cutting themes. Local churches and dioceses will do well to pay attention to these themes in developing their mission and ministry.

The <u>identity</u> of Christians as a presence among people of other Faiths.
44.   Identity is an important component in most people's self perception: 'who am I in relation to the other?' To be known individually by name is a core assurance that we receive from God. For Christian communities corporate identity is also important and is related in the presence of other religions to questions about the unique identity of the gospel and the specific claims of Jesus Christ. Where churches have become a religious minority, a proper sense of Christian identity becomes particularly significant and may need to be carefully distinguished from cultural, ethnic and other narrower identities. Identity is not a static or single layered reality; our self understanding is something that grows and deepens layer by layer as we expose ourselves to new people and situations. In this sense to engage with people and communities of other Faiths than our own, is to enrich our identity not to diminish it. Identity is also related to purpose – we are people who seek to do the will of God, we are people of the Way and our identity is bound up with Christ not with our own selves. Christian identity lies not in seeking to 'own' God, but in being dependent upon God.

The building up of <u>confidence</u> for their engagement with local communities.
45.   Rapid change in the surrounding context has been the norm for most parishes which are now in or

moving towards a minority Faith position in the neighbourhood. In such situations anxiety and loss of confidence can sap the ability of a congregation to remain people of outgoing hope and hospitality and turn them inwards. True confidence lies not in numbers or in power but in the way of incarnation, the Cross and resurrection. The loss of status and position can be crucifying, but can also be the means for local churches to lead people back to a confidence in God rather than in inherited structures and ways of doing things.

The <u>sustainability</u> of an engaged Christian presence.

46.   The ability of many local churches to remain sustainable in financial and material senses as they move to minority or even remnant status often appears to be in doubt, and all the more so as the Church increasingly emphasises mission, growth and viability. What are the ways in which churches can be adventurous and enterprising in adapting their structures and ways of being church in the new situation; and how can the wider church continue to express its sense of the significance of continued presence in multi Faith areas? Even more important are the issues of spiritual and theological sustainability. What are the sources which sustain churches spiritually in such situations?

47.   Throughout the Presence and Engagement process we have kept these themes in the forefront of our thinking and have found them to have been helpful in offering a framework for local churches.

3. THE PRESENCE AND ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

48. The Presence and Engagement process has been the most comprehensive national survey of the situation of Anglican churches in multi Faith contexts that has been undertaken to date. It has been national, looking at the situation across all parishes and dioceses in England; it has worked directly with and through the local churches on a regional basis; it has produced information which will serve as a basis for continuing improvements in addressing the variety of issues that have been raised

National Steering Group

49. The National Steering Group was formed under the aegis of the Inter Faith Consultative Group of the Mission and Public Affairs Council of the Archbishops' Council. Its membership was: The Rt Revd John Austin, The Revd Simon Bessant, Canon Michael Ipgrave, Mr Dominic Mughal, The Revd Denise Poole, Canon Andrew Wingate, The Revd Guy Wilkinson. Initially the Group was serviced by Michael Ipgrave as Inter Faith Relations Adviser and subsequent to his appointment as Archdeacon of Southwark in November 2004, by The Revd Guy Wilkinson. The Group was assisted by the Revd Professor Tim Gorringe as Theological Adviser.

Regional Steering Groups

50. A central element in the process has been its rooting in the local and regional churches and to this end six regional Steering Groups were formed in: East Midlands (Leicester, Derby and Southwell dioceses); Lancashire (Blackburn diocese); Greater London (Chelmsford, London and Southwark dioceses); West Yorkshire (Bradford, Ripon & Leeds and Wakefield dioceses); Manchester (Manchester diocese); Birmingham (Birmingham diocese).

51. Each regional group consisted of up to ten members drawn mainly from clergy but including lay 'practitioners' in local churches. Other local Christian churches were included wherever possible. Each steering group met on several occasions and contributed very substantially to the main task of organising a regional consultation. The level of commitment was remarkable. The regional groups provided an important framework:
    - Raising the profile of Presence & Engagement issues across the dioceses
    - Discussing a variety of related issues at local level
    - Bringing together individuals, churches, experts across several dioceses particularly across Greater London
    - Establishing a potential framework for future regional and local networks.

Consultations

52. Six regional consultations have been held, with a seventh Consultation for members of Regional steering groups. The Consultations were notable for the interest they raised, the levels of participation and the commitment of the Steering Groups to their organisation. In total some 250 people, mainly but not exclusively Anglican clergy, attended the consultations with participation both in Steering Groups and in Consultations by members of other Christian churches. A common format was used with variations across all Consultations.This included a focus on local situations and the stories arising from them; the three themes of identity, confidence and sustainability and scriptural and theological reflection. These were drawn together with time for prayer and worship.

53. The Greater London Consultation was greatly assisted by Dr Anne Richards, Mission and Theology Adviser to the Archbishops' Council. Our experience of working with parishes in London, and the nature of the Greater London consultation, was to find it significantly different from all other areas and Consultations. Partly this is due to the sheer size and diversity of the Faith communities of London, including of the Christian communities and it is noteworthy for example that half of the Muslim population lives in London. The existence of three dioceses and nine Episcopal areas between them, makes for additional complexity and the differing approaches to the appointment of inter faith relations Advisers adds to this. For these and other reasons, it was rather more difficult to find a comprehensive approach to inter Faith issues than in other cities.

The Consultation was however, particularly stimulating, not least because it brought together a wide range of practitioners who had not previously met.

54. Meeting together across different parishes, dioceses and denominations was for many participants a new experience and one which was widely appreciated, particularly given the commonality of situations and the possibility of sharing ideas and initiatives. It was notable that there was a real sense of a community of interest and of common purpose which transcended more traditional lines of churchmanship or location. We have tried to capture something of the discussions and feelings in these Consultations, but their real value lies in the ideas shared, the friendships made and the mutual encouragements received. The Consultations offer a model which can usefully be employed across the country, drawing together both those who are practitioners in multi Faith contexts and those in areas alongside or at a distance from them. It is in sharing and discussion that fears are dispelled and new possibilities brought into being.

Faith to Faith Network
55. An additional group and Consultation was arranged jointly with the Faith to Faith Network in Birmingham and proved to be a most important means of drawing together some twenty Christian organisations specialising in ministry and mission amongst people of other Faiths. The Network draws together a wide range of mainly evangelical Christian organisations specialising in mission and ministry amongst people of other faiths and cultures. This proved to be a most encouraging occasion both in enabling members of the Network to learn more of each other's work and their complementarity, and also to demonstrate very clearly a most important resource which is not widely drawn on by the wider institutional Church.

Census data analysis
56. A key element in the project has been the parish based analysis of the 2001 census data drawn from the question on religious identity. This analysis enabled the identification of all parishes in relation to their populations of other Faith communities. This in turn enabled two particular groups of parishes to be identified: those with more than 10% of their parish population as members of any other Faiths (863 parishes); and a smaller group of parishes to whom the questionnaire was sent, with either 10% of the population of any one other Faith or more than 25% of any combination of other Faiths (556 parishes). These are in the context of a total of 13,000 parishes in England. Caution is of course needed in interpreting the Census data, not least in relation to the meaning of the 'Christian' identity of 72% of the population. In addition there may well have been some undercounting for the Jewish community. The discovery of a substantial community of Jedi knights was also a notable achievement of the Census. Despite these factors, the Census is of real value

57. It is clear that the data will have a continuing value in providing a unique neighbourhood based analysis across the whole country and in providing data to inform diocesan and national policies on pastoral reorganization and training for example. It has been noteworthy that relatively few dioceses seem to have made systematic use of the software and data that they now have available to them.

Parish Questionnaire
58. An extensive questionnaire was prepared in consultation with Regional Steering Groups and with the statistics department at Church House, and sent to the group of 563 parishes with a return rate of about 50%. The main benefits of the questionnaire have been to obtain a significant sample on a cross-diocesan basis of clergy and lay perceptions; contact with a large number of parish clergy with the possibility of continuing relationships; and the provision of a basis for further investigation, analysis and policy formation.

59. The Presence and Engagement research has gathered a mass of information of widely differing kinds on very many aspects of the life and witness of the churches in the context of other Faith communities. This includes:
   ▪ Statistical data drawn from the 2001 census and presented in a variety of different ways

- Sample data from the questionnaire to parishes
- Stories from a variety of life situations
- Opinions, perceptions, thoughts and observations from the participants in the Consultations
- Theological reflections both formally written and informally expressed
- A wide variety of resources – people, organisations, publications, research materials
- Contact with a vast array of experience and wisdom in the remarkable people whose lives are given to these contexts.

60. Each of these types of material must be treated on the merits of its particular origin and given significance accordingly. It is not possible to present all this information systematically in a report of this kind but we hope that it represents something of what we have heard from across the churches of England. Some of the data is available in other formats for those who want it, but the Presence and Engagement process indicates clearly a need for a means to draw together, hold and make available the information that will enable the Church and its churches to make sense of their experience and assist them in their future presence and engagement.

4. WHAT IT FEELS LIKE ON THE GROUND – THE STORIES OF ENCOUNTER

61. From this process have come an immense number and variety of stories which between them speak of the complexity, commitment, disillusion, hope, faithfulness and creativity of the life of ordinary Christians engaged in the business of presence and engagement in multi Faith parishes. We considered it important for local churches to speak for themselves through these stories and we have deliberately included many of them in this section without comment at this stage.

62. Such stories need sharing and exchanging because they represent some part of truth and reality and have the capacity to cause change in the hearts and minds of those who hear or read them – as they have in the hearts and minds of those who first experienced them. They are of course, untidy, contradictory and incomplete, as may be expected of all collections of true stories. But they have in common the realities of a new range of encounters and exchanges of people of faith with each other in the streets, shops and workplaces of our communities. This is the way it is now in very many parishes and will become so in many more. We will do well to listen to the stories and to respond to them wherever we live and work.

63. The stories illustrate the range of places and situations of encounter with people of other Faiths that are now a normal part of parish life – the wider world of other Faiths has arrived on our doorstep and Muslims, Sikhs and Hindu people are now parishioners with the happy consequence that the universal is now more than ever encompassed within the local parish.

1. Increasingly local schools (not just the church school) are asking for visits to church as part of the curriculum work. This I am happy to do and enjoy it enormously. The majority of pupils are Muslim.

    Birmingham

2. A sea of boys from local mainly Muslim High school on a church visit. In a later 'thank you' letter, one said: "I didn't want to go to a Christian church. I found the visit very interesting. I now know that you believe in God too"

    Bradford

3. The vicar was refused permission to take assembly at the community school because he was told that Muslims are trying to proselytise and would not be able to be excluded if the vicar was allowed to take assemblies.

    Bradford

4. On our Good Friday March, a Sikh man of middle age placed his hand on the large wooden cross that we carry and walked with us for approximately 300 yards. There is a genuine respect here for the church because of our many links with the community.   *Chelmsford*

5. The Hindu group who provide the Christmas Day dinner for elderly white people. The Islamic group who are volunteering to give homework support in Maths, Science and English to our local schools. The local children visiting our churches and showing great interest in what we do and why.   *London*

6. The Gurdwara has replaced the Church as the Established Church. It is they who have the processions and organise the street parties and they are superb. Our church used to fulfil this role 50 years ago. We are utterly irrelevant to their life – they would be ten times our size – but each Faith is well disposed to the other   *Birmingham*

7. The deceased ,'Mabel-', was a woman in her eighties, twice widowed, without children. Mabel had no close relatives living nearby (her only surviving sister lived hundreds of miles away). I did not know her; there was no history of church-going and no contacts with the church: Mabel was a 'nominal' Christian. The person arranging Mabel's funeral was her neighbour. She had cared for Mabel for many years, had welcomed Mabel into her home most days to share the life of her family, had done her shopping and washing and cleaning, and had visited her at least once a day over the last two years that Mabel spent in the local Nursing Home. This lady is a devout Sikh. Her husband, daughters and son are devout Sikhs. Mabel had asked her to arrange her funeral, and had left her instructions about the hymns and some of the other arrangements. The service was to be at the local Crematorium. In planning the Service with the Sikh neighbour I explained the pattern and some of the meaning of the funeral service. She had been in the Girls Brigade of a local church and knew something of Christianity. I also learnt something about the Sikh funeral rituals from her, particularly as she had lost her sister and parents-in-law quite recently. She shared some of her pain in bereavement, and her Faith in eternal life with God. She was a delightful person, very fond of Mabel, and a person of deep spirituality. When it came to the funeral, there were very few people attending - one could see that without her and her family, Mabel would have led a very bleak existence indeed. The Sikh family seemed very prayerful and very sorrowful. In conducting the Service I found my understanding of some of the funeral prayers transformed, given the profound and gracious service and love which the neighbour and her family had shown to Mabel. I began to see Christ as a universal Saviour in a 'bigger', more inclusive way: one who embraces all persons in the mystery of his redemption and the peace of his eternal kingdom.
                                                                 Birmingham

8. We sold our old church hall to our Muslim friends. They have now built a mosque and we therefore have a very good working relationship .
                                                                 Chelmsford

9. Not a story - just an explanatory comment: People from the major Faith traditions regularly come to our church/community centre for all sorts of purposes. We lack the time or the personnel to initiate regular contacts/meetings with the other Faith traditions but relations are cordial. *Coventry*

10. When I as curate went to take a funeral for the son of an old lady who had lived all her life in one street and now had no family left, I asked her who cared for her now. She answered that her neighbours, a young couple with a baby, had her for Sunday lunch and brought meals around. He had taken her to register the death and had driven her to and from hospital to visit her son as he was dying. 'They're Muslims, by the way, but it's the heart that counts isn't it?' He attended the Christian funeral. *Gloucester*

11. This is a small village of 700 people but we host the Ahmedi International community centre visited by fully 25,000 visitors attending their jalsa which puts a great strain on infrastructure. *Guildford*

12. Our neighbours are changing again. Ours is a large and complex parish containing a number of different neighbourhoods. We enjoy living alongside our Hindu neighbours, who have brought colour and beauty in their jewellery and sari shops, delicious food, and the celebratory fireworks of Divali for us to share. Our older people have good relationships with their Hindu neighbours who are caring and respectful to the elderly. However, these relationships rarely go beyond polite neighbourliness and there is a particular reticence about asking questions which might deepen such relationships. Younger people have grown up alongside Asian and Black schoolfellows and share their secular culture. Meanwhile our parish has recently welcomed a significant number of Somali Muslims. They are a significant presence on a once very deprived estate and seem very new and alien to the indigenous population. Older people are struggling to adapt to yet another immigrant group and younger people react territorially, and occasionally violently.

Leicester

13. The invisible church.
The curate in the parish lives in a former pub on an inner city estate which provides accommodation for a local youth project as well as a space for Christian worship. In this catholic parish she always wears clerical dress in an attempt to be a visible presence of the church in an area where there is no "churchy" building. One day her hairdresser, a second generation Hindu from Tanzania asked "Are you in to martial arts?" When asked why she had asked the question she replied "Because you always wear black". The clerical collar had no significance for her and the presence of the church, in the form of an ordained person in

the community, was completely invisible. <u>*Leicester.*</u>

14. *Frustration by some who see the area changing, leading to a member of the congregation shouting out in response to a prayer for justice for refugees and asylum seekers: 'what about justice for us whites?'*
<u>*Leicester*</u>

15. *Occasionally a Muslim has come to one of our Christmas services. Asian children are happy to visit the church on class visits and seem open to learn about what Christians believe. Relations with Muslim neighbours are good and friendly.*
<u>*Southwell*</u>

16. *Community is 'messy' but rubs along quite well. Old black community and some tensions with the newer and large Somali community. Having a Muslim/Christian partnership as regular church members is quite a story.*
<u>*Liverpool*</u>

17. *Muslims increasingly come forward as "Godparents". The Church school is desirable for some Muslim parents over the local 'Muslim ethos school'.*
<u>*Liverpool*</u>

18. *Memorial services where a family has roots in more than one Faith community leads to special services to reflect this.*
<u>*London*</u>

19. *Muslims come into our church to pray. A number of Muslims joined our Remembrance Sunday service. I was invited to a big local Muslim wedding.* <u>*London*</u>

20. *The induction of the vicar this month was attended by Muslim, Hindu and Jewish friends in the community.* <u>*London*</u>

21. *The churchwarden and vicar were able to pray at a mosque after visiting a bereaved family who live on the same road as the church. Since then the daughters and wife of the deceased have visited the vicarage to ask for help with forms - a bridge has been built.*
<u>*London*</u>

22. *In the supermarket, the young Muslim check-out girl and I were instantly recognisable to each other. She wanted to make sure: "are you a priest?" was accompanied by a smile which didn't come out of the supermarket training manual. "We believe that Jesus is a great Prophet and you believe that He is God's Son. Yes," I managed, whilst hunting for my clubcard , but I have a feeling that when we are both in heaven*

we shall find that God has sorted it all out. "The smile grew more dazzling, "So do I". We wished each other God's blessing

<div align="right">London</div>

23. People, probably of Sikh origin, possibly from Sikh/Christian families occasionally say prayers, light candles, etc in our church; our Rector has also been asked to carry out House blessings, and to bless a child who was severely ill. This all fits in with our thoroughly mixed multi-Faith area.

<div align="right">Manchester</div>

24. Good Friday Walk of Witness. This took place at Easter 2002 as a follow-up to visits of solidarity made to a local Mosque following September 11th. As part of our usual ecumenical prayer walk we gathered outside the local Mosque as the Muslim men finished prayer. They then joined us on the street for a time of silence and bidding prayers for Christians and Muslims locally and in various parts of the world, especially where prejudice or persecution is present. This has now happened each year. I think it was both a striking sight for local residents to see over 100 people gathered on the street from 2 different Faiths and for both groups to sense suspicion and fear overcome through the welcome shown and greetings exchanged.

<div align="right">Southwell</div>

5. PRESENCE AND ENGAGEMENT - THE CONTEXT

64. In this section we seek to set out some of the significant, and for us sometimes surprising, facts and perceptions which have come from our work with churches in multi Faith neighbourhoods. Inevitably they are partial and incomplete and should serve as much to provoke more questions as to provide answers. If this serves to encourage further looking, listening and action, then posing the stimulating question will have been as valuable as providing incomplete answers.

The shock of change

65. It is possible from outside the experience of living through times of the immense, even total, change which has been the experience of many parish churches, to underestimate or play down the shock and bewilderment that it brings about. It is also possible from outside the lived context to imply that failure to adapt rapidly is in some sense reprehensible and due to underlying lack of faithfulness, racism or incompetence. The comprehensiveness of the changes that many neighbourhoods, particularly some inner urban neighbourhoods, have experienced is striking and encompasses cultural, linguistic, faith, physical, political factors and therefore emotional and psychological elements. The following story is quite typical:

Our situation is probably similar to that of many Churches in multi-Faith areas.

This team ministry, served when fully staffed by 2 full-time priests and a half-time post, currently a permanent deacon, has 4 Churches, formerly separate parishes. Three date from 1870-80 when the development of the "rag trade" brought to the area on the edge of the old city small factories and workshops, whose owners and workers all lived near to their workplaces. The fourth was an estate built for 1st World War veterans.

In the past 50 years the area has seen successive waves of immigrant communities: Irish, Polish, West Indian, Hindu and now mostly Indian Muslim. The remnants of earlier waves live fairly harmoniously with the present Muslim majority. Of the Christians, the Roman Catholic Church is predominantly Irish and Asian, Anglicans and other churches predominantly elderly English and elderly West Indian, and there are many small independent black Pentecostal Churches.

Our Anglican congregations, both English and West Indian, are mainly elderly people of limited means, left behind by choice or necessity when the younger generation moved on. They look back to past glories and often feel isolated and sometimes fearful. A few of their younger generation travel back to Church. Our few children are mainly of toddler or primary school age, coming to Church with grandparents.

There are few natural leaders amongst the laity and some of those there are ought to be allowed to retire gracefully. There is a steady loss of regular worshippers and contributors as they die or leave to live with or near their married children.

> *By contrast, the communities of other Faiths contain many young families whilst their older members are least able or willing to engage with us, often because of language difficulties. So there is a mismatch between our worshipping communities.*
>
> *In Leicester contacts and dialogue between religious and community leaders is well established, but, after 2 years here, my perception is that it hardly touches the majority of the community who on the whole get on daily as good neighbours at a simple level at home and work but otherwise remain within their own ethnic or Faith networks*
>
> *This Parish is just nearing the end of its second 18 month Team Rector Interregnum in 6 years. The 'Team Vicar' post has only been filled for half that period. The ministry team is over-stretched. Our greatest need is for help from professional voluntary lay leaders (eg Readers) perhaps seconded from better resourced suburban parishes – but they would need to understand the inter-Faith agenda and issues. There is also a need to train and encourage new entrants to ministry to serve in these areas.*
>
> *The other great need is for transport to get elderly non-driver worshippers to Services and other activities. We cannot afford a mini-bus – and if we could, have no-one to drive it (another task for the priests?) Public transport does not link our Churches at the right times, especially Sundays. Those who have cars do mostly come with them full. There are too many Church buildings but no easy way of physically bringing their congregations together, let alone other considerations.*
>
> *How can we maintain a Christian witness in these areas in the long term if there are no young Christians living in them?*

66. To come to terms with such a bewilderingly changed landscape is a very major task and requires local people to draw on every ounce of their faith and commitment. It is no surprise and no condemnation if that leads to an approach which is primarily to hold on to what is known and understood and valued and which has served well in the not so distant past. The scarcity of long term experience in such contexts and the absence of tested models other than the standard parochial model, makes it all the more difficult to move on.

The extent of the multi Faith context

67. The analysis of the census data has shown that the presence of significant other Faith communities is now one of the major contexts in the ministry of the Church. At the time of the 2001 census, some 900 English parishes out of a total of 13,000 had more than 10% of their population as people of other Faiths than Christian, and this figure is now higher and growing. In some dioceses the proportion of such parishes is high, including London diocese with approaching three quarters of all its parishes. In three other dioceses between one quarter and one third of all their parishes are of this nature. Perhaps more significant is the fact that there are now 35 out of 44 dioceses with at least one parish in this context. Table 1 provides the full list of the 35 dioceses.

* Parishes with more than 10% of their population from other Faith communities

** Parishes with more than 10% of population of any one other Faith or 25% of any other Faith communities according to the 2001 Census

Diocese	Total parishes	Parishes+10%*	Percent	Parishes+10% or+25%**	Percent
London	413	296	71.7%	191	46.2%
Southwark	300	72	24.0%	19	6.3%
Manchester	292	70	24.0%	59	20.2%
Chelmsford	482	62	12.9%	46	9.5%
Birmingham	162	55	34.0%	38	23.5%
Lichfield	429	36	8.4%	28	6.5%
St Albans	335	35	10.4%	15	4.5%
Blackburn	211	26	12.3%	25	11.8%
Leicester	234	26	11.1%	14	6.0%
Bradford	133	24	18.0%	20	15.0%
Wakefield	188	23	12.2%	20	10.6%
Oxford	624	23	3.7%	10	1.6%
Ripon and Leeds	161	15	9.3%	8	5.0%
Coventry	199	15	7.5%	4	2.0%
Sheffield	173	14	8.1%	13	7.5%
Southwell	266	11	4.1%	6	2.3%
Peterborough	352	9	2.6%	7	2.0%
Newcastle	177	6	3.4%	4	2.3%
Worcester	180	6	3.3%	3	1.7%
Rochester	218	5	2.3%	3	1.4%
Derby	255	5	2.0%	4	1.6%
Guildford	168	4	2.4%	3	1.8%
Bristol	167	4	2.4%	3	1.8%
Chester	275	4	1.4%	2	0.7%
Liverpool	211	3	1.4%	3	1.4%
York	472	3	0.6%	2	0.4%
Portsmouth	142	2	1.4%	0	0.0%
Lincoln	515	2	0.4%	0	0.0%
Durham	249	1	0.4%	1	0.4%
Carlisle	267	1	0.4%	1	0.4%
Canterbury	261	1	0.4%	1	0.4%
Hereford	347	1	0.3%	1	0.3%
Gloucester	323	1	0.3%	1	0.3%
Chichester	391	1	0.3%	0	0.0%
St Edmondsbury & Ipswich	446	1	0.2%	1	0.2%
Total	**10018**	**863**		**556**	

68. It is not possible to provide full data in the space available, but Table 2 lists the 20 parishes with the highest proportions of communities of other Faiths as at the 2001 Census. Much has developed since then and will change further in the coming decades. Birmingham and Bradford authorities for example forecast a doubling of the Asian and predominantly Muslim, Sikh and Hindu populations by 2020.

Name	Populn	% Christn	% Bud	% Hindu	% Jewish	% Muslim	% Sikh	% All
Leicester: North Evington, St Stephen	8784	10.8%	0.1%	23.9%	0.0%	49.2%	7.3%	80.5%
Wakefield: Purlwell St Andrew	6495	14.7%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	79.0%	0.0%	79.3%
Birmingham: Sparkbrook: Christ Church	8027	14.3%	0.1%	2.6%	0.0%	72.8%	2.2%	77.7%
London: Southall, St George	9175	16.3%	0.4%	20.9%	0.0%	19.2%	36.0%	76.5%
Bradford: St Clement	10153	10.9%	0.1%	1.0%	0.0%	71.2%	2.0%	74.3%
Leicester: St Theodore of Canterbury	6116	16.9%	0.0%	55.8%	0.0%	6.2%	12.0%	74.2%
Birmingham: Sparkhill St John	20228	16.0%	0.2%	6.4%	0.0%	64.1%	3.1%	73.8%
Leicester: St Philip	9050	16.2%	0.2%	25.8%	0.1%	33.7%	12.6%	72.3%
Bradford: Manningham:St Paul w St Jude	17494	13.7%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%	71.0%	0.4%	72.0%
Bradford: St Columba with St Andrew	7266	11.1%	0.1%	5.8%	0.1%	65.1%	0.6%	71.6%
Blackburn : St Michael's Worship Centre	9639	16.2%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	70.6%	0.1%	71.1%
Bradford: Toller Lane, St Chad	6076	15.4%	0.1%	0.9%	0.1%	67.3%	0.8%	69.2%
Chelmsford: Manor Park, St Barnabas	9826	22.0%	0.4%	16.0%	0.0%	43.4%	8.9%	68.8%
Birmingham: Saltley and Shaw Hill	15328	20.6%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	67.9%	0.5%	68.7%
Peterborough : St Barnabas	3524	17.2%	0.1%	0.7%	0.0%	65.9%	1.0%	67.7%
Birmingham: Small Heath, All Saints	24748	21.0%	0.1%	1.0%	0.0%	64.6%	1.6%	67.3%
Birmingham: Washwood Heath	9697	18.8%	0.1%	0.4%	0.1%	65.5%	0.3%	66.4%
Manchester: Werneth, St Thomas	5802	25.5%	0.2%	2.7%	0.1%	63.0%	0.2%	66.2%
Birmingham: Sparkbrook Balsall Heath	4311	20.9%	0.4%	5.0%	0.0%	57.1%	3.0%	65.6%
London: Southall, Holy Trinity	21114	23.0%	0.5%	16.7%	0.0%	17.1%	31.2%	65.5%

__Table 2   The 20 parishes with highest proportion of other Faith communities__

69. The population of these 900 parishes is some 23% of the total <u>population</u> of all English parishes although they make up only 7% of the total <u>number</u> of parishes in England. This of course is a reflection of their predominantly urban nature, but it is clear that multi Faith contexts are no longer particularly an inner urban issue. From the questionnaire sample, typically 60% of parishes were <u>not</u> in inner urban areas, but defined themselves as urban or suburban.

70. There were in 2001 some 62 parishes with more than 50% of their parish population as people of other Faiths and a further 228 parishes with between 25% and 50% of the parish population. Less than half of the total 12226 parishes in England are identified as having no parishioners of other Faiths than Christian.

71. The figures are not cited in a spirit of alarm or anxiety, but as a factual indication of the changing nature of the church's context and task in an increasing number of places. Of course there are real questions as to the meaning of such figures and it should not of course be assumed that they represent worshippers. Nor should it be forgotten that at a national level, those who identified themselves as Christian represent some 92% of all those who gave themselves a religious identity.

	% of population	% of Faiths
Christian	71.6	93.2
Buddhist	0.3	0.3
Hindu	1.0	1.2
Jewish	0.5	0.6
Muslim	2.7	3.5
Sikh	0.6	0.7
Other religion	0.3	0.4
All religions	*76.8*	
No religion	15.5	
Not stated	7.3	
All no religion/not stated	*23.2*	

Table 3
National Faith community data (2001 Census (1))

72. As Table 3 shows, in the population as a whole only 5.4% of the population identified themselves as being of a Faith other than Christianity, a figure thirteen times less than those identifying themselves as Christian and four times less than those identifying themselves as having no religion or not stating any religion.

73. Nevertheless the figures from the parishes do demonstrate the widespread extent of multi Faith parish contexts and it is the more interesting that of the questionnaire respondents, 60% considered that they were suburban or urban rather than inner urban. Multi Faith contexts are no longer a specialist inner urban issue.

74. It is possible that the Church, and probable that the wider world, does not yet fully appreciate what a remarkable and valuable asset it has in the 900 parish churches that minister in contexts with significant other Faith communities. This value lies precisely in their continuing faithful presence in places from which many others have now fled; and in their continued loving engagement with the issues that face people of all Faiths in some of the toughest and yet most vibrant neighbourhoods of our country. As a result of this commitment, there is a depth of knowledge and experience which is quite unparalled in any other part of society.

75. It is the valuable experience of those who minister in multi Faith contexts and the significance of their ministry for the whole Church that we wish to draw attention to. We are sure that we are entering a markedly new chapter in which these matters can no longer be relegated to the status of a specialist issue of the inner urban context or as the domain of the expert in inter religious studies. Rather, they are the concern of the whole Church and the extent to which we remain present and engaged in renewed ways will be a crucial sign of the health of the Church in the coming generation.

76. This is not just a matter of the effectiveness of social or ecclesial policies for a peaceable civil society in this country; it is a measure of the extent to which we have understood and come to terms with the intricate interconnections between the local and the global via the frameworks of faith. The world Faiths are universal and are creating identities which transcend the whole range of other local identity sets: cultural, linguistic, ethnic and national. Whether this is for the peace of the world or for conflict remains to be seen. Strange though it may seem to some, much of the future lies in the local context and in this country with the local churches.

77. But it goes further still, beyond issues of peace and conflict, to the heart of what it is to wonder about eternity, about the nature of God, about truth. How in our own backyards, not half way across the world, can we credibly offer the distinctive truths of the gospel which we believe are a key to life in all its fullness in the presence of others who maintain other and sometimes only partially compatible truths? These are matters not best worked at in the abstract and in the absence of those who are other to us religiously, but in their presence and in open engagement with them. In the abstract and in separation from those who are perceived as other to us lie stereotypes and fears. It is in the local encounter and in the ordinariness of neighbourhood life that we may discover the perfect love that casts out fear.
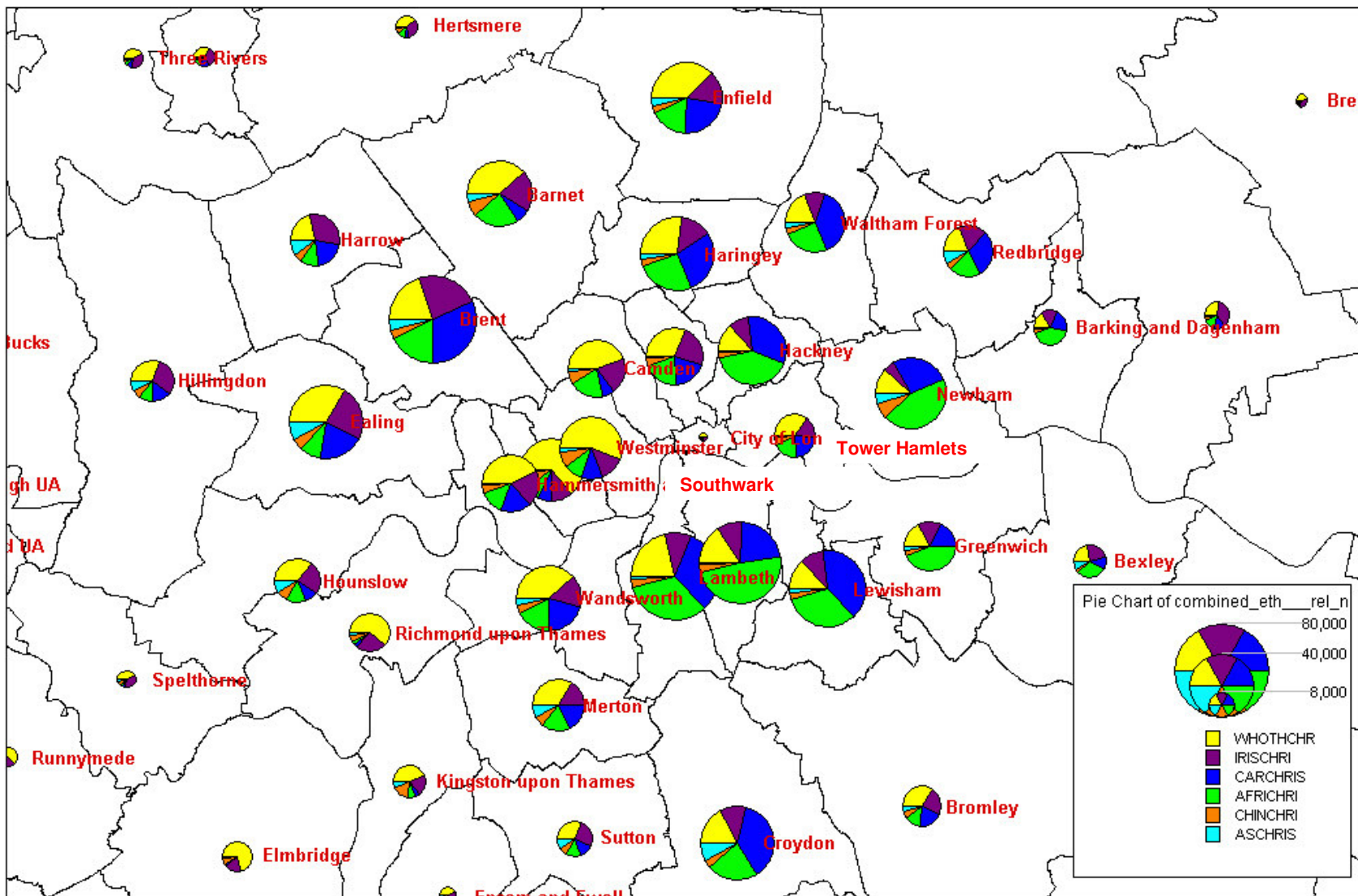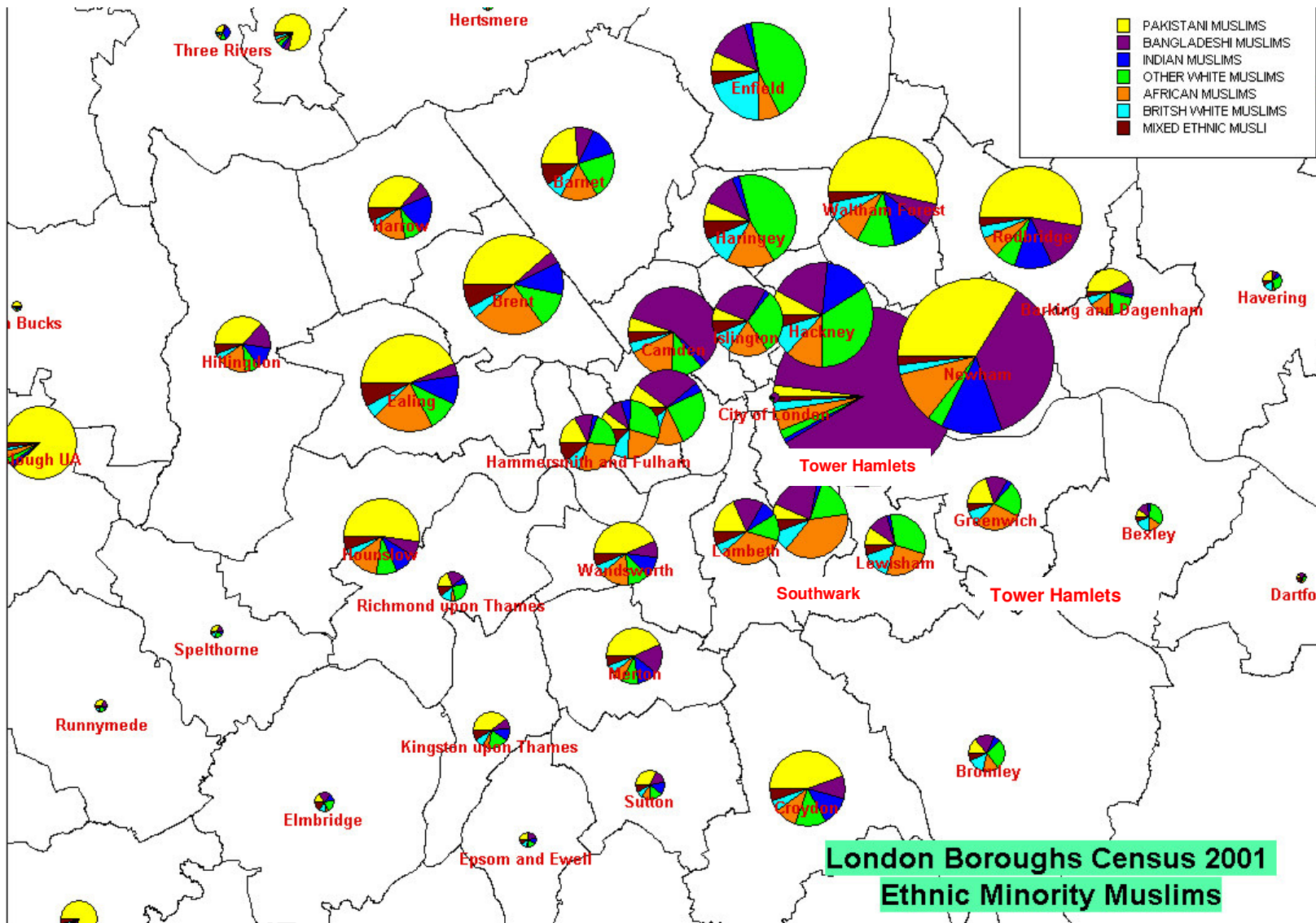
Connecting local to local

78. Multi Faith contexts, despite the well known urban concentrations in some cities, are in fact spread through urban and suburban – and some rural - neighbourhoods across the majority of dioceses. As we have noted, thirty five out of forty four dioceses now have at least one parish with more than 10% of its population as people other Faiths, including dioceses such as Hereford, Carlisle and Chichester**.** In Carlisle diocese, the parish of Pennington, Lindal with Marton and Bardsea has a population of 448 of whom 23% are Buddhist living at the Conishead Priory and Buddhist Temple. In Chichester diocese, the parish of Ifield with a population of 30,000, has 12% of its parishioners of Faiths other than Christian.

79. The variation of circumstances is very wide: the village of Tilford in Guildford diocese, with a population of 650 attracts some 25,000 Ahmediya each year to the International Centre located there. The parish of St Stephen, North Evington in Leicester diocese, has some 80% of its population of 9000 as people of Faiths other than Christian.

80. In some dioceses a significant proportion of all parishes are of these contexts and for example in London diocese 72% of all parishes are such. In many others, there are no more than a few parishes out of many hundreds: St Edmundsbury and Ipswich just one parish - St Mary at the Elms in Ipswich - makes up just 0.2% of all parishes in the diocese.

81. There is therefore a set of contexts, which although in principle they have much in common, are spread across most dioceses, in inner urban, urban, suburban and rural situations and over the country as a whole. It might be said that St Mary at the Elms in Ipswich has more in common with St Augustine, Bradford than it does with its next door neighbour parish.

82. In the course of the consultations it became clear just how limited were the networks of comparable situations available to most parishes. Very few parishes were in a position to draw on the experience and support of other parishes across the country facing very similar sets of issues.

83. There is a very good network of Inter Faith Advisers across all dioceses, which, with the Inter Faith Relations Adviser to the Archbishops' Council in the Mission and Public Affairs Division, do much to provide an interconnected system across the country as a whole. The Inter Faith Advisers are much appreciated by the clergy and provide a vast range of experience and expertise – more by far than can be offered by most other institutions, religious or secular, in the country as a whole. Most Advisers offer their services on top of other full time ministries and the opportunities for them to meet together regularly to exchange information, resources and stories, is necessarily limited. Resourcing to enable this to happen on a regular basis should be developed further.

84. However despite this network, 'learning and teaching' contacts between parishes appeared to be modest. In general contacts between parishes tended to be 'vertical' rather than 'horizontal' – that is to say, passing from the local up to the Diocesan adviser or some other person, across to the equivalent person in another diocese, and then down to the local again. Direct 'local to local' connection seemed very limited. There is no national database of initiatives, projects or general data available to be consulted by parishes. These are matters which could fruitfully be addressed.

The diversity of religious communities

85. The complex inter-relationship between ethnicity, culture, language and faith has been the subject of much discussion and concern. Increasingly the case has been accepted that race and Faith need to be distinguished and that Faith allegiance is often a more important identity than race. In turn, Faith communities are diverse not only in ethnic terms, but also in their religious understandings and traditions, in their cultures and languages as well as in their geographic origins.

86. There has been a long struggle in recent years to raise levels of 'religious literacy' to enable justice to be done to the actual complexity of the interactions between ethnicity, religion and culture. Until comparatively recently it was common for religious identity to be subsumed within or spoken of in the same breath as ethnicity. In the Home Office structures for example, Faith issues were held within the Race Equality Unit until 2003 with the formation of the separate Faith Communities Unit, now part of the Cohesion and Faith Communities Unit.

87. Christianity and Islam, and increasingly Buddhism, are worldwide Faiths and cut across all ethnic and cultural and linguistic boundaries at the international level. As is sometimes noted, there are more worshipping Christians in Pakistan and Egypt than in England.

88. For well documented reasons, the diversity of the Faith communities internationally is not fully represented in this country, particularly outside London. In recent years London in particular has seen a very great increase in the ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity of the Christian churches, a diversity which is paralleled, though in different ways, in the Muslim communities. The figures cited earlier that 72% of parishes in London diocese have more than 10% of their population as people of Faiths other than Christian is a clear indicator of the particular diversity of London, notwithstanding the substantial Faith communities of particular origins in some areas such as east London or Southall.

89. Greg Smith's recent analysis of the recently released data from the 2001 Census by religion and by ethnicity, has clearly demonstrated this diversity (12). Charts 1 and 2, refer to the ethnicity of Christian and Muslim communities in Greater London and this data on ethnic diversity also provides some 'proxy' indications of the cultural and geographic and therefore linguistic diversity of the two Faiths.

90. Chart 1 shows that in Greater London those identifying themselves as Christian in the census in six boroughs consist of between 30% and 50% of African ethnicity or origin, with significant Chinese and South Asian ethnicity in most boroughs.

91. Chart 2 shows that nearly 25% of the Muslim communities in London are of ethnicities other than south Asian and in London in the borough of Enfield, some 20% of Muslims defined as "other white Muslims" are of Cypriot (Turkish or Balkan) origins. In cities and neighbourhoods such as Leicester and Birmingham and in London boroughs such as Southall, Brent and Tower Hamlets there are substantial Somali Muslim communities of very recent origin.

Greater London Districts Ethnic Minority Christians

Pie Chart of combined_eth___rel_n

- 80,000
- 40,000
- 8,000

Legend:
- WHOTHCHR (yellow)
- IRISCHRI (purple)
- CARCHRIS (blue)
- AFRICHRI (green)
- CHINCHRI (orange)
- ASCHRIS (cyan)

District labels: Hertsmere, Three Rivers, Enfield, Bren, Barnet, Harrow, Waltham Forest, Haringey, Redbridge, Brent, Hackney, Barking and Dagenham, Hillingdon, Camden, Newham, Ealing, Westminster, City of Lon, Tower Hamlets, Hammersmith a, Southwark, Hounslow, Wandsworth, Lambeth, Lewisham, Greenwich, Bexley, Richmond upon Thames, Merton, Spelthorne, Kingston upon Thames, Bromley, Runnymede, Sutton, Croydon, Elmbridge, Epsom and Ewell, Bucks, gh UA, d UA

London Boroughs Census 2001
Ethnic Minority Muslims

Legend:
- PAKISTANI MUSLIMS
- BANGLADESHI MUSLIMS
- INDIAN MUSLIMS
- OTHER WHITE MUSLIMS
- AFRICAN MUSLIMS
- BRITSH WHITE MUSLIMS
- MIXED ETHNIC MUSLI

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92. The diversity of the Christian communities in Greater London has to a considerable extent been the product of the arrival of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. It has been observed that this lies behind the significantly higher proportion of multi Faith parishes in London diocese compared with other dioceses, which are growing numerically (Chart 9 below). Just as important however, is the way in which a very significant number of such Christians have not joined Anglican churches, but have formed a range of new churches representing particular geographic, cultural and linguistic groups. Recent work by Alan Sharp, working with Interserve's Urban Vision in Tooting gives an indication of this. There is a real challenge here for Anglican churches, both those which are culturally diverse and those which are not, to relate more fully to other Christian churches of diverse ethnic and cultural origins. Although the multi Faith and 'multi Christian' contexts are theologically very different, they are related and their existential dynamics can feel quite similar for parish churches.

93. He estimates that there are around "3000 evangelical Christians (60% black, 25% Asian, 15% white) who live or meet locally attending over 50 churches" in Tooting, (13). His analysis demonstrates the extent to which in such areas the churches gather by language, ethnicity and geographic origin, largely beyond the Anglican churches. His research found that there were churches whose predominant backgrounds were "Ghanaian, Jamaican, Nigerian, Sri Lankan, Congolese/Angolese, Brazilian, Mauritian, Singaporean, Pakistani, Barbadian and Punjabi Indian".

94. Outside London, especially in the northern cities, but also in areas such as the east Birmingham neighbourhoods of Saltley, Small Heath, Sparkbrook and Sparkhill and in respect of Hindu communities in Leicester, the situation is significantly different. Neighbourhoods tend much more to be not so much multi Faith as 'bi Faith' and Graphs 2 to 5 below give some indication of this. Outside London, the great majority of Muslim, Hindu and Sikh people are of South Asian origin, whether at one or two generations remove, or more immediately through the very high levels of intercontinental marriage. In a similar manner, the great majority of Christians outside London are of English or Caribbean origin, particularly for the Church of England.

95. Our questionnaire enquired about the ethnicity of clergy in multi Faith parishes to gain some impression of their likely cultural and geographic diversity. Chart 3 indicates the extent to which clergy in multi Faith parishes across all dioceses remain very largely white, and by implication at least, culturally English and linguistically English speaking.

Chart 3 Clergy ethnicity
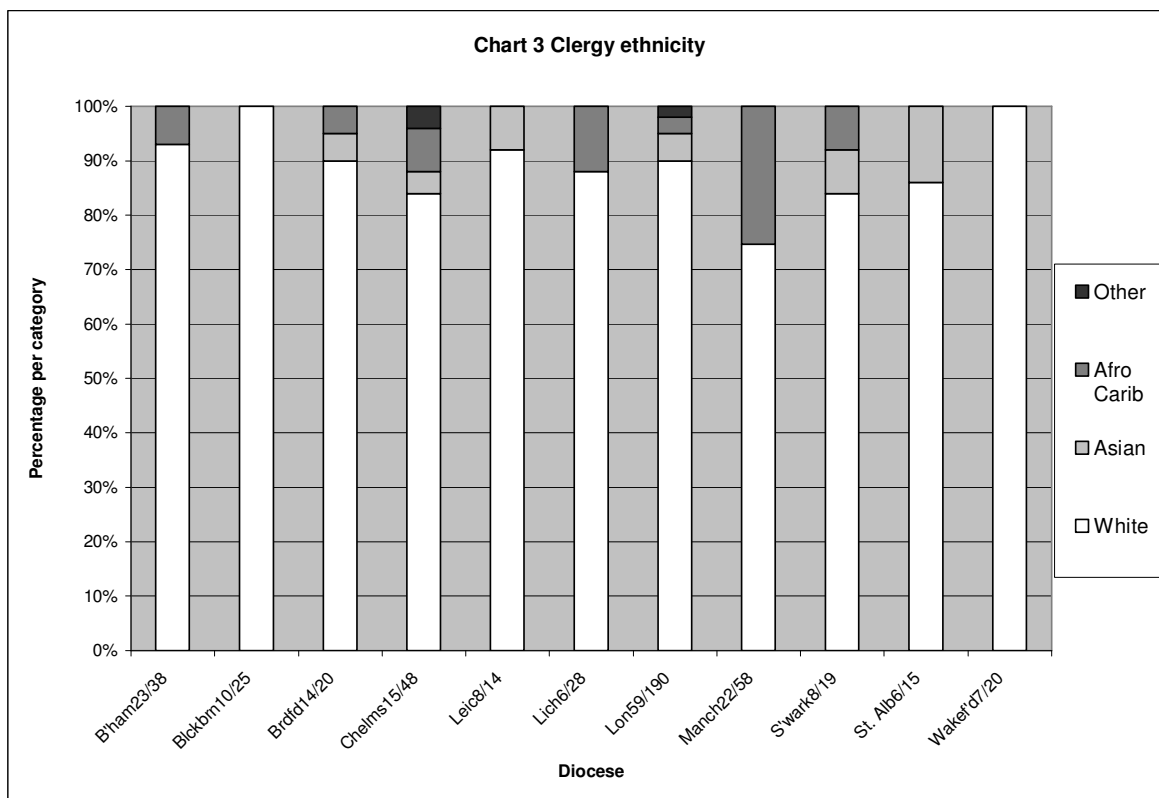
96. The situation described above indicates that especially outside London there is a substantial overlap between ethnicity and religion. In London this is less so but Anglican churches remain less diverse than the Christian community as a whole. This has a number of consequences which are of importance for the Church in multi Faith neighbourhoods and much more generally.

97. First, the substantial overlap has made it all too easy for both religious and non religious people to identify 'Asian' as Muslim, Sikh or Hindu; and European or white as Christian. Correspondingly for many people Christians are European and Muslims are Asian. This can lead not only serious misconceptions about the nature of the Faith communities, but also can have political and other implications. In these circumstances it has proved a short step for some to use 'Muslim' as cover for a racism which would be illegal if couched in ethnic rather than religious language.

98. Secondly, the more Anglican clergy and congregations are mono ethnic or monocultural and the less that they include people of other mother tongues than English, the more difficult it will be to engage deeply with communities which are not only of another Faith, but also of another culture, mother tongue and geographic origin.

99. Thirdly, the more that within the broader Christian community Anglican churches are European or African Caribbean, the more an impression is easily gained of separation, and the fewer are the opportunities for Anglican congregations to understand the true comprehensiveness of the world Church. A full appreciation of the comprehensiveness of the Church globally is a vital underpinning to Christian ministry in the present age.

100. The diversity of cultural, linguistic and geographic origins amongst other Faith communities and across the Churches of the wider Christian community suggests both a need and an opportunity. In multi Faith contexts engagement, particularly at a personal level, very often requires cultural and linguistic skills and understandings appropriate to the context.

101. Christians of non European origins, particularly perhaps the Asian Christian Fellowships and churches, are making a significant contribution to the presence of the Church in multi Faith areas, and of course in other neighbourhoods, and to the wider Church's ability to engage culturally and linguistically with other Faith communities. Where an Anglican congregation has a significant Asian Christian component, such as at St John's, Southall, or where Asian Christian Fellowships use Anglican churches as separate congregations, this can be a most valuable element in the church's inter cultural engagement in the neighbourhood.

102. This is not at all to suggest that other skills, understandings and perspectives are of lesser importance; nor is it to suggest that merely by a common geographic origin fully equips for multi Faith parish ministry. But it is to suggest that where the linguistic, cultural and associated skills and experience are not available to the local church, there will be significant limits to the extent to which effective engagement with parishioners of other cultures, religion, ethnicities and languages can be achieved.

103. There are examples where clergy of south Asian origin or nationality, are making a significant contribution to cross cultural and inter Faith ministry whether called specifically to such a ministry or not. 'Cross cultural' in this context refers as much to their ministry with European or African Caribbean congregations as it does vis a vis other Faith communities. The role of the Mission agencies in enabling the exchange of partners has been valuable,

> **Arun John**
> Arun John was born in India to parents who became Christians from Muslim and Hindu backgrounds . He was educated in Rajasthan and Vidharba and ordained in Delhi diocese in 1977. For 16 years he worked for the Church of North India, strengthening its partnership with the world church. He took a BD at Serampore and a postgraduate diploma in Mission at Selly Oak in 1991.
> In 1996 he was assigned through CMS to work in the diocese of Christ the King, Johannesburg, where he became Archdeacon in 2001. He developed links in Britain, especially with Bradford Diocese, and in 2004 accepted an invitation to become Chief Officer of the ecumenical Inner Ring Group and priest in charge of St Paul's, Manningham, working especially to model cross cultural congregations in Bradford.

As is also the ministry of a number of other Christian agencies within for example the Faith to Faith network. The commitment of many Asian Christians, clergy and lay, to journey outwards with their families has been remarkable. They bring a wealth of invaluable experience and skills to the Church in England, enabling churches to understand better and address more effectively the issues of mission and ministry in multi Faith and multi cultural contexts. Some individual stories amongst many are given in the panels. Although Asian and particularly Pakistani, Bangla Deshi and Indian contexts are particularly significant , it is of course true that the same issues and possibilities arise in relation to other origins, for example Nigerian.

Neighbourhood separation

104. The phenomenon of concentration of communities in particular areas is well known and contributes significantly to the intensity of the pressures facing local churches. The separation of neighbourhoods and the "parallel lives" that this encourages are also a source of anxiety inasmuch as they tend to weaken community cohesiveness. It is important to remember that this is a general phenomenon, not simply associated with particular Faith or ethnic groups. White outer estates and wealthy gated communities are as much separated a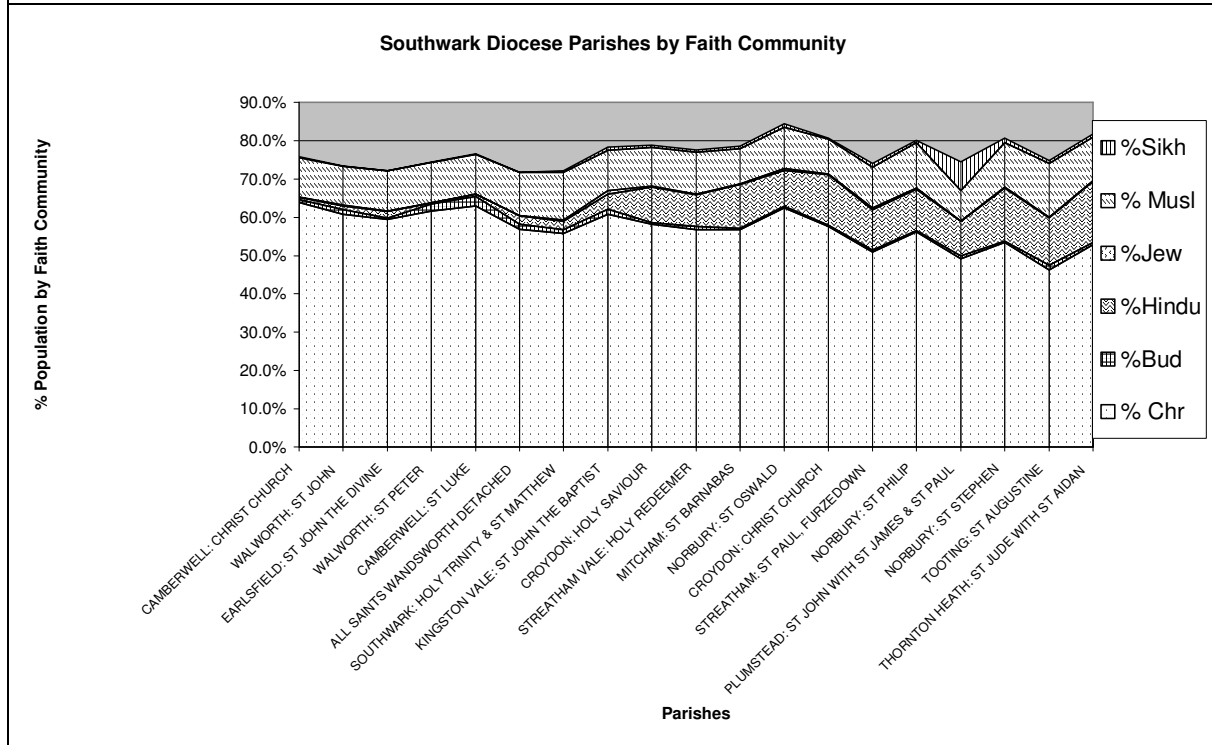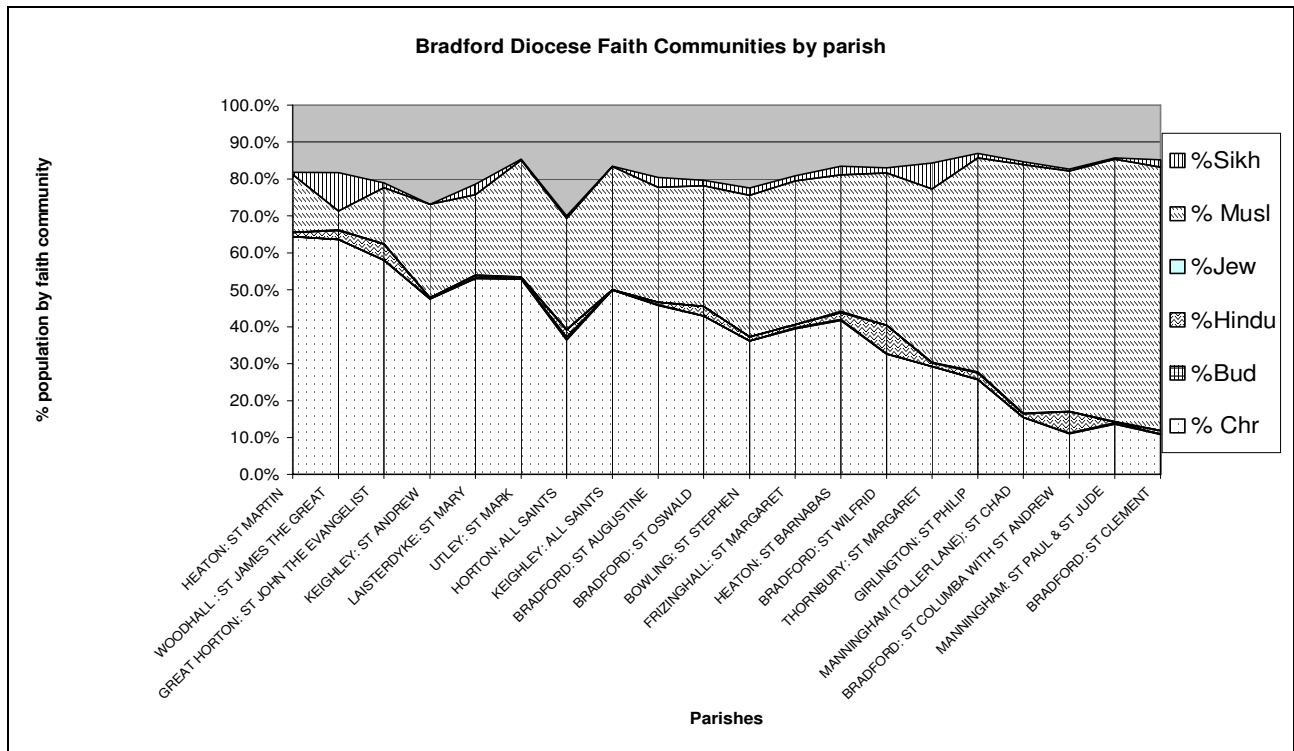s a majority Mirpuri Muslim neighbourhood in East Birmingham. Nevertheless, the cumulative effects of ethnicity, religion, language, international connections and culture generally, do give rise to a series of issues particular to communities that are primarily identified by Faith and reinforced by ethnicity.

105. We speak of a 'multi Faith' society and at the most general national level this is correct. However, at the neighbourhood level the realities can be very different and in many, perhaps most contexts, churches relate to one or possibly two significant other Faith communities rather than many. There are many practical consequences, not least for training and for acceptance that a 'multi Faith' approach needs to give way to something much more specific. The public language of 'Faith communities' and the 'Faith sector' too easily implies that there is something homogenous and tidily organised and which can be approached in a 'one size fits all' approach. This is compounded by the understandable, but sometimes inappropriate sense that public authorities feel that they must on all occasions deal with Faith communities only on the basis that the full range of Faiths are represented.

106. An analysis of the census data demonstrates the extent to which Faith communities, with the exception of the Christian community, are substantially separated from each other by neighbourhood. The situation varies significantly between dioceses, but the four graphs below which identify the proportion of Faith communities in each parish indicate an inverse relationship between their respective presences: Sikh and Hindu communities tend not to co-exist with Muslim; Jewish

communities tend to be geographically separated from Muslim and other Faith communities. Within Faith communities there are further separations between ethnic or national origins: Mirpuri, Bangladeshi and Somali for example within the Muslim community. Christian church communities are by contrast present in every area.

Birmingham parishes by faith community

Legend: ☐ % Chr ⊞ %Bud ▨ %Hindu ☐ %Jew ▨ % Musl ⊞ %Sikh

X-axis (Parishes): GRAVELLY HILL, ST. MATTHEW, NECHELLS, MOSELEY: ST AGNES, OLDBURY, TYSELEY, MOSELEY: ST MARY, BIRMINGHAM : BISHOP LATIMER WITH ALL SAINTS, EDGBASTON, SMETHWICK: ST MATTHEW WITH ST CHAD, MOSELEY: ST ANNE, HANDSWORTH: ST MARY, SMETHWICK: THE RESURRECTION, HANDSWORTH: ST JAMES, SPRINGFIELD, BALSALL HEATH, ASTON: ST JAMES, SPARKBROOK W BALSALL HEATH, SMALL HEATH, SPARKHILL

Y-axis: Percentage per category (0.0% to 100.0%)

Bradford Diocese Faith Communities by parish

Southwark Diocese Parishes by Faith Community

107. It is evident that the patterns are very different between dioceses and illustrate clearly the need for carefully differentiated approaches which reflect local realities. The four charts above for Birmingham, Bradford, Southwark and Chelmsford show significant differences and charts for other dioceses, which are not reproduced in this report, make the point even more strongly.

108. This is a complex matter and the local situation is constantly changing, but the snapshot provided by the 2001 census is reinforced by the perceptions of clergy in 2004 responding to the question "*Is the parish significantly separated into different areas or neighbourhoods by Faith community? - Not significantly?, Significantly and increasing?, Significantly but decreasing?*" (Chart 4)

Chart 4.Trend in neighbourhood faith community separation
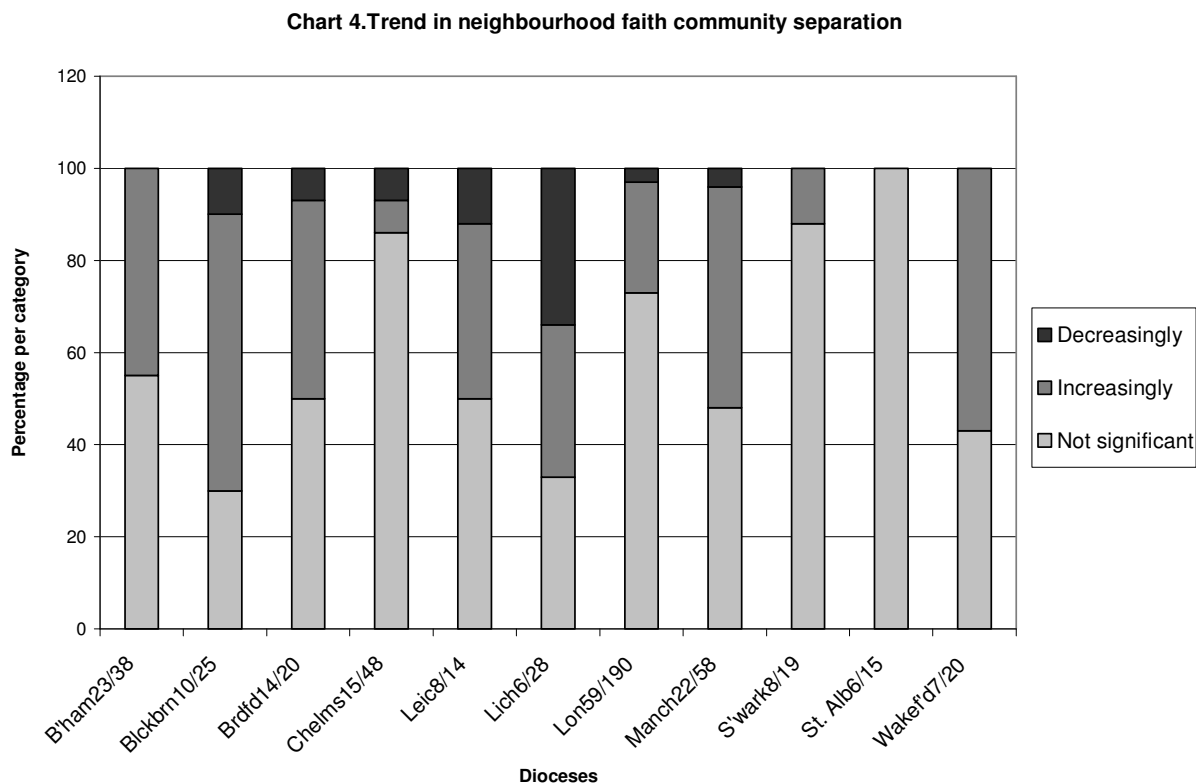
It is clear that in the majority of dioceses, and with the exception of Chelmsford, Southwark and St Albans, a significant proportion of respondents considered that separation was increasing. The situation in Blackburn and Wakefield was especially noticeable.

109. These developments in the extent of the other Faith communities, their ethnic and other complexity and the separation of neighbourhoods are not ephemeral matters, but are an extensive, growing and increasingly complex context for the Church. It is of the first importance that the Church appreciates these developments and responds to them in a commensurate manner.

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6. PRESENCE & ENGAGEMENT - CHURCHES IN MULTI FAITH PARISHES

110. In this section we move from more general considerations to a more detailed look at the perceptions of parish churches on a range of matters. The data are drawn largely from responses to the questionnaire, but supplemented by the work of the Consultations. In the charts, the number of 'Presence and Engagement' parishes in each diocese is identified, together with the number responding to the questionnaire. We emphasise that this is a sample approach and that it deals mainly with the perceptions of clergy and congregations. It provides a basis to suggest further questions that dioceses may wish to address.

Financial situation

111. Some quite detailed questions were asked about parishes' financial position. Parishes were asked to state whether their Parochial Church Council's financial position was "strong, viable or fragile" and whether it was likely "to strengthen, stay the same or weaken". Charts 5 and 6 below show that across all the responding parishes, some 10% on average considered that their financial position was strong and likely to strengthen. Blackburn, London, St Albans and Wakefield had higher proportions of parishes in this category.

112. At the other end of the scale, a somewhat higher proportion, 15-20%, considered that their position was fragile and/or would weaken. Amongst these, those in Bradford, Leicester and Lichfield and Southwark were the most anxious.

113. The largest proportion of parishes, therefore, is of those parishes which considered themselves to be viable and/or likely to remain in the same position financially. Amongst the dioceses with fewer multi Faith parishes, Liverpool and Coventry were most anxious, but across the whole group there was a higher proportion in the stronger bands.

Chart 5. Financial Position

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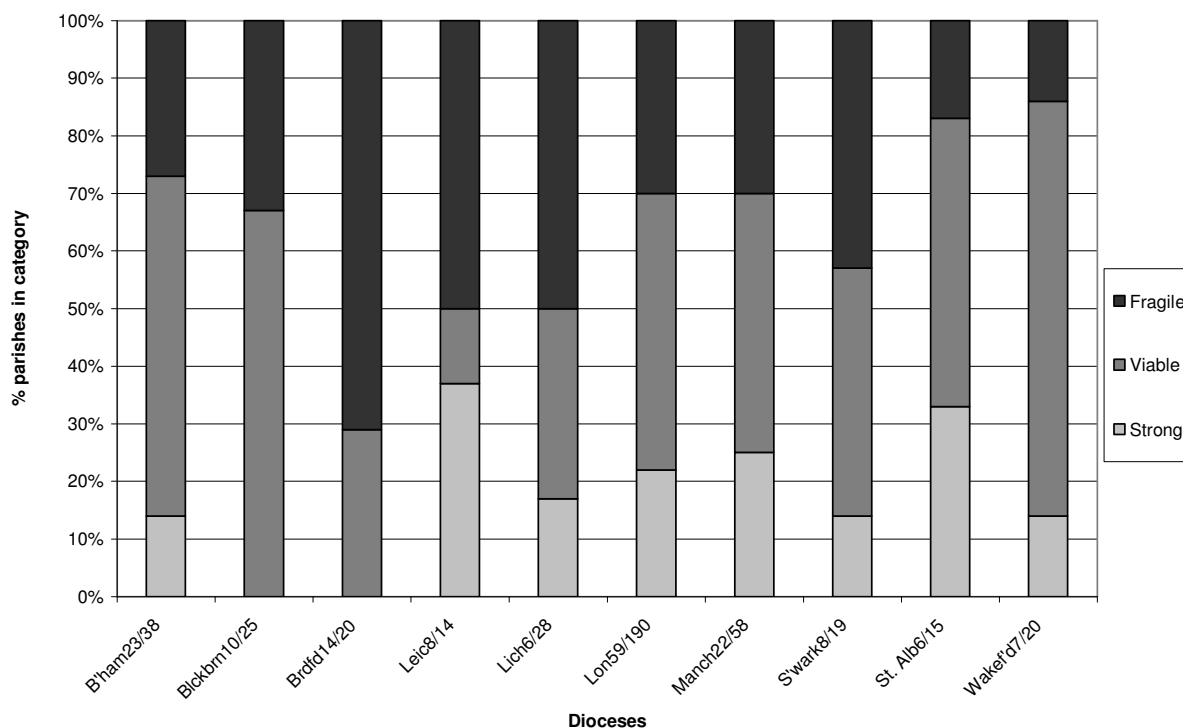
Chart 6. Dioceses Financial outlook
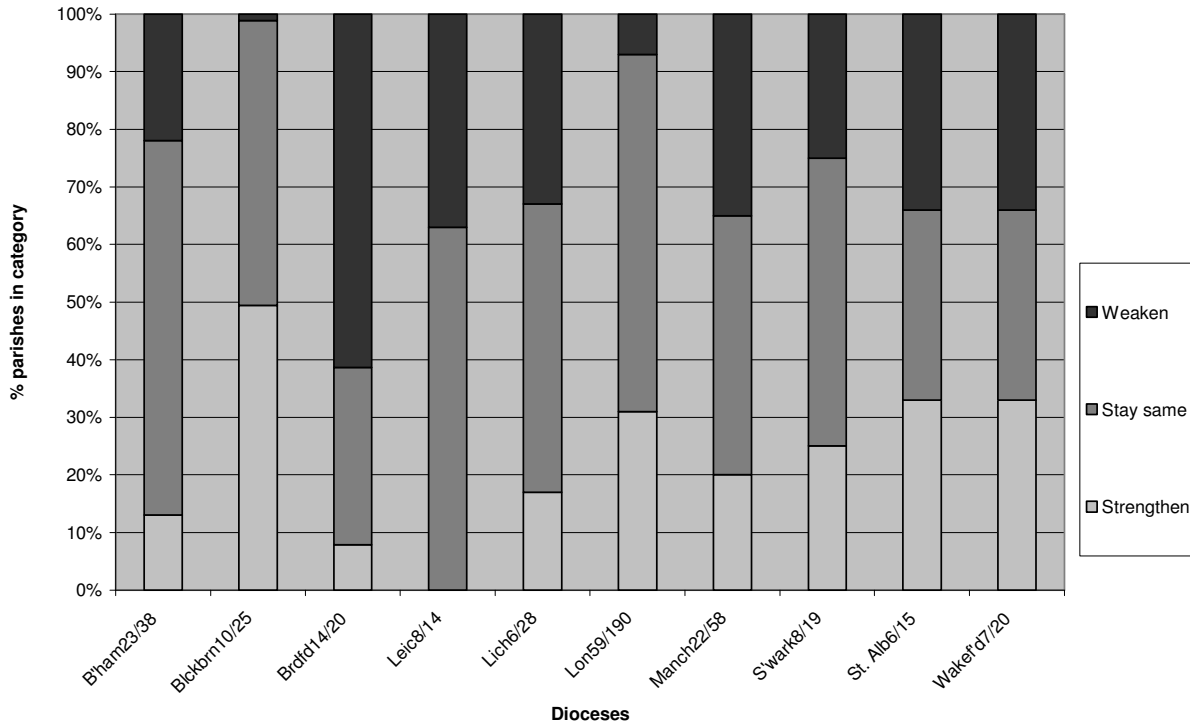
114.   As far as the sources of PCC income are concerned, the pattern is very consistent across the dioceses, with giving/stewardship providing about 40% of income, earnings and lettings a further 30%, 10% from grants and trusts and 10% from miscellaneous other sources. The earnings and lettings proportion is significantly higher in the dioceses with fewer multi Faith parishes, as is also the fees and miscellaneous income. Parishes in multi Faith areas generally have average weekly attendances below 75 with the exception of Leicester and Lichfield respondents, although in the case of the latter response levels were probably too low to be representative (Chart 7). In Bradford, Blackburn and Manchester about three quarters of responding parishes were in this category. Whilst per capita giving may be substantial in percentage of income, congregations tend to have up to half their members older than 60 (Chart 8) with corresponding impact on incomes which tend already to be less than average. In such circumstances, the ability of congregations to seek ways in which other sources of income than by direct giving can be developed is of importance. There are an increasing number of examples of churches in multi Faith areas which have set out to develop income generating activities and means to share information about these need to be developed.

Chart 7. Average Weekly Attendance

Legend: 100 +, 75 - 100, 51 - 75, 26 - 50, 0 - 25

X-axis (Dioceses): B'ham23/28, Blckbrn10/25, Brdfd14/20, Chelms15/46, Leic8/14, Lich6/28, Lon59/190, Manch22/58, S'wark8/19, Wakefd7/20
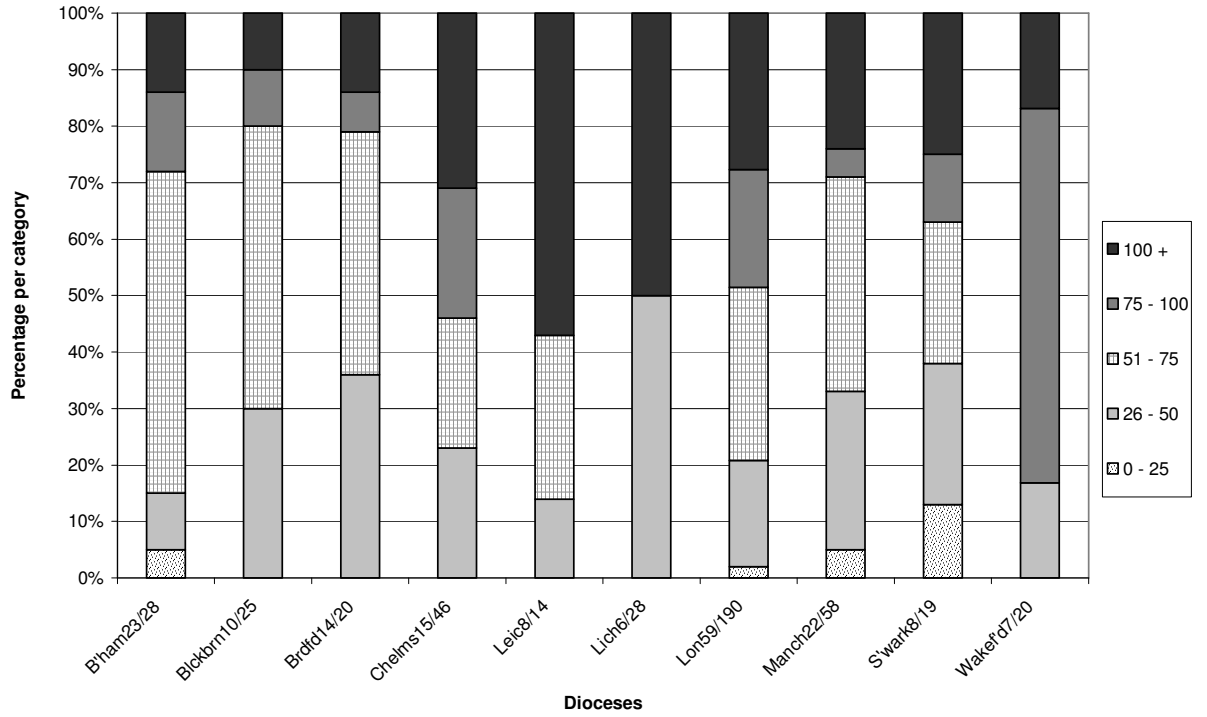
Chart 8 Congregation age structure

Legend: Over 60, 25 - 60, under 25, Children

X-axis (Dioceses): B'ham23/28, Blckbrn10/25, Brdfd14/20, Chelms15/46, Leic8/14, Lich6/28, Lon59/190, Manch22/58, S'wark8/19

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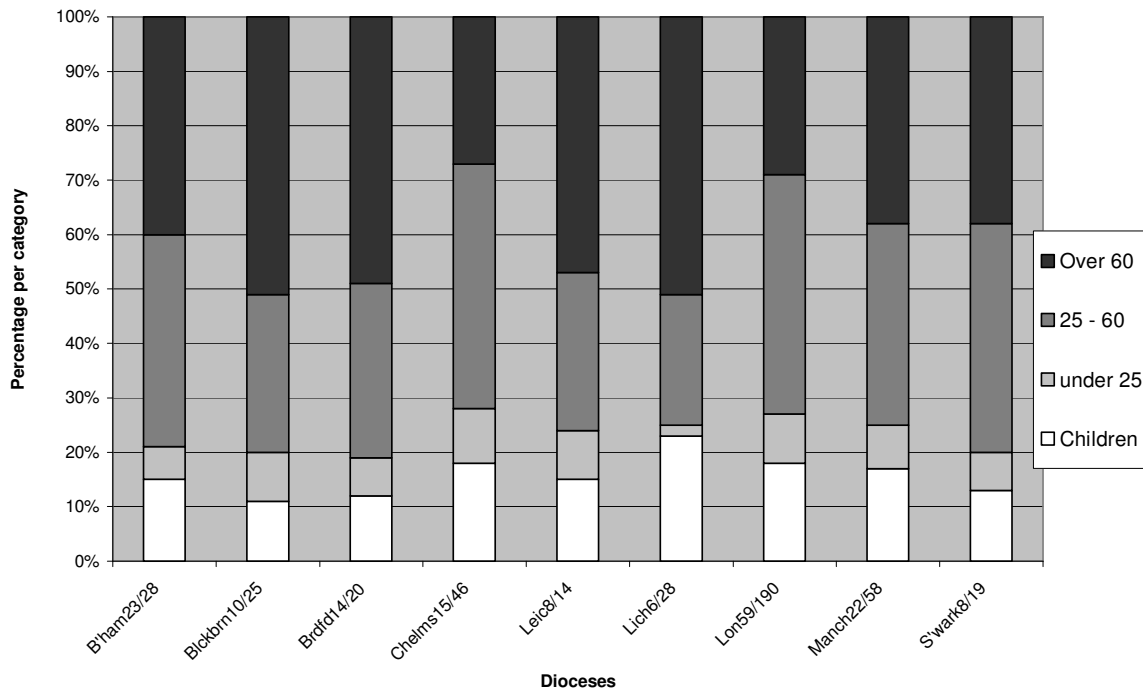
Congregations' growth and decline

115. In relation to trends in the growth of the congregations we also asked a more detailed question: "Has the congregation in the past five years been growing in number, static or reducing in number?" Chart 9 below shows that in most of the dioceses around 30% of their responding congregations are reducing in number, with Bradford having rather more at about 45% and Chelmsford and London significantly less than 30%. Most dioceses also have about 40% of congregations growing with particularly strong figures in London (70%) perhaps due to the arrival of refugee and asylum seeker members, and in St Albans (60%).

Chart 9. Has the congregation in the past 5 years been growing in number, static or reducing in number?
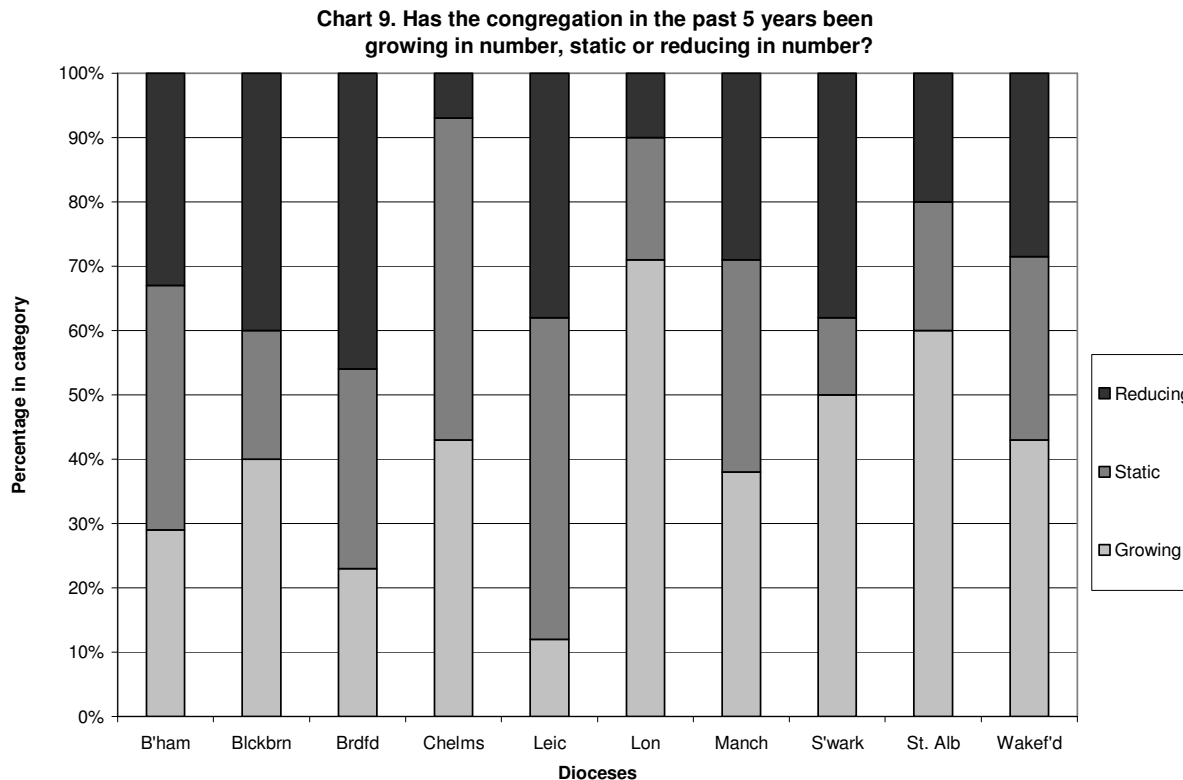
The perceived level of support

116. In general there appears to be a firm commitment amongst the churches in multi Faith parishes to remain present in their neighbourhood. However, this is being weakened by lack of resources and by an all too widespread perception that the structures of the Church - deanery and diocese - do not fully support their ministry and mission and that at the diocesan level there was in some a lack of strategic initiative. In 17 dioceses, including Birmingham, Chelmsford, Lichfield, London and Southwark, more than 40% of parishes responding to the question: "Have you or the congregation received any relevant support from the wider Church (deanery, diocese) in relation to other Faith community matters?", considered that they had not (Chart 10).

Chart 10. Any relevant support from diocese?
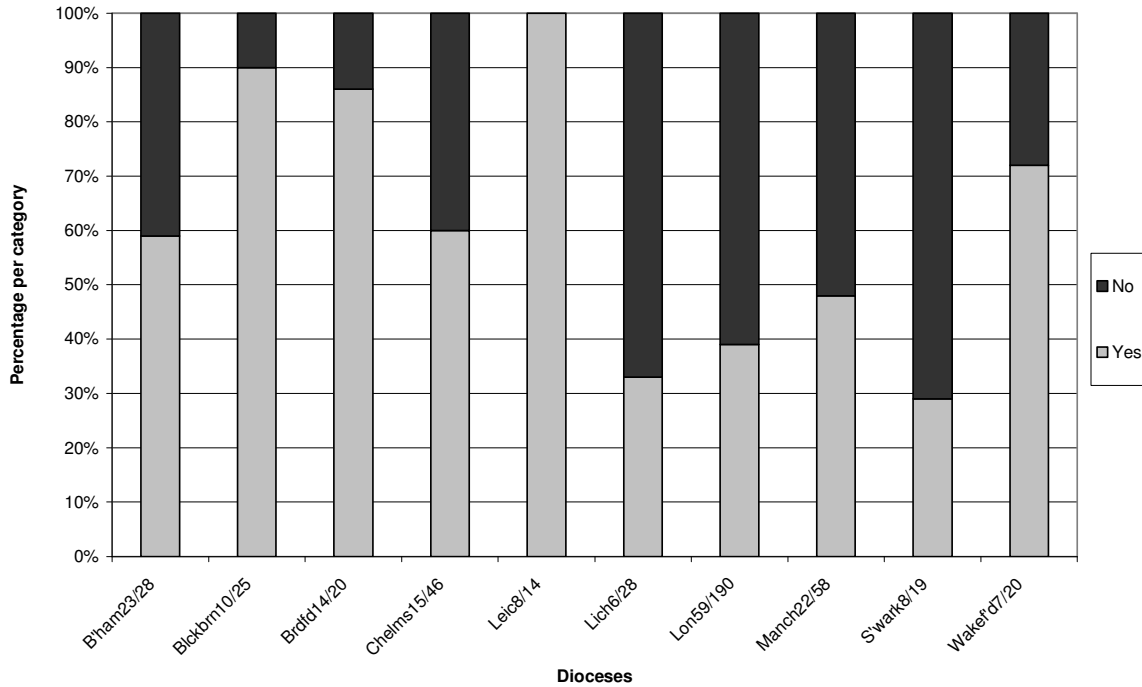
117. As to the question: "Are you aware of any diocesan strategic initiatives in relation to other Faith communities which are relevant to your context?", Chart 11 shows that perceptions were generally positive in Birmingham, Bradford, Blackburn and Leicester, but negative in Chelmsford, London and Southwark. Amongst the dioceses with few 'presence and engagement' parishes, Chester, Gloucester and Guildford were cited positively in this respect

Chart 11. Any strategic Diocesan initiatives?
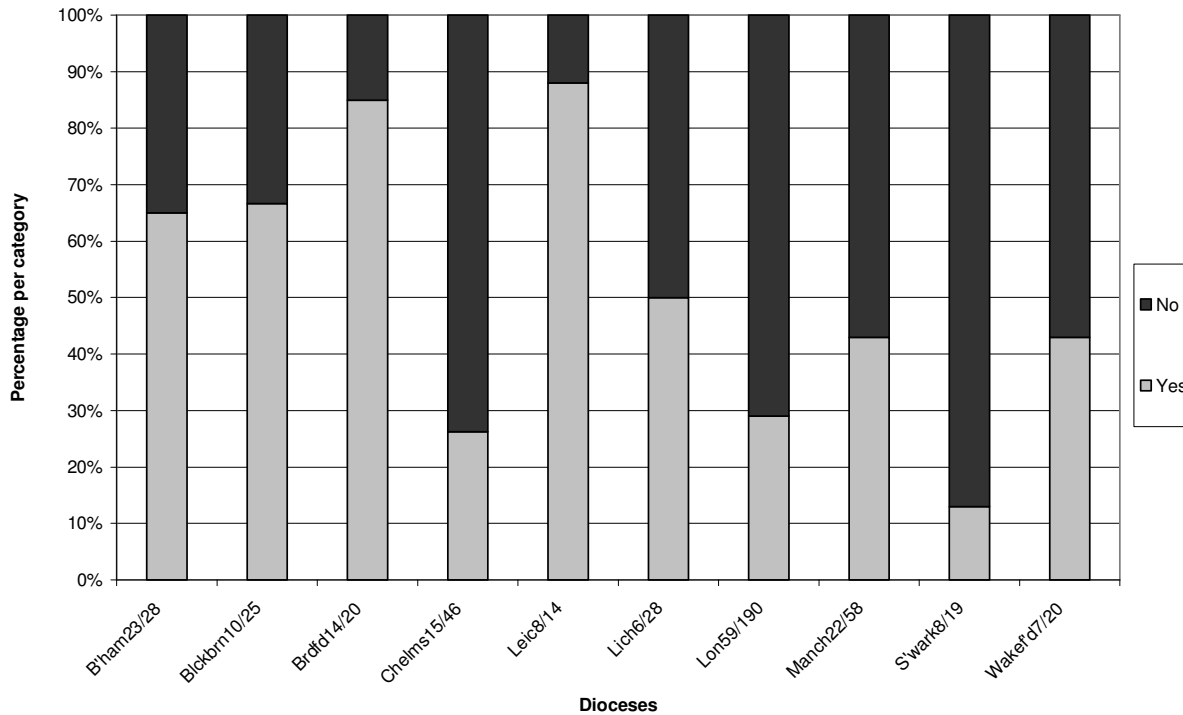
118. A real sense of the fragility of many parishes continued presence was apparent in the Consultations and it was a frequently occurring perception that to apply the standard measures of financial and numerical viability rigorously to all parishes in these contexts would be to risk a rapid and significant loss of presence at a critical time and a loss of engagement with a context of major significance to the Church and the country.

119. In a number of dioceses the suggestion has been raised as to whether the formula for allocating clergy to parishes should be adjusted to take account of the proportion of people of other Faiths, not in order to strengthen the allocation, but to reduce it. This approach is based on the suggestion that in such parishes the lower level of pastoral care and occasional offices requires a lower level of 'activity' by clergy and as such represents a reduced need for clergy. In our view such an approach is seriously mistaken both in principle and in practice. It would be to accept that the Church of England's historic self understanding as ministering parish by parish to the whole population is no longer appropriate and would represent a withdrawal to a membership approach. It would also be to place people of other Faiths in a special category. In practice it is doubtful that the presence of substantial communities of other Faiths represents a diminution in the workload for the clergy. If anything the evidence is to the contrary.

120. The analysis of the census data in the four diocesan graphs implies that the parish churches continue to be the Faith community present in all neighbourhoods with significant other Faith communities. However, congregations have not been immune to the widespread phenomenon of 'white' or 'middle class' flight which has grievously affected so many neighbourhoods. Indeed the tendency for older and younger to move out from neighbourhoods where the 'other' is increasingly present represents a real challenge to many churches. For younger couples their anxieties have to do with their children's education. For older couples it has to do with anxieties about the future value of their properties in relation to their retirement. In respect of younger couples, church schools have some possibilities to retain a balance in their Faith composition as a contribution to enabling a continued neighbourhood

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diversity. Diocesan and parish policies need to consider these and other issues which will make it more likely that Christian people will want, and be able, to stay in their neighbourhoods.

121. There is a counterflow, represented by a steady, if low key, stream of Christians coming intentionally to live in these neighbourhoods whether to be part of the ministry of existing local churches or to work in new ways as salt and yeast. This may be through organisations such as Interserve, through the decisions of individuals and families to offer themselves for service in local congregations or through forms of intentional community. Many congregations have also benefited from people who, having moved from the area, nevertheless return to worship and make a real contribution to its engagement. These are significant developments and there is room for them to be supported and encouraged.

122. The continuing presence of diverse Christian communities in multi Faith neighbourhoods is a powerful counter cultural witness and a real contribution to maintaining neighbourhoods which are both diverse and cohesive.

Extent of the churches' engagement
123. Gauging the extent of local church engagement in their neighbourhood and in particular with people and communities of other Faiths is a complex task and must generally be assessed as much by anecdotal and impressionistic evidence as systematically obtained statistics. There has been substantial research in recent years, both through surveys and in academic research into "bridging, bonding and linking" forms of social capital (14). The bulk of this activity has been devoted to assessing the contribution of Faith communities in general and churches in particular, to social capital formation. Less attention has been paid to the levels of interaction specifically between churches and other Faith communities in their neighbourhoods.

124. In the questionnaire, questions were asked about the extent of both ministers' and congregations' contacts with people of other Faiths. Charts 12 and 13 provide an interesting, if necessarily partial insight, with notable variations between dioceses. These range from 100% of responding clergy in Wakefield having "many" (+10 contacts per month) or "some" (5-10 contacts per month), through to Birmingham, Blackburn, Lichfield, London and Southwark having 70% of their clergy in multi Faith parishes recording "few" (less than 5 per month) or "none". For congregations the picture, though distributed somewhat differently, was similar overall.

Chart 12. Number of contacts by ministers with people of other faiths per month
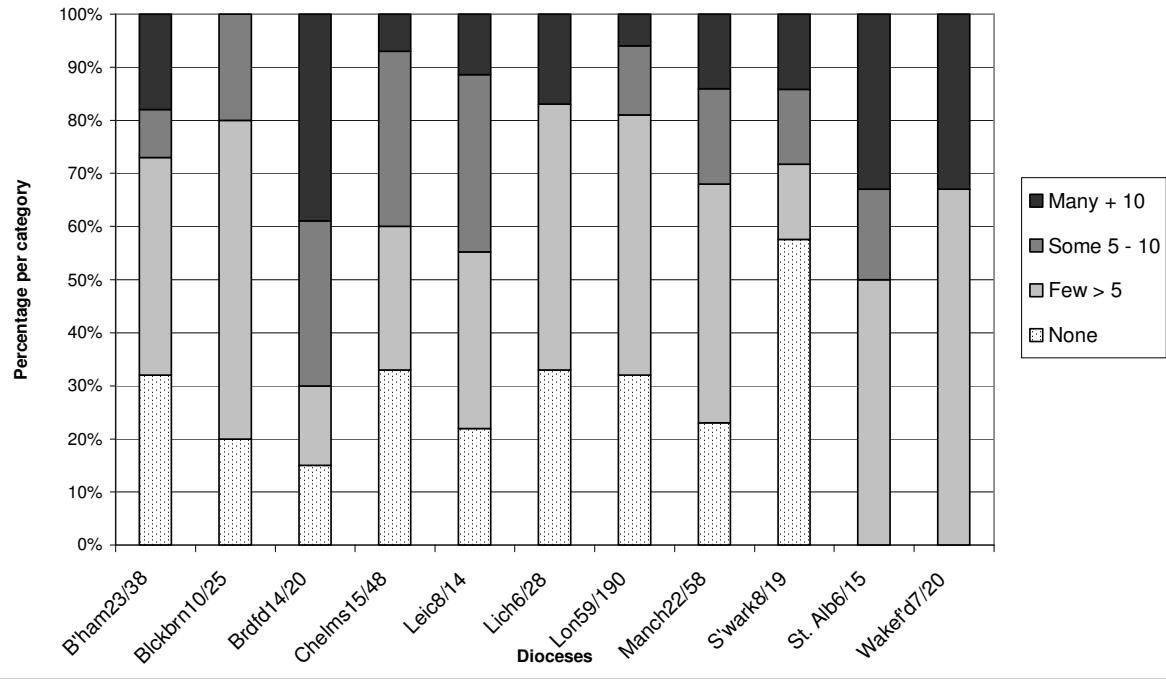
Chart 13. Number of contacts by congregatio with other faiths per month
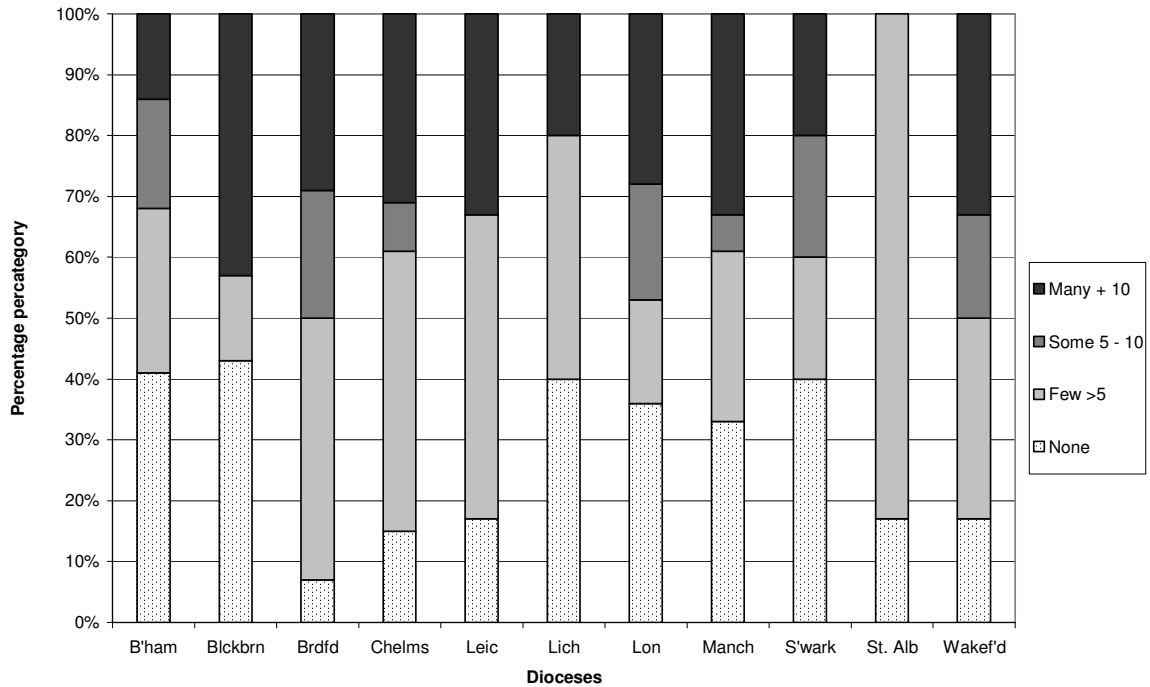
125. A further impression of the extent to which churches are engaged with people of other Faiths in their neighbourhood can be gauged from the extent to which church buildings are used by groups which have a significant proportion of people of other Faiths (Chart 14). In most dioceses the churches' buildings in more than three quarters of multi Faith parishes are used by such groups. Nevertheless in some dioceses and in particular Lichfield, Manchester and Southwark the proportion is lower and questions could be raised as to the reasons.

Chart 14. Buildings used by groups with significant proportion of other faiths?
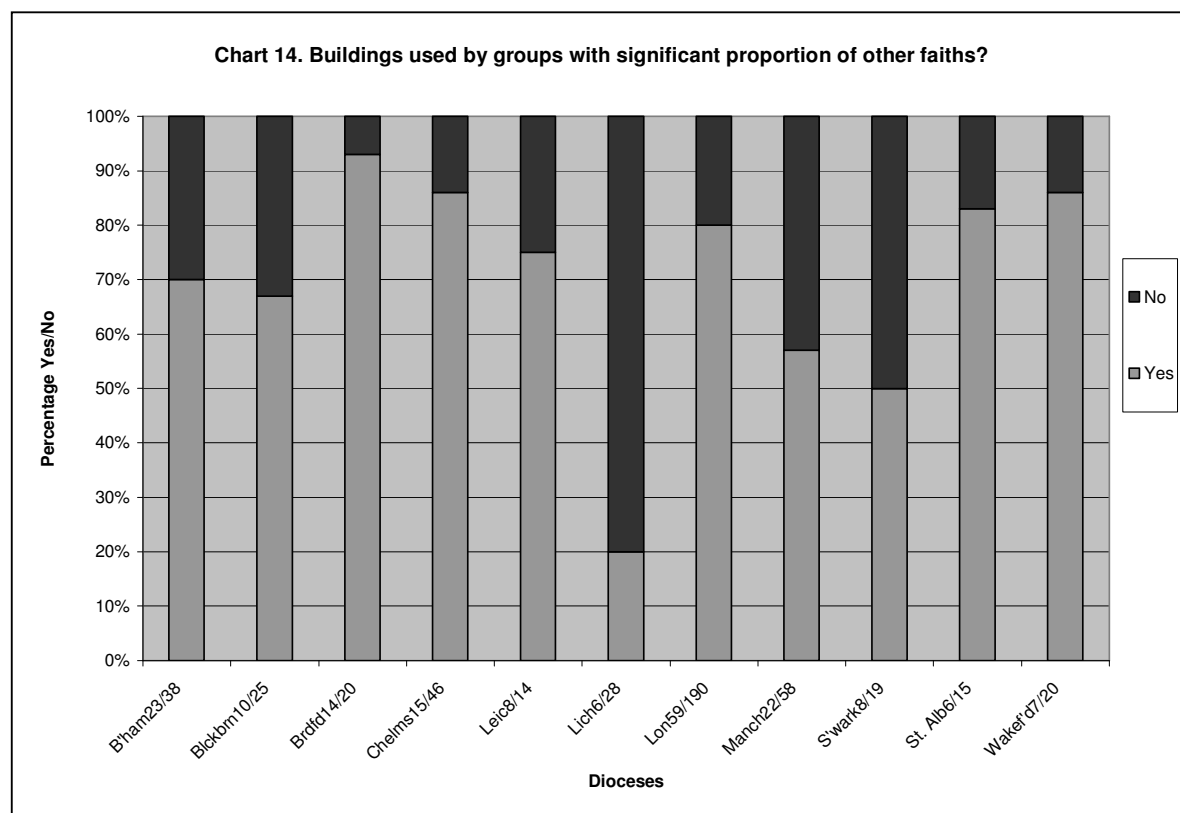
Faith Forums and Councils

126. Another indicator of the local church's engagement with other Faith communities is to consider the extent of their involvement in the rapidly growing number of inter Faith Forums and Councils. There is now a very substantial range of inter Faith Forums and Councils at national, regional and local levels, many multilateral, others bilateral. The Directory recently published by the Inter Faith Network for the United Kingdom: "Inter Faith Organisations in the UK" (5), lists over 200 such organisations, and their number continues to grow.

127. It is noteworthy that of the contact people named in the Inter Faith Network directory for the mainly local inter Faith organisations in England, a minimum of 59 of the 175 or 34%, are Christian clergy or Christian lay leaders. Although the IFN itself does not identify denominational allegiance, it is possible from personal knowledge to identify the majority of the clergy as Anglican. There is no doubt a further proportion, not identified by clerical titles, who will be Christian lay men and women.

128. The current work towards a new bilateral Christian Muslim Forum, active involvement in the longstanding Council for Christians and Jews and in the Inter Faith Network for the UK and the continuing development of relations between Christian and Hindu communities, are further examples of the commitment of the Church of England in particular and the churches generally, to these forums and councils at the national level. It is the case that at all levels the Church of England has very commonly taken the initiative to work with other churches and other Faiths towards the provision of contexts within which mutual relationships can be shaped and developed.

129.   The perception of most clergy and lay leadership is that the initiative in local inter Faith engagement lies predominantly with the local Anglican churches rather than with other Faith communities and this is borne out in Chart 15 which records the extent to which, in their responses to the questionnaire, the clergy perceived themselves to be the main initiators of such contacts locally. In most dioceses up to 80% responded with 'many' or 'some'.

Chart 15. Proportion of contacts initiated by the church
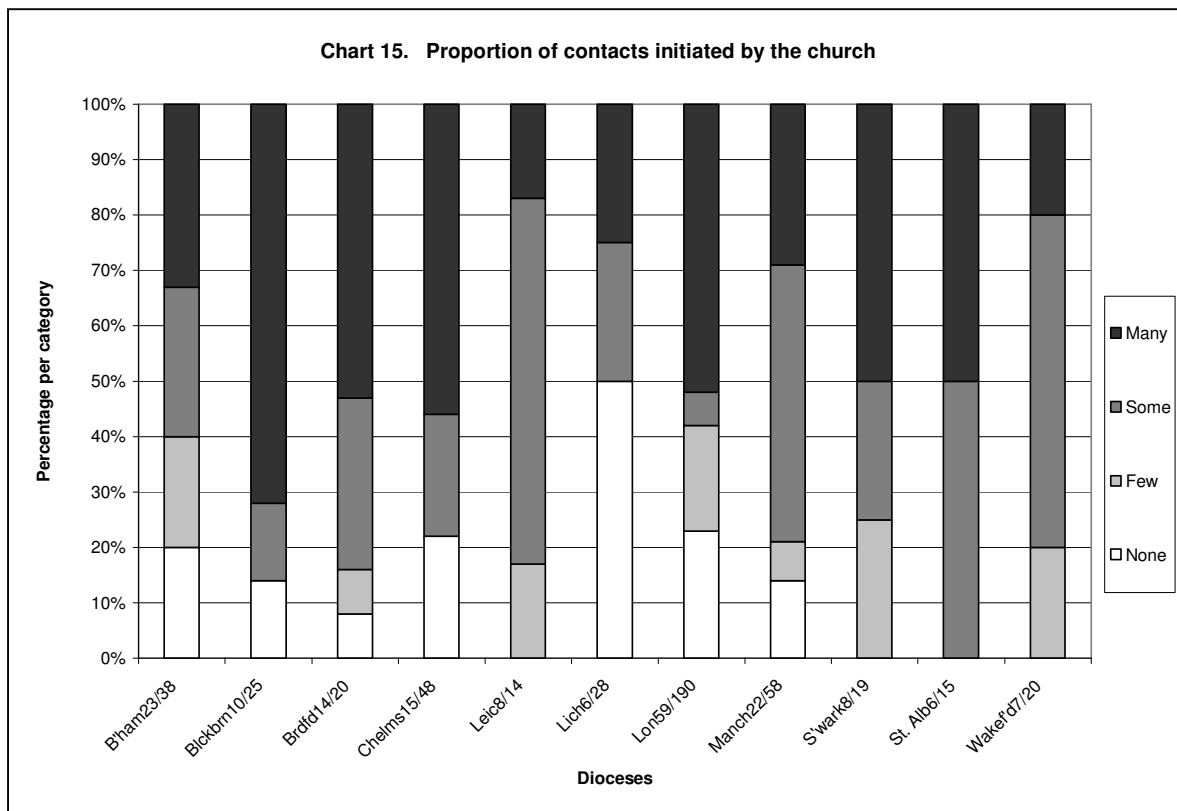
Conversion

130.   In the stories that have come from the Presence and Engagement process a good proportion touch on issues and experiences of conversion. It is clear that the move from one framework of belief to another is a quite common experience.

131.   Conversion, whether from or to Christianity, is one of the range of potential and actual outcomes of local churches' engagement that is both widespread and at the same time often not easily discussed. The word 'conversion' has become one of those words which are expected to bear more weight than they should have to. In some discourse, both secular and religious, it has become the word not to be uttered in polite company; in other contexts it is the test by which the authenticity of Faith is judged. In practice it is a word which is used almost exclusively in a religious sense and captures the worst fears and the highest hopes of many people whether of Faith or secular. But it is not a word that can be banished, nor is the concept behind it one that can be removed from the place it occupies at the heart of Christianity and Islam in particular and of other Faiths in different ways.

132.   This should not be a surprise, nor should the possibility of conversion be a cause for concern in western civil society, since it is a concept which is as much at the heart of the Western principles of human development and of democratic governance as it is a religious concept. Our understanding of human freedom and development is based upon the ability, indeed the necessity, for each individual constantly to address critically the full range of their received values, concepts and culture. Our understanding of democracy is rooted in the appropriateness of seeking to persuade people to adopt a different political perspective than the one they currently hold. Our educational principles, whether

for the sciences or humanities, are deeply rooted in the application of critical principles to the range of currently held views and approaches. The search for religious freedom, of which conversion is a significant facet, has been foundational in the search for political, academic and other freedoms.

133.   We do well not to be over anxious about these matters and should seek to avoid seeing 'conversion' as particularly a religious matter or something which can be usefully discussed apart from particular contexts. There are indeed many such particular contexts, including marriage between people of different Faiths. The task of Christians is to go about their gospel business in such a way as to live out the attractiveness of Jesus and of the Kingdom of God. To want to share with others what one has received for oneself as good and liberating news is not to be discouraged, much less denied. And to refuse to listen to another's perspective and heartfelt understanding, whether religious or not, is to miss an opportunity for personal and spiritual development. The outcomes of such sharing, whether on oneself or on others, is a matter for the Holy Spirit and is not primarily an issue of human endeavour.

134.   In any discourse there are rules and conventions which exist to guide ethical behaviour in relation to conversation, debate and persuasion and these are as well known in the context of inter religious dialogue as in secular debate (11). The emphasis should be on these rather than on seeking to exclude the subject from normal social or religious behaviour.

135.   A flavour of the healthy and widely differing ways which local churches approach this subject is evident from the stories below which have been gathered in the course of the Presence and Engagement process. What is particularly heartening about many of these stories is the way in which so often conversion is not the primary aim or indeed the aim at all. What is primary is an unselfconscious living out of an authentic gospel witness in the midst, and it is this which proves attractive and gives rise to questioning and to turning. In other words, the combination of committed witness and the work of the Spirit remains as powerfully attracting as ever.

1.   *You don't have to mention God, or Jesus, or the Bible: in fact it's better if you don't........'*

We had asked Shireen to answer a few questions, one Sunday morning at St Christopher's. Shireen had asked Christ into her life as an eleven year old. There had been only two Asian families, friends and neighbours, living in her road in Derby, one Muslim and one Sikh. The oldest of the children in the Sikh family, Gurdeet, had unknown to her parents, become a Christian believer. Thus while the parents of both families thought the children were playing together, in fact very practical Christian teaching was in progress.

Twelve years later here was Shireen, a secondary school teacher standing in front of us.

I said to her 'Shireen, here we are, about a hundred people. We aren't very good at loving our neighbour, but we try. Most of our neighbours are Muslim, and we have this Project. How should we proceed? What is your advice?'

She replied, 'First pray - for yourselves and for your friends. Secondly, show unconditional love. Don't think you have to mention God, or Jesus, or the Bible. In fact it's better if you don't. If you do, your friend will be on the defensive and have to respond. But if you show unconditional love, sooner or later some will ask, 'why are you like this?' Then you can say what you like, because they have asked, so are not defensive.'   <u>*Birmingham*</u>

2.   *J is a Sikh lady. When we say morning prayer she comes and prays at the back of church, often leaving before we have the time to speak. On one occasion when we did speak, she invited us for a meal to meet her friends. At the meal she told us her story.*

A retired member of the church (who had since died) used to visit her regularly, along with many other Sikh families, and had gained their trust and respect as a kind of honorary grandmother. J had many talks and prayers over a specific area of concern, and was much affected by an apparently miraculous answer to prayer. Her daughter has been to playgroup, and holiday club over the years. J says she has decided to become a Christian. J seems to have many Christian contacts - various neighbours, was visited by the Baptist minister.

On our visit I tentatively offered to pray, and J gathered everyone together and prayed long and enthusiastically with deep thanksgiving to "my Jesus".She often gathers friends and her extended family together to talk about Jesus. On Good Friday the church was open for silent prayer. She and her sister came, and J subsequently told us that there her sister had a deep experience of

God and has now given her life to Jesus. Her husband is not a Christian, though is aware of her Faith. She finds it difficult to come to church on a Sunday, though would like to. She reads the Bible and would like more help to understand it.   *Birmingham*

3.   A number of Iranian asylum seekers have professed conversion recently - one as a result of being deeply affected by the film "the Passion of Christ".   *Birmingham*

4.   I visited the Church school last week with a Pakistani Christian minister who took part in the morning assembly. Afterwards the year 6 teacher told me that her class couldn't get their heads around the fact that he was both Pakistani and Christian.   *Blackburn*

5.   One of my best friends is Jewish by race and Zen Buddhist by conviction. I believe in this kind of relationship which has developed naturally, not mealy mouthed get togethers where we pretend 'we're all the same really'.
                                              Manchester

6.   We have been forging links with the local Sai Baba group for about three years. They are predominantly Hindu followers of the guru. They have visited services and sung at our Parish Mass last Easter. This Easter they invited us to put on an Easter service for them in a local community school hall. After our vigil mass, the clergy, together with a choir from the parish and other lay people, attended, sang, prayed and read the scriptures, and then the Bishop of Leicester preached. An image of the sacred heart stood on the altar alongside a photograph of the guru and incense was burned in front of both. After the service a number of the group returned to our Parish Mass. Some people from the parish are increasingly comfortable sharing their liturgy with large numbers of Asian strangers and are more confident in telling the story of their Faith.
                                              Leicester

7.   Who is talking to whom? The clergy of the parish get involved in inter-Faith dialogue and are involved in teaching and encounter which makes links for others between the local Faith communities, but we are conscious that it is not happening at the grassroots level. The interaction between clergy and academics or students has little or no impact on our local situation. In a parish with high levels of deprivation, where people's horizons are limited, there is little curiosity about other Faiths and less confidence about explaining the Christian story

or beliefs to others. Our area is 40% Hindu and very multicultural. Two Muslims recently came to (Christian) faith and have been confirmed, one being rejected by their family. Several Hindus have come to faith via Alpha, but families have exerted pressure and pulled them back before baptism.

London

8. We see a regular flow of conversions from Muslim to Christian amongst refugees from Muslim countries. As a priest I do get spat at by Muslims on the street occasionally.

London

9. A Hindu married to a Christian member of the church for 40 years had a dream of Jesus beckoning them into church. He became a Christian aged 70 and has been baptised by immersion. Another Hindu man in his 40's has recently started coming and says he has never seen people who love one another like this.

London

10. At the moment we have several Hindus and a Muslim with us in our worship. They are exploring faith in experience. We call this 'pilgrim evangelism' . One has come to faith recently and another prayed to become a Christian last week.   *London*

11. A man of Hindu and Sikh parentage arrived in church wanting to become a Christian. He joined a confirmation class, was converted, baptised and confirmed.

London

12. For about a year the vicar living next door allowed two Muslim families to park their car in his driveway before going to mosque. Now, a month ago the two families were baptised and confirmed.

Southwark

13. One of the ladies who married a Muslim, converted and left church, later came back. Now her husband joins in social events at church. She still attends family events at the mosque. Because the Church Hall is the only community hall in the parish, many Muslim events take place within it.

London

14. Visits of Sikh Women to Church Services. In the summer of 2003 during the course of a Sunday morning service just after the sermon was preached, the welcomer at the door came to me to say that 2 women were at the church door with gifts that they wished to bring to the church as an expression of thanks to God for answered prayer. I spoke with them during the hymn and invited

them to come and share their story with the church. It seemed that they were visiting family in the area from Devon. Where they live there is no Gurudwara and so following a severe car accident they had sought prayer support from a local church. They had thus felt it appropriate to return to a church to thank God. The older women told us that 'even though we speak different languages, have different beliefs, there is only one God'! They then presented gifts of flowers, cloth, money and wine and left the church. We, were about to be led in our intercessions. I prayed for them and then moved on to other prayers. Coincidentally that morning I had told the church about the good news that one of our asylum seeker families had just been told that they had permanent leave to stay following a lengthy process. I had invited the father to speak but he had felt nervous. After the visit of the leaders he stood and said that how could he not have the courage to give thanks in the light of the women's story and so he shared personally and our intercessions were transformed!

<div align="right"><u>*Southwell*</u></div>

15. *The vicar has recently been meeting a young Muslim man who has become a firm adherent to his faith and tradition after a time of indifference. The premature death of his parents made him think about the meaning of life. We enjoy talking to each other about our faiths.*

<div align="right"><u>*London*</u></div>

Churches engaging creatively

136. Local churches have been at the forefront of very many creative initiatives to engage with parishioners of Faiths other than Christian. Many of these arise from simple, normal presence and are part of the everyday warp and weft of parish life. They illustrate the helpfulness of continuing to work with the traditional Anglican concept of 'parishioners' as a means of emphasising the comprehensiveness of ministry and of 'normalising' perceptions. A parishioner may equally be agnostic, atheist, Muslim, or Christian, but remain nevertheless a parishioner. The fact that Muslim or Hindu parishioners as much as secular parishioners are entitled by their residence to take part in the election of churchwardens makes a significant point which should not lightly be lost.

> **ICLS**
> The Intercultural Leadership & Communication School is a unique approach to connecting young adults across separated communities. It works through successive five day residential seminars, offering insights into the participants' values and religious understandings; and also skills in media, leadership and conflict resolution. The participants form a continuing association across their communities. The programme was developed by individuals from Bradford Diocese, the Council of Mosques and the Peace Studies Department in Bradford, and has now run ten seminars. The programme has extended to Leicester and to other European cities

137. Many other initiatives are very substantial and have involved wholesale changes to buildings and to the very way of life of the church in order that it may the more effectively engage with the mission to which it is committed. Again we have stories to enable local churches to speak for themselves. They could be repeated many times across the country.

1. *Twenty years back, we had a Mums and Toddlers group and some English lessons for Asian ladies. Times changed, and in 1999 the Church set up The Project. We have gone on from Mums and Toddlers ('Seedlings') to pre school education, to Boys' Club, to Youth Work and to Family Support. We are bursting at the seams. We are the sole choice for a Children's Centre, joining with the Christian Medical Practice over the road. Just for now, money is not a problem. When relations between Muslims and everyone else seem to be getting worse, here one is continually struck by the atmosphere of trust, happiness and enjoyment of each other's company across all the natural divisions. And some of our friends are asking important questions.*

   <u>*Birmingham*</u>

2. *Last month when the Government asked mosques to repudiate terrorism, the main mosque wanted to make a public statement in the local News. They asked me (the vicar) to write it for them.*

   <u>*Bradford.*</u>

3. *Our Asian neighbours like to get involved in St Oswald's annual street party. 'Working together', raising funds for a common cause, brings about good relationships .*

   <u>*Bradford*</u>

4. *My newsagent, Mr Khan, had seen the plight of African children on television. What are we going to do about it? He asked. So we got two empty sweet jars, one for church one for his shop. I made labels and together we raised £200 for 'Everychild' in almost equal proportions .*

   <u>*Bradford.*</u>

5. *Last month the church hosted a Community Dialogue with five members from each of the local churches, mosque and school in one particular neighbourhood. This has built relationships across these institutions, but also highlighted significant cultural differences - especially around the place of women in the community.*

   <u>*London.*</u>

> **Columba Community, Bradford**
> The Columba community in Bradford developed in 2001 in the wake of 9/11. It is an ecumenical community located in a former vicarage in the heart of a multi faith neighbourhood. The Society of St Columban placed two members residentially there and it lives out its mission to provide: "a doorway, a safe place, a common ground, a place open and affirming to people of all faiths and none". The community welcomes all who wish to anchor their commitment to building relationships with other faiths in a shared experience of prayer and reflection. To this end there is open prayer on the 11th of each month.

6. Since 1995 we have been involved with other Faith communities in the joint community projects through the multi cultural open forum. This is very exciting in good times, but very demanding of time, energy and optimism.

Coventry

7. The international service run in one of our centres is a joy because it is run by one of our Anglo Catholic churches in co operation with a community church. It serves Kurds, Iranians, Iraqis and many from African countries. Christianity although dominant, is only part - at refreshment time it is unique!.

Derby.

8. Our Lent course with 8 Christians and 6 Muslim women all of whom live locally. discovering that Christians fast and pray at set hours, was a revelation for them and many revelations for us.

London

9. A prayer box on the street is used by lots of people of all Faiths and none is a significant symbol of Christian church caring for all people

London

10. We have also had a number of community art projects based in the church - particularly with textile workshops. Art has been a very good way of drawing varieties of people together in a common task, almost without them realising that they were being 'multi-cultural'. Most progress here happens in small but meaningful ways - sometimes almost too small to notice but not without value.

London

11. Our Centre runs classes in many subjects, ESOL, Asian & basic dressmaking, computers, Yoga, Keep Fit, Drop -Ins, Confidence building, Urdu, etc. People of all Faiths mix in most of these classes, some of which are women-only. Over 600 visits are recorded each month. In addition the hall is often used for Muslim and Sikh celebrations (e.g. weddings). n January 2004, Muslims, Christians and Jews came together for an act of commitment at the local Methodist church to mark the first anniversary of the murder of DC Stephen Oake on January 14th 2003

London

12. I walk everywhere in the parish, not having a car. Personal friendly contact with local Asian people is very important to me. Because of this I have been invited into Asian homes and to Asian weddings

London

13. Yesterday at my local Sufi mosque we prayed as usual together. I am _their_ priest. It is good .

London

14. A project which began in 1977 came to fruition last year when our church Hall was demolished, making way for a new building shared with the neighbouring Methodist church and leased to an inter Faith charity to provide a Parents' Resource centre alongside a Healthy Living Centre. A good example of Christian/Muslim partnership.

Leeds

15. My experience here is limited: I have been in the parish only two years, and it is far too early to say in what direction things are going. I did, however, inherit an intercultural framework, in the shape of the use of our Parish Hall for secular social gatherings, quite a number of which were Muslim. In particular, there have been: a weekly Lunch Club for Asians (recently ceased owing to lack of funds), frequent lettings to Asian wedding parties (now ceased lettings to Asian women's groups In addition, we have a local charity, "Families of Rotherham East", started by St James and doing extremely well, and which among its other work offers IT training to a local Asian Women's Group. The core issue is that a great deal of outreach has been made in this area over many years, and it seems to be "all one way".

My congregation's complaint isn't that there are so many Asians in the parish - that complaint is made by those outside the church, but those in the church are far more tolerant and sympathetic. The issue is that when our lot have made so many attempts to "go along with" their culture, we would expect to be met at least part of the way by some reciprocal understanding -and it isn't happening. A large reserve of good will still exists in our church - and in most others in the area. It would not take long to rebuild these bridges, if there could be a Muslim initiative which set out to meet us half-way. Unfortunately, we don't know how to ensure that this happens, and 7/8ths - 1/8th isn't going to be enough. And it is very important that we keep the dialogue going. A man in my congregation is married to a teacher who has a significant Muslim content to her classes, and she is nervous about the utter lack of respect which the Muslim boys show towards her as a western woman. Another of my congregation has just moved her children away from one junior school, because of a significant amount of verbal abuse, sometimes going as far as bullying, from Muslim boys towards her daughter, and stories like this multiply. We need, urgently, to address this problem, before this particular generation of children grow up to confirm such prejudices within our culture, when today's easy tolerance might turn very sour.

Sheffield

16. Local Action Group for Admission to C of E Secondary School. Some years ago a local primary school was informed that they would no longer be allocated reserved places at a nearby C of E secondary school as they were unable to accommodate all the requests for foundation places.

This angered the parents of the Moslem children and those with no Faith background as they saw it as exclusive and flouting the agreement made with the LEA when the secondary school moved into the area and expanded its intake. As the local priest and as a parent whose child was about to enter the secondary school easily, having 2 clergy parents (!) I supported the setting up of an action group for parents. I met with them fortnightly, the church providing free space in our centre, and fully participated in a plan of action, involving lobbying MPs, the diocese and the school governors etc. We were the first group to have the decision taken to national arbitration and for that to be found in our favour. The primary school now has a written agreement allocating a permanent number of places to them and other measures including allocation of 10 Faith places have been taken. The personal relationships formed have been extensive. One of the group, a Moslem woman, asked for my help when she faced death threats from her family. I prayed with her in the name of Jesus and the next day she phoned to tell me - a miracle had happened and the relationships were now restored and her family had agreed to support her in obtaining a divorce from her husband who had abandoned her. Another Muslim man who is involved in consultancy work both local and with government has just agreed to join our management board for our community centre, happy to be in agreement with our Christian ethos.

Nottingham.

17. When I came here in 1987 or soon after, there was the Salman Rushdie issue. The neighbouring vicar and I called meetings of all the mosque leaders and ourselves. Those meetings continued. In the '90's our church and the local mosque met in each other's buildings on a few occasions. The vicar says prayers in the mosque occasionally. By being here for over 17 years and in and out of our large infant school, the vicar is well known and hence a help to good relations.

Wakefield.

18. A number of Muslim fathers were happy to bring their children to an after school Christian focussed club in church (when it was operating about 5 years ago).

Gloucester

138. It is very often, perhaps normally, the case that most creative church initiatives develop not out of a specific concern for working with other Faith communities, as from a more general desire to serve the needs of the community and to engage with other partners in doing so. This is an important and natural part of the need for churches to explore ways in which their assets – their people, their place in the community, their buildings and above all their motivation and energy – can be used in sustainable ways for the common good. There are also examples of initiatives at regional or national level where a number of Faith communities, often with the Church of England taking a leading role in the partnership, have come together to increase local capacity to engage in regeneration programmes.

St Margaret's, Thornbury

The first St Margaret's church had to be demolished in the early 1990's and a vision was formed to redevelop the site as a modern set of facilities to place the church at the heart of the community it serves.

With the aid of Millennium, European and Lottery funds, the small congregation of about fifty, a wonderful building was created with a beautiful church, community facilities and offices, a community library and café.

A Sikh community worships in the Hall and St Margaret's has developed a strong inter religious dialogue locally.
http://www.thornburycentre.com

St Paul's, Bordesley Green

St Paul's is a small congregation of some forty people in inner urban east Birmingham. Its commitment to a continuing presence in the neighbourhood led to a search to find a viable financial and community based foundation. To this end the church hall was converted into a commercially viable day nursery drawing on the nursing staff in the nearby hospital; a not for profit community café leading into a community advice centre was developed; and finally the church building was redeveloped for conference and office facilities as well as for worship. These developments were achieved over an extended period of creative and faithful commitment.

Faith Based Regeneration Network

The FbRN is drawn from nine faith traditions: Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian. It was established in 2001 by and for regeneration practitioners who identify with faith traditions, or who work with or for faith community organisations. It is the first time that practitioners have come together from a range of faith traditions in this way, and is the only organisation of its kind in Britain. To enable faith based regeneration practitioners to learn and gain inspiration from each other, across the different faith traditions in the UK and establish a common voice to communicate with government and other relevant authorities about regeneration and community development issues.

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139. The deep engagement of churches in area regeneration and renewal programmes is now widespread, whether in neighbourhoods of multi Faith community or not. The ability of local churches to play their part professionally and responsibly in neighbourhood initiatives alongside other partners of Faith or none is a key to maintaining an engaged presence in most localities, urban, suburban or rural. At their best such initiatives can create spaces for sustaining human dignity. The work of the Church Urban Fund over the past twenty years has been of fundamental importance and the Commission on Urban Life and Faith will point the way for the next generation. There is a great variety of Christian organisations, local churches' initiatives and individuals working in 'community ministry'. Where these are in multi Faith contexts, there is real opportunity for mutual encounter, for contribution to the common good and for sustaining the mission of the local church. It is in the 'journeying out' (15) and in the engagement with the other that inevitably results, that the local church discovers and rediscovers its vocation and sustains its presence. Continued and growing

engagement in these initiatives from a local presence in the midst, will be a sacramental expression of the seriousness of churches' commitment to presence and engagement.

140. There are many examples of churches which have undertaken significant development programmes. Often these arise from a clear understanding of the need to adapt and reshape the mode of their presence to what is often the radically new context which has come about within as little as twenty years. Increasingly the stories of these developments are being collected and shared through the work of Faith councils and forums working with Regional Development Agencies and other public sector bodies. This can help to bring the contribution they make to the development of social capital into clearer perspective. There is much more however that could and should be done to highlight share and celebrate these initiatives amongst the churches within and between dioceses, including those whose experience of multi Faith contexts is for the time being limited.

Engaging ecumenically

141. The Presence and Engagement process has been a Church of England initiative and has engaged primarily with Anglican parish churches across the country. This has in part been from a proper desire to focus on the needs of Anglican parish churches; and in part from the nature of the data available systematically to identify Church of England parishes. Nevertheless the Inter Faith Consultative Group which has been responsible for the Presence and Engagement initiative, has a membership wider than Anglican, and the regional groups and their Consultations sought to include sister churches wherever possible. The development of the Churches' Commission on Inter Faith Relations in recent years has been the main ecumenical instrument at national level to create a broad Christian forum for these issues.

142. The willingness and ability of local churches to work closely together is essential both in the face of the resource challenges and perhaps more important still, as a witness to those of other Faith communities – 'see how these Christians love one another'.

143. In many neighbourhoods, for Anglican churches it is the corporate diocesan 'Share' structure which has enabled parish churches to continue to have a minister where for other denominations their financially independent status has led to closure and withdrawal from a visible presence. This has been an all too widespread phenomenon and adds to the significance of the Church of England maintaining presence on behalf of others.

Bradford Churches Inner Ring Group
The IRG was formed in 2001, building on previous ecumenical co-operation, to provide a single overview and framework for action across the inner urban areas of Bradford.
Each of the Christian churches has one representative on the IRG Board which is serviced by a paid officer and by a secretariat of experienced clergy and lay people whose time is offered to the IRG by their Church.
The IRG has encouraged and sponsored a variety of work particularly in relation to co-ordinated approaches to the other Faith communities of Bradford

**London Inter Faith Centre
at St Anne's and St Andrew's NW6**

The London Inter Faith Centre is a new set of buildings created jointly by the Anglican parish and the local URC church. Each demolished their buildings to create a single place of worship and aditional facilities were created to provide a place for meeting, study and dialogue among the world's religions and for dialogue between faith communities and the secular world.
The Centre works to:-
▪ Build bridges between faith communities
▪ Resource the host culture
▪ Work with other charitable, church and government agencies on these issues
http://www.londoninterfaith.org.uk

144.   In their responses to the questionnaire, shown in Chart 16, 15-20% of parishes indicated that other churches in their parish had closed in the previous five years, with particularly high figures in Blackburn (30%), Bradford (35%), Chelmsford (40%) and Wakefield (65%). The maintenance of a Christian presence in multi Faith neighbourhoods requires an active commitment to explore the possibilities of sharing of resources in such a way that closing church buildings becomes a sign of health for the Christian Church as a whole.

Chart 16 Have any other churches closed in your parish in past 5 years?
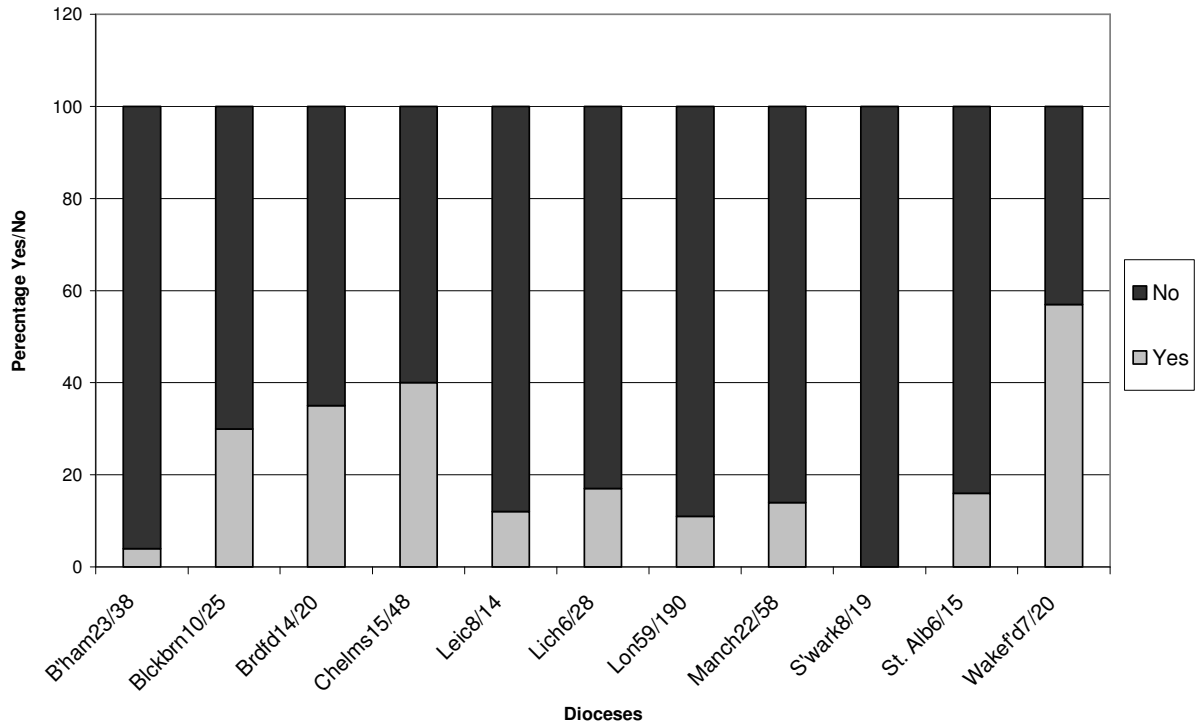
145.   There are many excellent examples of close joint working of local churches. The work of London Inter Faith Centre (at St Anne's and St Andrew's, NW6), and the Inner Ring Group in Bradford are two examples of a wider range that could be cited.

146.   However, the overall evidence of the questionnaire is less encouraging. To the question: "*Does the church work with other Christian churches on anything specifically related to other faith communities?",* the responses were quite strongly negative, averaging 60-70% across virtually all dioceses with the exceptions of Bradford and Wakefield (Chart 17). Local, deanery and diocesan strategies do need to give more attention to ways of encouraging local churches to work ever more closely together.

**Chart 17. Does the church work with other Christian churches
on anything specifically related to other faith communities?**

Legend: No, Yes

X-axis label: Dioceses

Y-axis label: Percentage Yes/No

X-axis categories: B'ham23/38, Blckbrn10/25, Brdfd14/20, Chelms15/48, Leic8/14, Lich6/28, Lon59/190, Manch22/58, S'wark8/19, St. Alb6/15, Wakef'd7/20
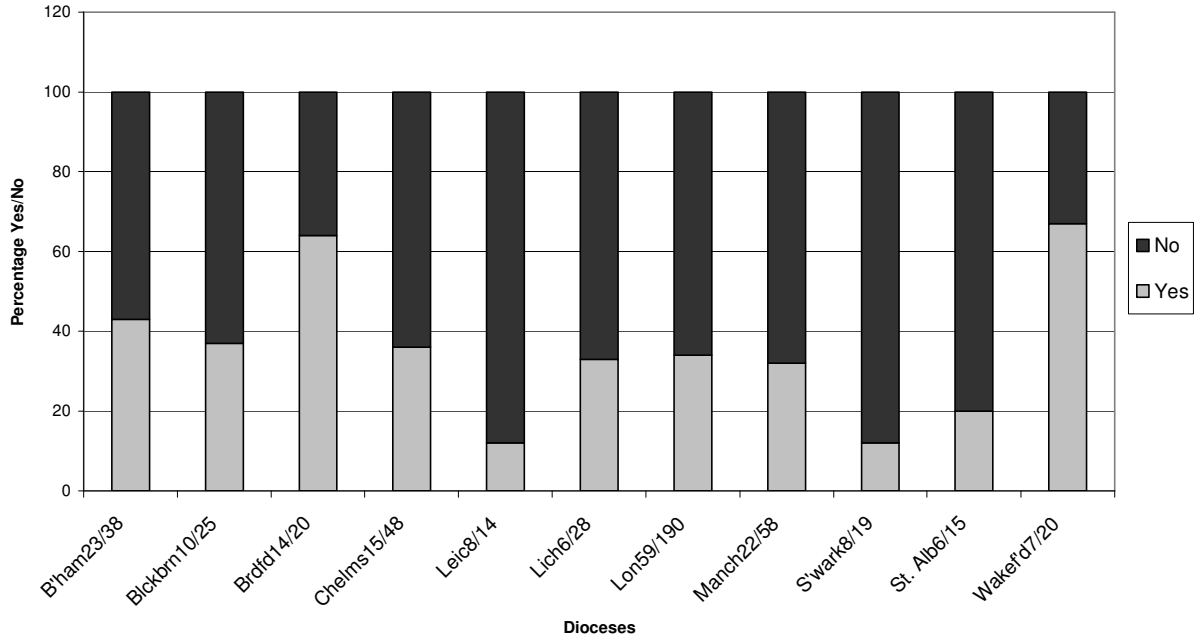
7. PRESENCE AND ENGAGEMENT: THE CLERGY'S PERCEPTIONS

147. We have given some consideration in the preceding paragraphs first to the general context in which churches are present in multi Faith neighbourhoods, and secondly to the extent and means by which churches engage with those contexts. We now have some observations about the perceptions of clergy about their context as expressed in the Consultations and questionnaire. Tribute should be paid to the clergy, who have been willing to speak honestly of their perceptions and of their ministry.

The Clergy's experience

148. In the majority of dioceses – with the exception of Chelmsford and St Albans – around two thirds of responding ministers had less than ten years experience in a multi Faith parish, a reflection perhaps of the relatively recent development of such contexts. This is perhaps confirmed by the fact that in the majority of dioceses, with the exception of Birmingham and Blackburn, most ministers had not originally felt called to such contexts which had 'happened around them' (Charts 18 and 19)

Chart 18. How many years in other faiths context?
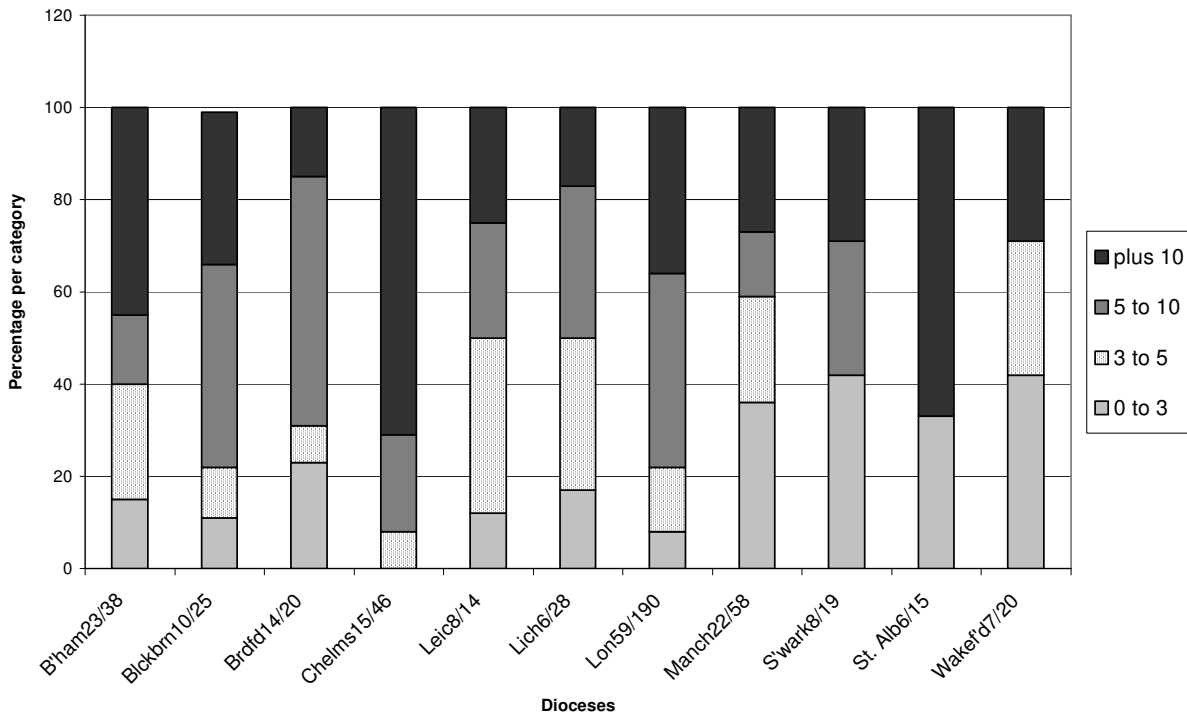
**Chart 19 Did you feel particularly called to this context of ministry
or did it just happen around you?**
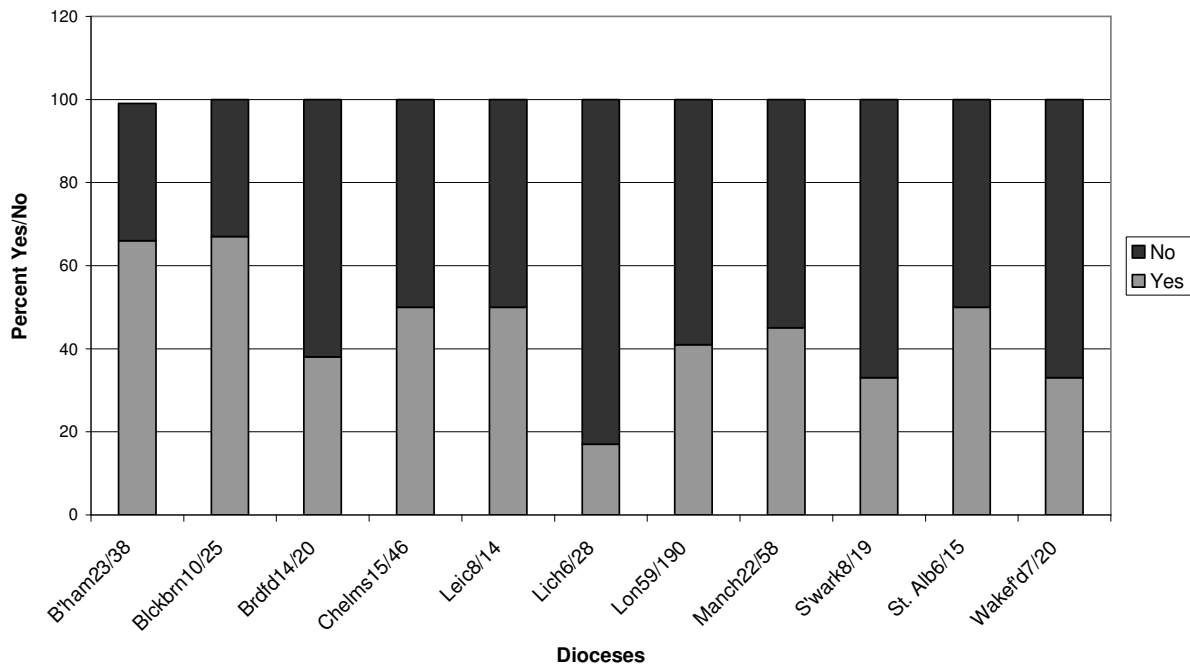
149.   Despite this, and in affirmation of the nature of ministry in such areas, the great majority of
       ministers, usually over 80%, hoped to remain in this kind of ministry, although in the dioceses with
       less than 5 responding parishes, there were notable exceptions to the norm in Chester, Coventry,
       Derby and Gloucester, where none of the responding clergy hoped to remain in ministry in multi
       Faith neighbourhoods (Chart 20).

Chart 20 Do you hope to stay in ministry amidst other faith communities ?
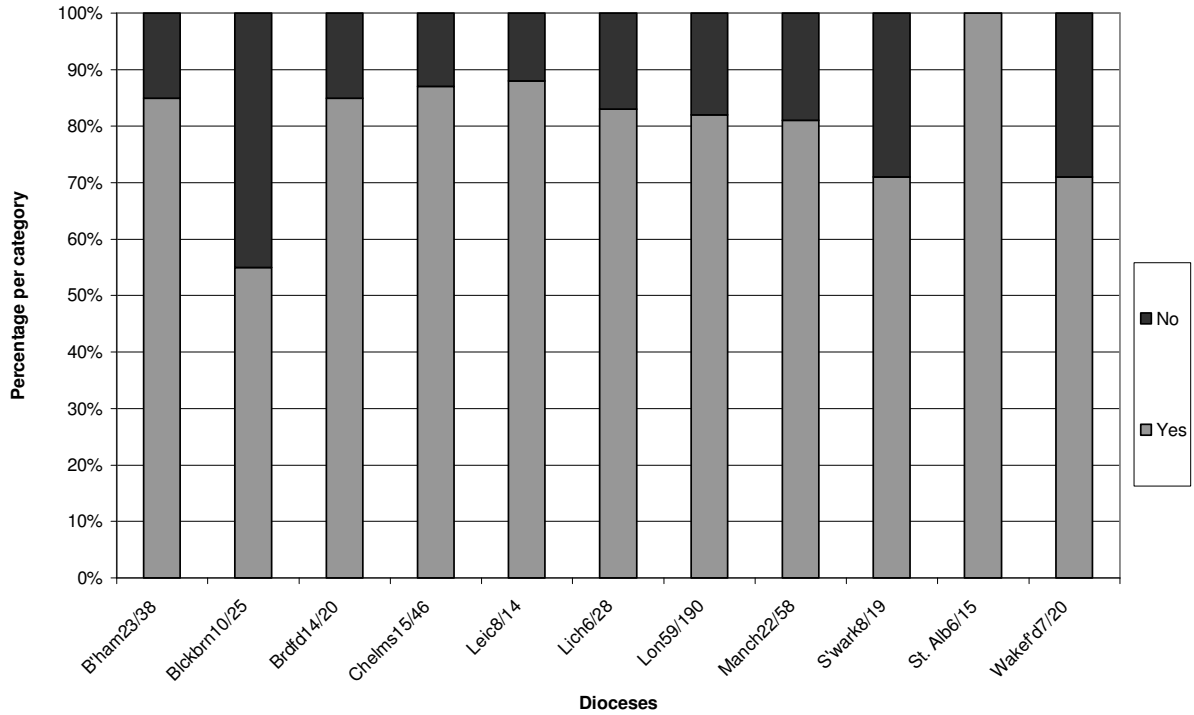
150. Importantly, clergy were generally hopeful about the future of the church in their parish and when asked to indicate whether they were "hopeful", "anxious" or some other word, in most dioceses the great majority, between 60-80%, were hopeful. The notable exception was Blackburn where only about 40% were hopeful; in Bradford and Lichfield the position was rather balanced with equal proportions hopeful and anxious. In asking the same question about congregations' morale, the responses were in general significantly less hopeful than their clergy, but still generally positive at around 60% in most dioceses. There were however three exceptions, Bradford, Blackburn and Leicester, where between 60% and 80% of the congregations were said to be "anxious".(Chart 21)

Chart 21 Which of these best describes your own feelings about the future of the church in your parish?
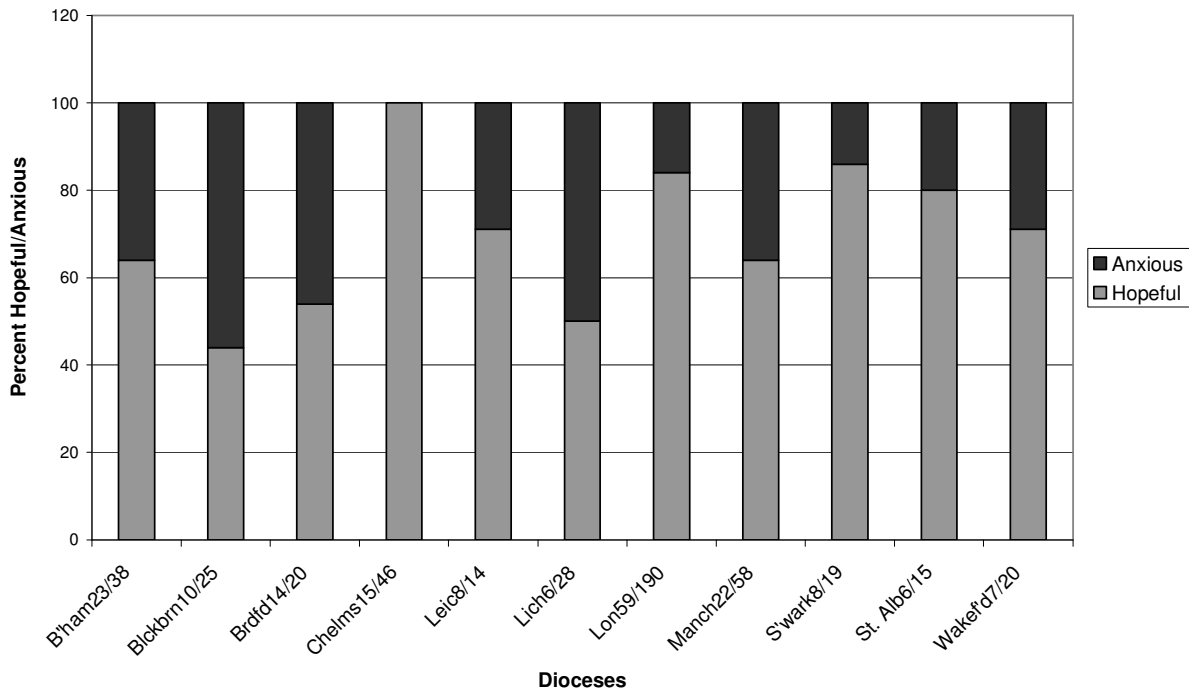
151.   We were interested in the extent to which clergy felt that they had support for their ministry through an effective network. A disturbingly high proportion of responses to the question: *"do you have an effective support network?"* were in the negative. In London, Blackburn, Lichfield and Southwark dioceses three quarters or more of all clergy responded in the negative. Amongst the dioceses with few multi Faith parishes, clergy in 100% of such parishes (17 in total) in ten dioceses responded negatively (Chart 22). To the further question: *"would it be helpful to be part of a Christian support, information and advice network?"* the responses were positive.

Chart 22 Are you a member of any network for support or information in relation to inter faith issues?
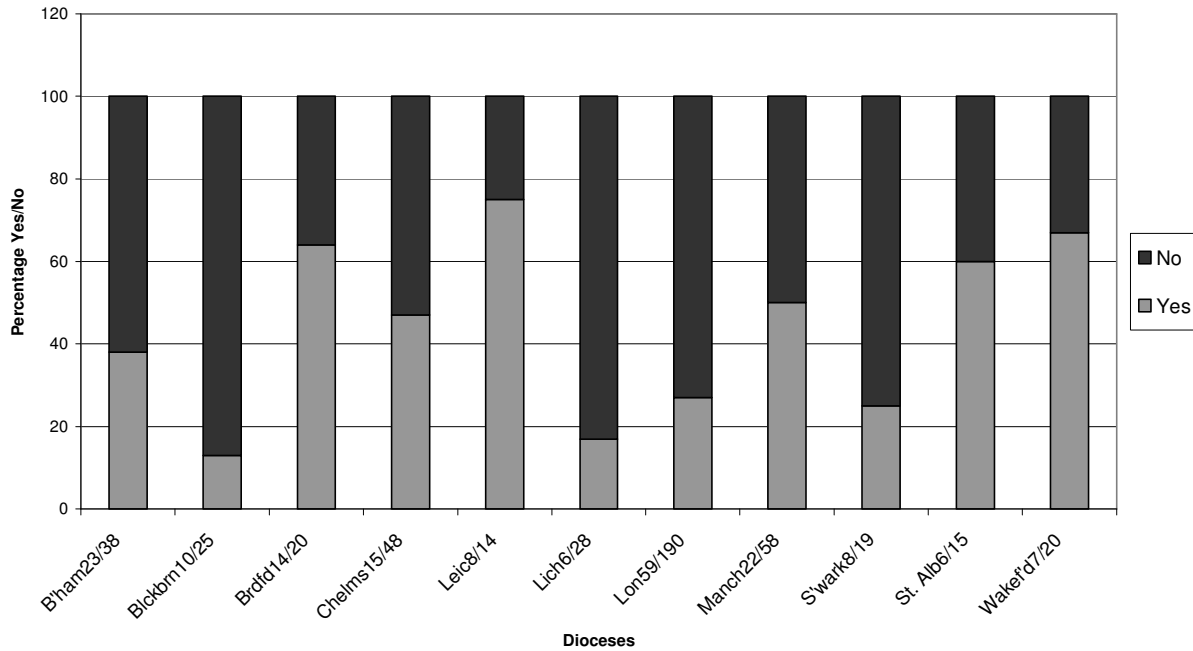
What sustains and what would make a difference?

152.   In the questionnaire we asked clergy what they considered to be the main "enabling" and "disabling" factors in their situation and also what would make a difference. We cite their responses in some detail because they provide an important if necessarily impressionistic picture of the perceptions of the Church's clergy. (Table 4)

Enabling and disabling factors

153.   The factors which were commonly cited as "enabling and encouraging" clergy in their ministry were primarily to do with the attitude and composition of the congregation: their growth and vibrancy, their prayer and life of faith, and their acceptance of change. Other encouraging factors cited included supportive clergy relationships; their place in the wider parish community and working with others for the common good; the vibrancy of the area; working with schools; and a sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit in prayer and worship.

154.   On the other hand a variety of factors were cited as "disabling and dispiriting", and overwhelmingly these had to do with the lack of resources of people, finances and leaders adequate to the task in hand. Excessive workload arising from the nature of the context, the needs of buildings maintenance and paperwork were all commonly cited. Congregations were said to be ageing and younger members moving away. No doubt in the face of these challenges, lack of engagement by many in the congregation was cited in a worryingly high number of responses across many dioceses. Finally a smaller number of parishes from across six dioceses cited issues in relation to the Muslim community as sources of difficulty: "the closed nature of the Muslim community", "the dominance of other Faiths in the parish", and a sense of "unstoppable demographic change".

Dioceses	Birmhm	Blckbn	Badfd	Chlmsfd	Leics	Lichf	Lond	Manch	Sthwk	St Alb	Wkefld	Total
ENABLING AND ENCOURAGING FACTORS												
Congregational												
Prayer and faith/commitment of the congregation	2	2	1	1			9	5	1	1	1	**23**
Growth in numbers and personal commitment	2	1		2	1	1	6	1	2	1		**17**
Congregation's acceptance of change & flexibility	2	1	3	1	1	1	3	1			1	**14**
Strong vibrant worshipping community	1	1	1	2	2	1	2	2		2		**14**
Ethnic & other diversity /AfrCarib/Philipine members	2			2			4	1	1			**10**
People	1						3	2				**6**
Sunday worship	1						2					**3**
That others with a vision have been called into the area	1						1					**2**
Relationships												
Supportive relationships/team ministry	1	1	3	1		2	2	3	2	1	2	**18**
Good staff team	1						4					**5**
Lay participation	2						1				2	**5**
Supportive diocese/good training							3					**3**
Wider community												
Working with the community/central place in community	1		4	2			3	1	1			**12**
Strengthening community	1	1					4	1	1			**8**
Good inter Faith relationships					1		1	2				**4**
Pastoral ministry							2				1	**3**
Extra use of buildings		1					1					**2**
Visitors	1											**1**
Presence of Overseas students/refugees			1									**1**
Vibrancy of the area												
Freedom and ability to take risks/respond to situation	1		1	1			1					**4**
Vibrancy of the area					1							**1**
Feeling of being at the incarnational cutting edge	1											**1**
Young people												
Schools/youth groups involvement				1	1	1	1					**4**
Lots of kids	1						1					**2**
God												
God/Holy Spirit/Prayer		1		1			4				1	**7**

DISABLING AND DISPIRITING FACTORS											
Resourcing											
Lack of resources/finances	1	1			2	1	7	3		1	1	**17**
Rapid population mobility/people moving away	2		1	1	1		5			2		**12**
Small/diminishing/aging membership	1	1	1		1	1	2	3			2	**12**
Poor buildings							2	4			1	**7**
Fund raising	1	3					1					**5**
Too few able/reliable/leader people around	1				1		2				1	**5**
Uncertainty about future patterns of ministry	1			1								**2**
Dated liturgical services and attendances	1											**1**

Congregational other motivation/attitudes

Lack of engagement by many in congregation	1	1	3	3	2	1	4	2				**17**
Paperwork, bureaucracy/building maintenance/DAC	1	2				1	9	1	2			**16**
Lack of Diocesan/national support, affirmation, imagination	1	1		2			4	1	1		2	**12**
Demands of context/volume of work/extent of challenge	1		2	1			3	3	1			**11**
Lack of vision for mission in the wider church	1				1		1	1				**4**
Negative & critical attitudes in Christian community	1						1	1				**3**
Backward looking/stuck/fearful attitudes							1	1	1			**3**
Areas of spiritual weakness in church				2								**2**
Attitude of large, rich churches/wider church generally	1						1					**2**
Sense of failure		1										**1**
Seeing little fruit from one's labours	1											**1**
Muslim community												
Closed nature of the Muslim community	1	1	1			1						**4**
Dominance of Islam/other Faiths in the parish	1						3					**4**
Unstoppable demographic change					1							**1**
General community issues												
Vandalism/rowdyness	1							1		1	1	**4**
Community tensions/hostility			1				2					**3**
Pressures on white British to move away/house prices			1				1			1		**3**
Attitudes of secular society						1	1	1				**3**
Inter ethnic prejudice/racism	1			1								**2**
Impatience			1									**1**
Some young Asian men			1									**1**
Lack of understanding between Faith communities	1											**1**
High levels of mental illness	1											**1**

Table 4 Enabling and Disabling factors

What would make a difference?

155.   The questionnaire included a question: *"What three things would make the biggest positive difference to your church in relation to its ministry amongst and alongside other Faith communities?".* The analysis of the responses is set out below in some detail as it provides an important and potentially creative insight into the range of perceptions of people living and working in multi Faith contexts. Chart 23 and Table 5 summarise the responses into twelve broad groups according to the number of mentions from respondents. "Dialogue attitudes" were mentioned by far most frequently, with money next and then skilled people, affirmation, people and money in a group together.

What would make a difference?

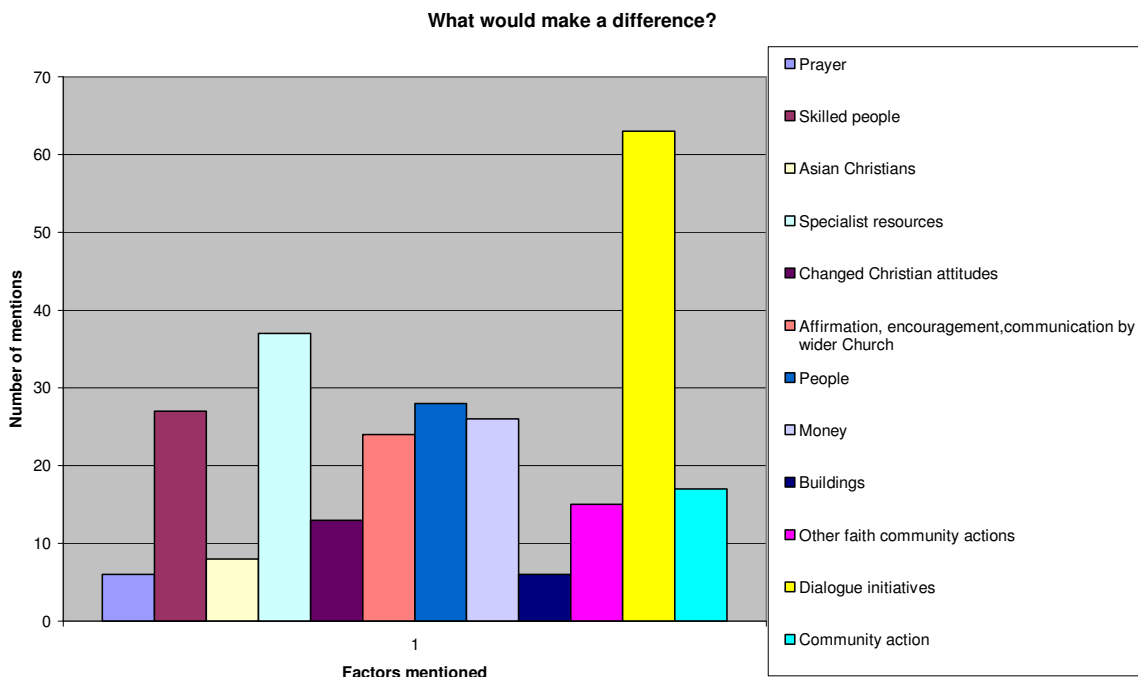| Legend |
|---|
| ▢ Prayer |
| ▢ Skilled people |
| ▢ Asian Christians |
| ▢ Specialist resources |
| ▢ Changed Christian attitudes |
| ▢ Affirmation, encouragement,communication by wider Church |
| ▢ People |
| ▢ Money |
| ▢ Buildings |
| ▢ Other faith community actions |
| ▢ Dialogue initiatives |
| ▢ Community action |

Chart 23

156.   A breakdown of the chart (Table 5) gives an interesting insight into perceptions of need and should provide a basis for further research and discussion with local churches.

What three things would make the biggest positive difference to your church in relation to its ministry amongst and alongside other Faith communities?

Prayer	**6**
Prayer, fasting for healing, deeper Faith, conversion	6

<div align="center"><u>**Other Faith specific resources**</u></div>

Skilled people	**27**
Specific Christian workers: other Faiths, multi/inter Faith/youth/evangelism/other/minister to Asian community	14
More resident Christian/missionary people	6
Resident 'Missionaries'	2
More congregation members able to work with OF issues	1
Continued good bishop's adviser	2
Presence of converts in congregations	2
Asian Christians	**8**
Older Asian Christian	1
Ethnically Sikh Christians	1
Higher proportion of ethnic minorities in the congregation	2
Pakistani/Asian Christian worker	2
Asian members of the congregation	1
Full time Tamil minister	1
Specialist resources	**37**
Language skills: liturgy, general help	5
More and better sociological information about the parish	2
Helpful models for building relationships and sharing faith	2
Knowledge of other Faiths and cultures/More training and information	10
Home group courses	1
Effective work with young people	4
Better co-operation by local school with church/having a church school	3
Help with particular groups: Hindu, Japanese, Jewish	4
Clear but gentle evangelism	1
Better Christian training and education in congregations/more confidence	4
Theological reflection on mission and ministry in this context	1
Christian attitudes	**13**
Motivated members to undertake 'help' ministries	1
More Christians interested in other Faith work	4
Openness and acceptance of all by the church	4
Stronger sense of Christian identity and confidence	2
Renewed confidence and discovery of role	1
Deeper sense of mission and purpose	1
Affirmation, encouragement, communication by wider Church	**24**
Recognition of importance of other Faith ministry by wider church	5
To be kept in touch with what is happening	2
National long term vision	3
Consistent/clearer leadership from House of Bishops	3
More affirmative attitude from diocese	8
Affirmation by Church of gospel as good news for other Faiths	2
Support for isolated clergy	1

<div align="center"><u>**General resources**</u></div>

People	**28**
More clergy	7
Administrative support	2
Committed skilled people	1
More lay participation and leadership	3
Having a curate	2
Guaranteed future ministry	2
Genuine partnership between churches	1
More staff/lay/youth/community workers	6
More time	4
Money	**26**
Smaller quota	4
More financial input for education	1
More cash (to adapt buildings)	5
Long term financial help for existing projects	1
Greater financial support	4

More resources	9
Financial resources to build missionary activities	1
Long term commitment to parishes and clergy	1
Buildings	**6**
Better use of buildings	1
Better buildings	5
Other Faith community actions	**15**
Pro active approach from other Faiths	3
Muslim leadership to speak English	1
Ability to build relations with local imams	2
Identify/know local other Faith leaders	5
More reciprocation of interest and engagement	1
Different local mosque leadership	1
Better Sikh/Muslim relations	1
Not having a large mosque built next door	1
Dialogue initiatives	**63**
Regular meetings with local Faith leaders (especially Muslim)	11
Find common ground with other Faiths and build on it	1
Better understanding and knowledge	15
Hospitality and social gatherings	3
More local meaningful contacts	9
Greater dialogue	4
more support to promote interaction and co operation	1
Openness to meet and share	2
Publicise positive aspects of inter Faith dialogue	1
Help with relationship building	1
More personal Muslim Christian friendships	2
Better channels of communication between Faith communities	2
Greater willingness by congregations to engage with the Common Good	4
Partnerships on local issues and projects	3
Faiths to engage in dialogue not evangelism	2
End of separated education	1
Ability to meet with women community leaders in other Faith communities	1
Community action	**17**
Community events	1
Co operation around asylum seekers	1
Health (especially mental health issues)	1
Strong relationship with Diocese and statutory agencies	1
Employment	1
Strong stand against the BNP	3
Ending war in Iraq and better international climate	3
More work alongside community development officers	1
New centre for the community	1
Better Local Authority religious literacy	1
Better Media religious literacy	3

Table 5. What would make a difference?

8. WORK FOR THE CHURCH

157. As we considered what we had heard and read, a number of overarching, albeit inter related, themes emerged. Each has to do with ways in which churches are insufficiently equipped for their work in multi Faith neighbourhoods. They concern the understanding of purpose and task, theological and scriptural reflection and equipping and training.

The tasks of the local church

158. Behind issues of enabling and disabling factors and behind the responses to what would make a difference discussed in paragraphs 137 to 141, lie another set of questions about task and purpose. Perceptions about what is needed must be related to an understanding of the task or tasks in hand. In general we felt that there was not great clarity about purpose. This was brought home to us in the responses to questions about perceptions of priorities in relation to the task of the local church.

159. In order to provide some impression of perceptions about priority tasks, we asked: *"In which order would you place these 'tasks of the church' in relation to people of other Faith communities in the parish?" 'Learning and mutual trust'; Mission; 'Maintaining a worshipping Christian presence'; 'Sharing in promoting the Common Good'; 'Other' "*. The questionnaire did not provide any definition of the tasks and in particular there was no definition offered of 'mission'. The questionnaire did provide an opportunity for other tasks to be given and for comment.

160. The responses were interesting and quite consistent across dioceses (Table 6). 'Maintaining a worshipping Christian presence' and 'Learning and building mutual trust' were generally in either first or second place. 'Sharing in promoting the common good' was largely a third priority. It was noteworthy that across all dioceses and churchmanships, churches virtually without exception placed 'Mission' in fourth place. These responses raise a number of interesting questions about the understandings of local churches' role and purpose. In particular, what does the word 'mission' mean to churches in multi Faith contexts particularly in the light of current emphases on 'mission' by the Church nationally? What is the understanding of the churches' task that puts 'sharing in promoting the common good as a comparatively low priority? That maintaining a Christian presence was first or second priority for all but a couple of dioceses alongside learning and building mutual trust, is also worth reflection.

	Bhm	Blkbn	Brdfd	Chelm	Cov	Derb	Leic	Lich	Lon	Mnch	Oxfd	P'bro	R&L	Sheff	S'wrk	St. Alb	Wkf'd
Learning & building mutual trust	1st	2nd	1st	1st	2nd	2nd	1st	1st	1st	2nd	2nd	2nd	2nd	1st	1st	1st	2nd
Mission	4th	4th	3rd	4th	4th	3rd	3rd	4th	4th	4th	4th	4th	4th	4th	4th	4th	4th
Maintaining a worshipping Christian Presence	2nd	1st	1st	2nd	1st	1st	2nd	2nd	2nd	1st	1st	1st	1st	3rd	3rd	2nd	1st
Sharing in promoting the Common Good	3rd	3rd	2nd	3rd	3rd	3rd	2nd	3rd	3rd	3rd	3rd	3rd	3rd	2nd	2nd	3rd	3rd

Table 6. Priorities given to the 'Tasks of the local church' by parishes

Equipping and training

161. The responses to the question: *"What things would make the biggest positive difference to your church in relation to its ministry among and alongside other Faith communities?" (Table 5)* indicated that there is a real desire for more specialist training and equipping across the range of issues and contexts. This was reinforced in the Consultations. What precisely is needed varied widely and included for example knowledge of other Faiths and cultures, help with particular religious or cultural groups, better understanding of Christian theology, language skills and better sociological information about the parish.

162. As part of the Presence and Engagement process, we have initiated a survey of Christian provision for multi Faith neighbourhoods through the Faith to Faith Network and the results of this will give a clearer understanding than is available at present. In general our impression is that there is much that is on offer, but in rather fragmentary and disconnected ways. We arranged a Consultation with members of the Faith to Faith Network, consisting mainly of Christian organisations specialising in ministry and mission amongst people of other Faiths. This demonstrated a substantial, but rather less than well known, range of resources despite the excellent work of the Network and in particular its resourcing of trainers. The work of Diocesan Advisers, particularly where they have been given part or full time roles has also been a significant contribution and one which has been commented on particularly in Bradford, Birmingham and Leicester.

163. The backbone of training provision for multi Faith neighbourhoods in the past two decades has been from people who have brought their years of experience in South Asia and elsewhere to bear on the issues and needs of those who minister in multi Faith communities in this country. They have brought with them a vast range of contacts and connections with the world church and have been supported by mission agencies such as CMS and USPG in particular. Their work through Crowther Hall, now closed and the United College of the Ascension, now reduced in scope and to join with Queen's College Birmingham, in continuing to offer jointly their programmes has been notable. Many have committed their experience to parishes and as diocesan Inter Faith advisers and the Church is much the richer for them.

164. Some of these sources of experience - and the equipping institutions to which it gave rise - are decreasingly available and will become of less direct relevance to the local context in this country. This is not at all, however, to say that there will be no place for continuing and indeed growing exchanges and relationships between people and churches of this country and the world Church. This will be of great and continuing importance. However the availability of institutional centres in this country for the equipping of churches from a specifically Christian perspective is now quite limited and rests mainly in England on the London School of Theology's Centre for Islamic Studies, All Nations College, the work of Centres such as the London Inter Faith Centre, the future joint arrangement of Queens and UCA, and a range of provision offered through dioceses, courses and occasional seminars.

165. By contrast, there has been a burgeoning in recent years of the range of secular Centres for the study of religions and related subjects. There has also been a significant growth in the number of religious research and teaching Centres other than Christian, notably Islamic, but also for example, including the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies.

The Hind report Outcome statements

166. The Presence and Engagement process has also worked with that part of the Hind report which has been seeking to develop a systematic framework of desired 'Outcomes' from the different stages of theological education which will help to shape the curricula for colleges and training courses in future. A detailed submission was made to the working party.

"Our overall observation is that questions of inter Faith understanding etc, should not be seen as a separate subject, but as touching significantly on the full range of areas of formation, including for example doctrine, biblical studies, church history, ethics, pastoral studies, sociology, spirituality and worship and mission. It must be recalled that the experience of the early church during its formative

periods was one of pluralism, a context to which the western world is now returning and for which its ministers must be equipped by more than just a little knowledge of the beliefs of other Faiths. In equipping for the current context, it is essential to have a mixture of teaching and exposure: there is a clear difference between teaching by Christians of their response to other Faiths on the one hand, and teaching by members of those Faiths about their own religion. Both forms of teaching should be there at some point although it is worth pointing out that in teaching about Islam for example, Muslim voices can be heard in a variety of ways: videos, books and articles by Muslim authors as well as guest speakers."

167. Some of the detailed comments have helpfully been incorporated in the revised Outcomes to be published. It will be of particular importance now to consider how these matters can be effectively taken into the curricula which will be responsible for elaborating and delivering the Outcomes.

A new context

168. It may reasonably be claimed that we now face a different context, in which the future equipping of ministers and lay people must be rooted in the experience of mission and ministry in the urban multi Faith neighbourhoods of this country. This will be supplemented by the experience of those whose rooting is in societies in Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and elsewhere with significant Muslim, Hindu Sikh communities, which provide not only the origins for many of our other Faith communities but whose social and political issues form the background to many current issues in our neighbourhoods. The Church in this country now has a depth of experience which needs to be understood as a valuable asset not only for the Church, but also for the secular world, private, voluntary and public, which increasingly appreciates the need for a better understanding of the nature and role of Faith communities and is searching for authentic voices from which to learn.

169. We face not only a different context, but also a different scale of need, as the number of multi Faith situations continues to grow and the relevance of these issues to the whole Church increases. It must continually be said that these are not specialist issues for a limited number of particular contexts, but are of relevance to the whole coming generation of leadership in the Church. We have therefore arrived at a new chapter in which the nature of the need has changed and the scale of the need has increased and will continue to increase. At the same time the inherited resources of the Church for the equipping of its people have decreased and have taken on a different relevance.

170. It is therefore time for a renewal of the approaches to equipping and training which will also need to take account of practical financial, geographic and institutional realities. In a nutshell it is unlikely that individual courses providing general initial and continuing ministerial training, will be able to provide the depth of experience and expertise needed for equipping for ministry in the multi Faith contexts of the present and future. Nor will there easily be the resources for the major Christian perspective training institutions of the previous generation.

171. What will be needed will be a form of provision which is rooted in the current experience of the local churches; which draws together in a 'virtual academy' the Christian – and other – scholarship and local knowledge and understanding which is available across the country; and which does so in partnership with appropriate people and organisations of the other Faith communities. What is provided by such centres, whilst being rooted in the experience of the multi Faith heartlands, will need to be 'portable' and therefore available across the country.

172. The beginnings of such an approach are already being pioneered in a number of places through courses which are rooted in churches' experience of what it is to minister in the urban and multi Faith contexts of this country. The Presence and Engagement process has worked with these pioneers to encourage and support their development and to place them within the broader strategies of the Church. The aim of the 'Bradford Churches for Dialogue and Diversity' (16) and Leicester's 'St Philip's Centre for Study and Engagement in a Multi Faith Society' (17), is to provide a core of experience and expertise. This is offered to churches locally and regionally, to theological colleges and Courses, to European partner churches and to the range of secular organisations which increasingly seek to understand Faith communities. These two ecumenical Centres aim to work in a

complementary manner across the North (BCDD) and in the Midlands and South (St Philip's Centre) and in partnership with Christian and other providers. They are constituted as separate charitable companies in which a variety of core 'shareholders' will invest, and are receiving the strongest support from their Dioceses and other Christian churches.

173. Mention should also be made of other important provision from the London School of Theology's Centre for Islamic Studies which is making a national contribution from its west London base The London Inter Faith Centre is based in the Anglican/URC Local Ecumenical Partnership in the Willesden Area of London diocese. The Presence and Engagement process has also strongly encouraged a new approach in the work of the Centre for Contextual Theology based at St Katharine's Foundation in East London which aims to bring together in a network approach the provision of Christian equipping across the dioceses and Areas of London. For the reasons mentioned earlier, London has a world city dimension beyond other cities and will require different approaches to the provision of equipping and training.

Theological and Scriptural reflection and clarity of purpose

174. The Presence and Engagement process included the intention of exploring the nature and extent to which a continually renewed and well resourced theological and scriptural reflection undergirded the ministry and mission of local churches. In the Consultations we sought especially to focus on such questions and to encourage practitioners to share the stories and encounters which had caused them to reflect theologically and which had given renewed meaning and life to their ministry.

175. We believe that a continual bringing together of the experiences thrown up by our multi Faith contexts on the one hand, with the study of and reflection on our vast theological and scriptural resources on the other, is fundamental to providing foundational meaning and purpose to the work of the local Church. Without this there is a risk that in using language which owes much to public policy, the work of interpretation and critique from the perspective of Christian theology and practice will be weakened. The language of 'cohesion and diversity', 'Faith communities' and 'interfaith dialogue' for example, needs to be examined for its roots in the uniqueness of a gospel perspective and witness. Such language is not neutral and carries its own presuppositions, and without critique risks importing other than gospel agendas.

190. It seemed also to us that there was a rather anxious awareness that the standard models of ministry learned by experience in other parishes or in ordination training, were not able to cope with the often unprecedented situations found in these contexts. We gained a sense of much casting around for 'new ways'– sometimes highly creatively – but often without satisfaction. The faithful commitment of time, prayer and energy was often felt not to yield commensurate 'results' and could give rise to a loss of a sense of purpose, focus and direction. There is room for a more systematic approach to the sharing of experience and reflection and to the development of additional, locally grown models of mission and ministry.

177. At the outset of the process we identified the three guiding themes for the Consultations: 'Identity, confidence and sustainability'. These refer as much to theological and spiritual themes as they do to issues of resourcing and structures. Without a firm rooting in the deep soil of our understandings, for example of Incarnation, Trinity or the Cross, the confidence, identity and sustainability of the local church risks being undermined.

> **Hospitality of the Heart**
> Christian faith speaks of a God who through outgoing love welcomes us as strangers into the heart of the divine fellowship, and who commends this pattern of hospitality as a model to be followed by us also. This poses particular challenges to us in a society where we live among people of many different Faiths. How does the divine imperative of hospitality challenge us to invite our neighbour into the heart of our Christian life together?. This is the question posed to us in different ways in four biblical passages offered here:
> - Deuteronomy 26.4-11
> - Luke 13.23-29
> - Genesis 18.1-8
> - James 2.1-7
>
> *The introduction to four bible studies produced for CCIFR by Canon Michael Ipgrave*

178. We found it harder than we had expected to encourage Consultation participants to engage explicitly with these issues rather than with the 'practical' issues and language of resourcing or socio economic and political analysis. We also found that although there is some quite excellent material available to resource study and reflection, it is not widely known, and there is a more limited range of focussed material than we had hoped.

179. It is not that there is a shortage of scholarly and academic material. On the contrary there has been a burgeoning of Christian theological exploration of the theological and other relationships between faiths. What appears to be less consistently available is the means by which local churches in multi Faith neighbourhoods are encouraged and enabled to assess their situations on the basis of theological and scriptural reflection. This is important not only for their own circumstances, but just as much for the wider Church.

180. We were encouraged by material provided for the Greater London Consultation by Dr Anne Richards, Mission Theology Adviser and we include below part of a longer text as an illustration of one approach to reflection on issues of presence and engagement (18). We could also commend amongst much else, experience based reflections such as 'Walking towards the Mosque' by Keith Trivasse (19). We have not sought to develop our own material in this report because we have wished to remain true to the aim of reflecting the actual situations of local churches. However, we are offering to local churches a framework within which theological and scriptural reflection can be encouraged and enabled. An outline of this framework is given in paragraph 181 below.

'Where are you'; who do you say that I am? Who are you looking for?

181. *"The first question that God asks us is 'where are you'?*
The question called out in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve have eaten of the fruit of the forbidden tree. I believe that God continues to call out to us and ask us this question. In its simplest form, it is a question about locality, where are we, right now, in space and time. This question tells us that even if we are hidden away, out of sight, even if we are a small community, the God of Adam and Eve, the God of all our ancestors, searches for us and will never stop searching for us until God finds us. But this question carries more than this, because it is a question about our obedience to the task we have been given, however tempting it is to turn away from God's will. God's patient and loving mercy searches us out and asks us what we have done today in accordance to our promises to serve God's will. Who will we be like, Adam and Eve themselves, hiding from that loving searching desire, or like the prophets, standing up and saying 'Here I am, send me' or must we be willing to be as Jesus was in yet another Garden standing utterly alone, surrounded on all sides by people who have ulterior motives, or who don't care or who haven't got the strength to help, but still acceding to the Father's perfect will.

182. *Do not forget that this question is asked by God of every human person. All people of all Faiths and none are called by God in these terms: where are you in time and space and where are you in your spiritual journey, the discernment of God's will and obedience to it. Are we ready to answer the question for ourselves and to listen and respond to the answers others give? What do our neighbours tell us about their replies to this call from the living God? When God calls, do we hide away from those who come out and walk with him; or do we walk with him but ignore those others who have hidden away because they fear our arrogance and presumption in our right to walk with God?*

183. *The second powerful question from Scripture goes right to the heart of Presence and Engagement. Jesus' question to Peter: **who do you say that I am**?*
Again this question challenges us profoundly today and it a question that everyone must answer. It isn't just a question of giving the right answer, - a bit like schoolchildren groping round every question in assembly with 'Is it Jesus?' Any reply to this question has profound consequences. For Peter, to say that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Holy One of God, has life changing effects, committing him to an entirely new level of discipleship and colouring all his future actions and the manner of his death. Christ challenges us and people of other Faiths with this question and we must pay careful attention to the answers we and others give. It is not enough to give the 'right' answer and think that's the end of it. After all when another person gave Peter the chance to witness to

Jesus's identity, he denied him as strongly as he had affirmed him. Powerful questions from scripture challenge the faithfulness of our walk with God and our obedience. Other Faiths may be more consistent and obedient in their acknowledgement of who Jesus is for them than we are ourselves.

184. *Lastly, the most powerful question in scripture is* **'who are you looking for?'**
Think what extraordinary words these are: words spoken by the risen Christ to those who have come searching for his dead body. What is the answer, - who are we looking for in a multicultural and multi Faith situation? A corpse, the fag end of a minority Faith? Or are we looking for the one whose resurrection is 'the ultimate energising of a new future?' How easy it is to forget that in a small community of faith? The very fact that we are capable of looking for and finding one who has risen from the dead and who still speaks to us, who has given us new speech and new life through the advocacy of the Holy Spirit, that is tremendous witness. Presence means we must be faithful to the questions God asks of us. Engagement means finding out how other Faiths answer these questions too"

A framework for theological and scriptural reflection
185. From a worldwide Christian perspective, being present amongst people of other Faiths as a minority is historically not new and remains the common experience of very many Christian communities today. The scriptural context itself is almost entirely one of space shared with communities of other religions and much of biblical discourse is concerned with Jewish and Christian relationships with the religiously other. By contrast in Western Europe this is an experience which has not been ours for at least a thousand years and there is a need to draw on the experience of scripture, and on the experience of non-European Christian communities through the centuries and in the present day. We are therefore offering an approach which aims to encourage further and deeper theological exploration by local churches as an essential aspect of their ministry and mission.

186. The aims of this approach are:
   • To identify and begin to explore some theological themes and scriptural material
   • To develop out of the Presence and Engagement process, resource material to assist parishes in considering the theological foundations of their ministry and mission in relation to people of other Faiths. This could include a series of bible studies, of reflections on core Christian theological doctrines and a bibliography of some of the existing published material in this area
   • To encourage a continuing forum for the exchange of reflections on such material

187. It should be emphasised that the purpose of this approach is to encourage an engagement with scripture and Christian tradition which will help to give explicit shape to the engagement with other Faith communities amongst whom the people of the churches live. Of course this is not done in the abstract, unrelated to actual experiences, but provides the means to question, shape and give meaning to our experience and thus to give coherence and focus to our actions and the ways we use our limited resources.

188. To speak of engaging with scripture and Christian tradition is, for Anglicans in particular, to provide for a multiplicity of starting points and no doubt also for a multiplicity of outcomes reflecting the different weights which will be given to different doctrines, texts and their interpretations. This is a positive aspect and is consistent with the value placed on the interplay between scripture, tradition and reason in the Anglican tradition.

189. Some possible 'doorways' might be to begin with:
   • A Scriptural theme or story , exploring what it says about Christian community in relation to people and communities of other Faiths
   • Particular experiences or encounters, reflecting on these in the light of Scripture, core Christian teachings and themes
   • Some core Christian teachings, asking the question: "what about these teachings leads to local Christian communities being moulded in ways that both relate them to and distinguish them from other Faith communities?"

- Some contemporary motifs in Christian mission, asking such questions as: "what Christian theologies are the motifs derived from?" or "what do they say to Christian attitudes to and relationships with people of other Faiths in our parishes?"

190   There are of course other starting points, but the key is that each is a doorway which leads to the same room within which there is a constant dialectic between experience, Scripture and Christian doctrine mediated by prayer and worship. Taking each of the 'doorways', a brief illustrative list might include some of the following examples amongst many others:

Amongst the scriptural themes and stories
- The general scriptural context of sharing space with, or defining space in the midst of, other religions
- The teachings and attitudes of Jesus
- The religiously other in the purposes of God
- Relationships between men and women
- The religiously plural context of the early Church

Amongst the personal experiences and encounters
- Experiences of encounter with the 'other' which have challenged existing perceptions
- Experiences of prayer with or by people of other Faiths
- Experiences of compassion and shared humanity
- Initiatives of working together for the common good

Amongst the 'core Christian teachings'
- The nature of God as Trinity, Creator, Father, Love
- Jesus: Incarnation, Proclaiming the Kingdom, Meaning of the Cross, Resurrection
- The Spirit: Pentecostal communication, Unity in diversity, The unpredictability of God's presence
- The economy of salvation: Baptismal vocation, Eucharistic community, Prophetic ministry
- God and the world: Human beings made in the image of God; Reconciliation, Sin, ignorance and salvation; the City as an environment for God

Amongst the contemporary motifs in Christian mission
- Sharing God's mission
- Peace and justice
- The City of God
- Participation
- Communication
- Dialogue
- Distinctiveness
- Hospitality
- Freedom of the children of God

9. OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CHURCH

191. We have been concerned above all to listen to the experience of the local churches in multi Faith contexts, through their stories, through the experience of the Consultations, through the questionnaire and the analysis of the census data. We have tried to present something of their experience although it is necessarily partial and selective. We now seek to draw from this some particular observations and to offer them to the Church as opportunities to which we are challenged to respond positively.

OPPORTUNITY 1   To encourage reflection on the theological and scriptural foundations of the Church's engagement in multi Faith areas

192. We are clear that there is much to be done to facilitate local churches to explore and share their experiences in multi Faith neighbourhoods in relation to Christian scripture and theology. We hope that means will be explored to share more widely the materials which exist across the Christians churches, agencies and colleges and to develop others. We also hope that encouragement will be given to churches to reflect on their experience theologically and scripturally and that the fruits of this will be shared. Furthermore, we hope that scholars and academics will be enabled to shared the products of their research and thinking as widely as possible with 'practitioners'.

OPPORTUNITY 2   To develop additional means of theological and spiritual equipping and training for clergy and laity in multi Faith areas

193. In the body of the report we have referred extensively to the need for a renewed approach to equipping and training and to encouraging theological and scriptural reflection. To a certain extent clergy and lay leadership have made bricks without straw in their responses to contexts which have mainly happened around them. Most clergy were not called to ministry amongst people of other Faiths; most had not had previous experience of such ministry; most lay people have not received appropriate training, although a high proportion of clergy have received some relevant training – a tribute to diocesan and national Inter Faith advisers.

194. We have been encouraged both by the work that is being done in some Colleges, by many Inter Faith Advisers and especially by the energies being put into these matters in Bradford and Leicester. We believe that this it is of the greatest importance that these be encouraged and resourced in order that the aspirations for example of the Outcome Statements referred to earlier can be effectively achieved

OPPORTUNITY 3   To encourage and enable the wider Church to learn from the experience of neighbourhood ministry in multi Faith areas

195. The significance and challenge of the issues raised in the course of the presence and engagement process pose real questions to the Church as a whole and not merely – as has commonly been assumed – to a limited number of inner urban contexts. The questions raised and the learning opportunities offered, arise not simply from the increasing numbers of parishes involved, but much more deeply from the nature of the world in which we live and in the Church's approach to it. The Church as a whole can learn much from these contexts which, more than many, are a microcosm of the wider world in which the country as a whole is set.

196. These parishes provide a particularly powerful outworking of the ways in which the local and the global impact reciprocally upon each other. This is not simply a matter of the obvious connections between the global events of September 11th 2001, Afghanistan, Palestine/Israel or the Iraq war; it relates to the way in which the choice of satellite channel reflects an international dimension for local people; it relates to the fact that 50% of the Muslim community's marriages in Bradford are inter continental; it relates to the full awareness of persecution of Christians in Pakistan amongst the diaspora.

197. The presence of believers of all the major world Faiths living in close proximity alongside each

other, presents people of faith in this country with theological questions about the nature of their faith claims more starkly than has been the case for a thousand years. When other Faiths were for most people located in quite other parts of the worl,d and often as colonial people in the imperial memory, it was comparatively easy to write them off as irrelevant or wrong. When a Church of England parish has over twenty mosques and Christian people have friends and work colleagues who are Hindu, Sikh or Muslim, deeper experience based questions are posed to our theology.

198.   Furthermore, the historic inability of different religious groups to live peaceably together in the wider world is challenged in an immediately local context before the eyes of a sceptical Western society. It is a widely held belief that religious difference is the cause of most conflict in the world. Opinion will only begin to shift on this when it is clear that in our local contexts, where we live side by side, Christians are seen to be as peaceable as Jesus.

199.   The Church's ability to develop an appropriately positive mission is challenged particularly sharply in these areas in ways that can provide models for the variety of other contexts. In a sense, Western European society increasingly has more in common with the multi religious environments in which the scriptures, old and new, are embedded, than it has experienced for a thousand years. The drive for a 'Mission Shaped Church' finds a challenging test bed in multi Faith contexts. If we can develop appropriate, peaceable mission strategies for these situations, then we shall be more likely to do so in the culturally Christian situations of the suburban world.

200.   The Church is provided by these contexts with an opportunity to demonstrate a real contribution to the Common Good in relation to public policies of cohesion and diversity. The visible experience of Christians working with people of other Faiths for the common good is a powerful witness and will go far to dispel the sense of religious people as uninterested in the wider wellbeing of society.

201.   The Church is challenged by these parishes to consider again the meaning of strength and weakness within its Body. Financial and numerical indicators are only one measure of strength. The extent to which local churches can move on from 'presence to engagement' in relation to other Faith communities is also a measure of the performance and viability of a church in the local context. However much the value of faithful presence and close engagement may be difficult to measure - though not impossible - they may be a source of longer term and deeper strength than is sometimes acknowledged and better indicators of the health of a church than Usual Sunday Attendance or contribution to Share.

OPPORTUNITY 4:   To enable local churches in multi Faith areas to be connected more effectively across diocesan and other boundaries

202.   Diocesan and national advisory structures will remain vital to a coherent framework of support. However, because multi Faith parishes represent a 'community of interest' which cuts horizontally across all existing geographic and accountability boundaries, additional means need to be found to enable them to communicate with each other directly, sharing experiences, reflections, practice and resources. The way forward on this, as so often in the present age is bound up with electronic technology to provide a means of communication between parishes and advisers and direct access to the information they need when they need it. Such a system would also enable the Church nationally both to consult and be informed more effectively and systematically about developments of significance.

OPPORTUNITY 5:   To assist the national Church and the dioceses to develop long term strategies to support presence and engagement in multi Faith areas.

203.   The presence and engagement process raises questions about the role and focus of diocesan and national advisers and the level of resources which can be devoted to maintaining an effective presence in multi Faith neighbourhoods. There will be no simple or quick solutions to the substantial needs of local churches, particularly inasmuch as they will continue to compete for resources and attention with many other groups and issues. Nevertheless their ministry and their needs should now

have a higher profile and should be the touchstone of diocesan and national approaches to inter Faith issues.

204. Dioceses need to have explicitly worked through strategies and policies for these issues, not just in relation to parishes in multi Faith contexts, but to the wider range of questions raised in this report, so that there is an integrated approach across diocesan departments for mission and evangelism, training, buildings and pastoral reorganisation. There has been debate in some dioceses as to whether the inter Faith adviser should be located within departments concerned with mission, social responsibility, education or public affairs. What is important is that wherever responsibility is located, it should encourage the perception that these are increasingly general, not specialist issues across all parishes. There therefore needs to be real attention paid to ensuring the means to ensure a cross cutting approach. There may furthermore be reason to reconsider the standard naming of such posts as 'Inter Faith' Adviser.

205. At the national level, the range and complexity of issues to be addressed continues to increase and there is a clear need for a continuing resource. This report has argued for a renewed focus on the needs of the local churches, both in multi Faith areas and beyond and the national adviser post should give due weight to this, not least through support for the network of 'Inter Faith advisers'. This is not of course to underplay the importance of continuing to develop relationships with other Faith communities, with other significant organisations and to be in a position to advise effectively at the national level.

206. The recently revised job description for the national Inter Faith Relations Adviser, which draws together the servicing of the Archbishop's Lambeth office and the Synodical and other institutions at Church House, is to be welcomed, as is the network of bishops supporting this work.

OPPORTUNITY 6:   To improve the availability of data and information and to help parishes and dioceses to make strategic use of it

207. The Presence and Engagement process has begun to engage with the mass of useful data that is available and which can help to inform policies for parishes and dioceses and other bodies. The digitising of parish boundaries, together with geographical information software, provides the basis for a powerful parish and neighbourhood based analysis by enabling all census data to be allocated to parish boundaries. A tool of considerable importance is now available which enables the religious identity question included for the first time in the 2001 Census to be combined with other data sets including ethnicity, deprivation and much more. This is of very considerable value in a number of contexts:

- **For parishes and dioceses to assist in understanding their local contexts and for planning supportive policies**
Although the relevant software licences and data are available in all dioceses, it seemed that with notable exceptions, not all dioceses are at present making use of the data in a systematic manner.
- **To enable a national overview**
The licensing and practical considerations tend to mean that individual dioceses can only see their own picture and that comparisons across dioceses of the kind made in this report cannot be made locally. It falls therefore to the national office to provide for data of the kind presented in this report
- **To researchers and public authorities**
Parish level data is equivalent to neighbourhood data. The Church of England possesses a unique source of local information on a systematic basis across the country as a whole. This is not available from the public authorities since the most common basis is the Ward. Even recent developments of 'super output area' analysis are not equivalent to the database available through parish boundaries to the Church.

208. It should be noted that the Census data is based on the situation in 2001 and is already significantly outdated in view of the rapid pace of developments. In addition, there is evidence that the Census significantly undercounted some Faith communities and some groups within Faith communities. Consideration needs to be given to means of further data research and there should be support for the

continued inclusion of a comparable question on religious identity in the 2010 Census.

209. Beyond the Census and equivalent data, there is a wide body of other information and resource materials available, ranging from conferences and seminars through unpublished research materials at Master's and Doctorate levels, to published articles and books.

210. There is in particular a remarkable range of Christian people, many of them within the Church of England, who have deep experience and profound understanding of the full range of other Faith communities and the issues produced by a multi Faith society. There is a strong case for the gifts of these people to be more systematically brought together for mutual exchange and as a means of ensuring that the best advice is available to the Church locally and nationally.

CONCLUSION

211. A formal conclusion of this report seeking to sum up its contents in a few succinct paragraphs is neither necessary nor desirable. Our hope is that the material speaks for itself and will interest, surprise and provoke those who read it and that it will give rise to further questioning in all dioceses, with or without multi Faith parishes. Above all our hope is that it will open eyes to understanding that what appears as weakness and liability, is in fact strength and asset. "*for God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are*".

NOTES
1) Census data: "Census output is Crown copyright and is reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO and The Queen's Printer for Scotland".
2) Only a proportion of the data accumulated in the Presence and Engagement process can be presented in this report. The remaining data, particularly that in relation to a range of dioceses, is available from Mission and Public Affairs Division at Church House.
3) Much additional data which has been gathered in the course of the Presence and Engagement research, is available from the Revd Guy Wilkinson in the Mission and Public Affairs Division of Church House. Email: guy.Wilkinson@c-of-e.org.uk
4) Some of the main national organisations associated with inter Faith work are set out diagrammatically.

UK and national inter faith bodies

The UK currently has approximately 20 UK and national bodies. These include umbrella or linking bodies based on organisational membership, such as the Inter Faith Network for the UK and three of its member bodies: the Scottish Inter Faith Council, the Inter Faith Council for Wales and the Northern Ireland Inter Faith Forum.

The Inter Faith Network itself was founded in 1987 to link and promote good relations between people of the major faiths in the UK (see www.interfaith.org.uk). Also among the UK inter faith organisations are bodies focusing on relationships between two or three particular faiths, for example the Council of Christians and Jews which was founded in 1942 and the Three Faiths Forum (a more recently founded body which promotes understanding between Jews, Muslims and Christians).

The Inter Faith Network's members include the representative bodies of the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jain, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh and Zoroastrian faiths; national and local inter faith organisations; and educational and academic bodies specialising in inter faith relations. With its member bodies, the Network works to promote good relations between persons of different religious faiths by: holding meetings of its member bodies where social and religious questions of concern to the different faith communities can be examined together; setting up multi faith working groups, seminars and conferences to pursue particular issues in greater depth (such as the role of women in faith communities and religious discrimination); fostering inter faith co-operation on social issues; running an information and advice service; publishing materials to help people working in the religious and inter faith sectors; in consultation with member bodies, helping to provide contacts and participants for inter faith events and projects and for television and radio programmes.

At UK level, faith communities meet through the Faith Communities Consultative Forum (part of the Inter Faith Network for the UK) to discuss together issues of common concern, eg their responses to planned legislation such as the proposed amendment, within the Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill, to extend legislation to cover incitement to hatred against religious groups and the plans for the establishment of a single Commission for Equality and Human Rights.
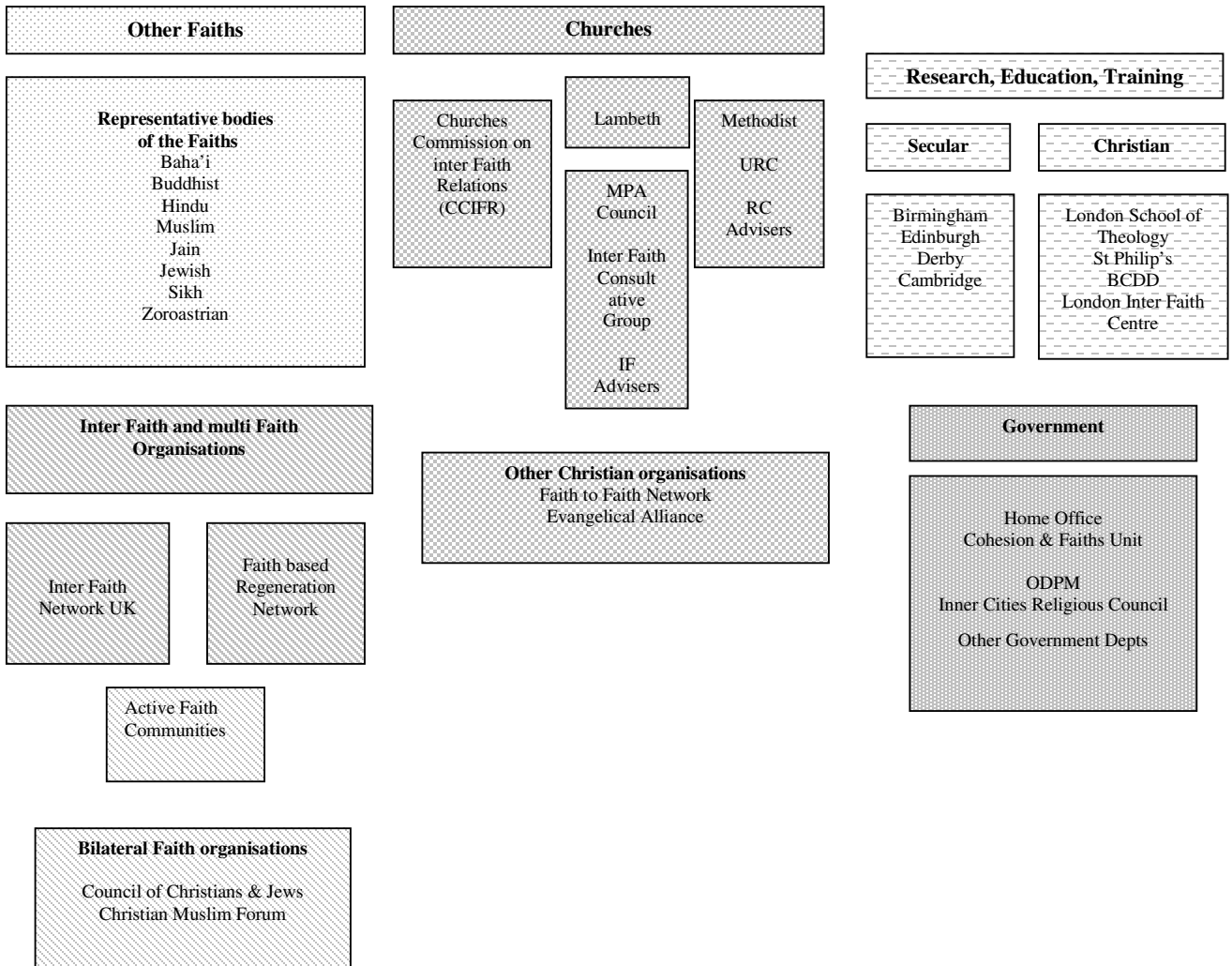
Government

Central Government has increasingly been developing ways to consult with faith communities. The Inner Cities Religious Council of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister was started in 1992 and continues to meet, chaired by a Government Minister, to advise on inner city issues. In 2003 a Faith Communities Unit (FCU) was established within the Home Office. Among the significant pieces of work carried out through the FCU was the report, *Working Together: Cooperation between Government and Faith Communities* see http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs3/workingtog_faith040329.pdf).
Since 2005 the work of the FCU unit has been integrated with that of the Home Office's unit carrying responsibility for Community Cohesion under the new name of the Cohesion and Faiths Unit. Alongside its work with individual faith communities, the new combined Unit works to encourage positive inter faith relations in the UK.

Local government is also giving attention to inter faith issues. For example, the Local Government Association's document, *Community Cohesion: An Action Guide* (downloadable from

http://www.lga.gov.uk) published in October 2004 with the Home Office, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, IDeA, Commission for Racial Equality and the Inter Faith Network, includes a section specifically encouraging work with faith communities and support of inter faith projects as important contributors to community cohesion. Some local authorities, such as Leicester City Council, have taken a particularly active role in working with their local inter faith body (Leicester Council of Faiths) and part fund this.

Other Faiths

**Representative bodies
of the Faiths**
Baha'i
Buddhist
Hindu
Muslim
Jain
Jewish
Sikh
Zoroastrian

**Inter Faith and multi Faith
Organisations**

Inter Faith
Network UK

Faith based
Regeneration
Network

Active Faith
Communities

Bilateral Faith organisations

Council of Christians & Jews
Christian Muslim Forum

Churches

Churches
Commission on
inter Faith
Relations
(CCIFR)

Lambeth

MPA
Council

Inter Faith
Consult
ative
Group

IF
Advisers

Methodist

URC

RC
Advisers

Other Christian organisations
Faith to Faith Network
Evangelical Alliance

Research, Education, Training

Secular

Christian

Birmingham
Edinburgh
Derby
Cambridge

London School of
Theology
St Philip's
BCDD
London Inter Faith
Centre

Government

Home Office
Cohesion & Faiths Unit

ODPM
Inner Cities Religious Council

Other Government Depts

REFERENCES

1. John 10:10
2. Eg: 'Building Cohesive Communities: A report of the Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion'. Home Office 2001
3. Eg: The National Strategy on neighbourhood Renewal developed through many policy documents since the Report by the Social Exclusion Unit: National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal: a framework for consultation' 2000
4. Eg: 'Faith in Regeneration' The Policy Press 2003
5. Inter Faith Organisations in the UK: A Directory, second edition published January 2005. Inter Faith Network.
6. Faith in the City. The Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas. Church House Publishing1985
7. Towards a Theology of inter Faith dialogue
8. Inter Faith worship
9. Christian witness in a plural society
10. The Mystery of Salvation. The Doctrine Commission of the Church of England. GS 1155 Church House Publishing 1995
11. Eg: The four principles of dialogue; British Council of Churches 1981. The four principles were:
    - Dialogue begins when people meet each other
    - Dialogue depends upon mutual understanding and mutual trust
    - Dialogue makes it possible to share in service to the community
    - Dialogue becomes the medium of authentic witness
12. Greg Smith. Private communication. Data from Census 2001 ONS Crown Copyright: Maps / Data Processing by Greg Smith (University of East London).
13. Alan Sharp. Private communication
14. A classic text on social capital is 'Bowling Alone' by Robert D Puttnam 2000 Simon & Schuster
15. 'Journeying Out' by Ann Morisy. 2004 Morehouse
16. Further documentation available from Dr Philip Lewis
17. Further documentation available from The Revd Canon Dr Andrew Wingate
18. The full text is available from The Revd Guy Wilkinson
19. Walking Towards the Mosque. The Revd Keith Trivasse. Contact Pastoral Monograph Number 13 2004

GLOSSARY

(i)   church(es)
        A local Christian congregation meeting for worship, ministry and mission and usually owning or having the use of a church building or buildings

(ii)   Church
        The Church of England nationally or the Church worldwide across all Christian denominations

(iii)   Deanery
        A geographic unit of a diocese consisting of a variable number of parishes

(iv)   Diocese
        The geographic area under the jurisdiction of a diocesan bishop of the Church of England

(v)   Parish
        The geographic area of an ecclesiastical parish, for which bishop, clergy and Parochial Church Council are jointly responsible

(vi)   Parishioner
        A person who resides in an ecclesiastical parish of the church of England, and by that having legal rights to be an elector of the churchwarden at the annual vestry meeting

(vii)   Parochial Church Council
        The mainly elected body of lay Christians responsible with the clergy for the governance of the life of the parish church

(viii) Belief
        In the usual religious sense, a set of understandings or hypotheses considered to be coherent which describe a person's framework of reference in relation to God. However in public policy terms it is increasingly being used to differentiate a non theistic (for example humanist) set of beliefs from a theistic set which are referred to as 'religion' or 'faith'. Thus in the context of legislation on religious discrimination, a 'religion and beliefs' strand makes this distinction.

(ix)   Religion
        Refers to a set of beliefs and practices organised formally or informally and distinguished from other Religions in various ways. Christianity, Judaism and, Islam for example have been content to know themselves as 'Religions'; Hinduism generally also, Buddhism less so. Increasingly 'Religion' has given way to 'Faith' as a less institutionally referenced word. Faith also increasingly encompasses sets of belief and practice which would not normally refer to themselves as Religions for example, Paganism.

(x)   faith (lower case)
        In a religious context, the word refers to an attitude, quality or motivation amongst people who put their trust in God, however defined.

(xi)   Faith or Faith community (upper case)
        The term used in the public sector and increasingly more widely to refer to a religion or to an activity characterised by religion, for example 'Faith schools' for Aided schools, Faith Forum for a gathering of individuals representing different religious perspectives. The word tends to ignore differences within religions and tends to equate religions of widely differing sizes, histories and theisms

(xii)   Other Faith
        Faiths or Religions other than Christianity. No doubt from the perspective of Faiths other than Christian, the term includes Christianity and Faiths other than the one in question.

(xiii) inter Faith, (widely with different spellings: interfaith, inter-faith, Inter Faith)
Usually used as an adjective as in inter Faith relations, inter Faith dialogue, inter Faith worship, etc. It refers to the means or activities through which people of two or more religions engage with each other for better mutual understanding, for projects or activities in common or for other reasons. It should be noted that 'interfaith' as a single word is avoided by some people in order to emphasise that 'inter faith' is a term used for relations between different faiths, not some new syncretistic construct.'

(xiv) Multi Faith
Usually used as an adjective as in multi Faith area or multi Faith organisation. It describes the religious composition of an area or an organisation. It often does not distinguish between for example areas with a significant variety of Faiths and those, such as in many areas especially outside London, where there is only one significant Faith community other than Christianity.

(xv) Religious literacy
A phrase coined to describe an adequate level of knowledge and understanding of religious belief and practice. It is used in particular to refer to the ability to make appropriate distinctions between religious belief and practice on the one hand and racial, ethnic, cultural, geographic and linguistic issues on the other.

(xvi) Mission
The work of God in the world with which Christians are called to discover and associate themselves.

(xvii) Neighbourhood
A geographic area, usually of no more than a few thousand residents, with which a significant proportion of the residents or others identify. It is usually defined by particular physical features or boundaries, by settlement history or by the ethnic, religious or cultural composition of the residents. It is a word much referred to in recent urban public policy literature as in 'neighbourhood regeneration or renewal'.

(xviii) Diversity and cohesion
Words widely used in public policy discourse in recent years in relation to the desired nature of society. Diversity refers to the increasingly plural nature of society, ethnically, religiously, culturally, in family structures and in many other ways. 'Cohesion' entered the public policy language after the disturbances in Northern towns in 2001 and refers to the extent to which a diverse society can also have in common a range of agreed attributes, notably certain basic values and consequent behaviours.

(xix) Separation and segregation
Together with other phrases such as 'parallel lives', these are words which in their current usage have entered the public domain largely since the disturbances in the Northern towns in 2001. They refer to the extent to which neighbourhoods have become increasingly homogenous in their composition and the residents of different neighbourhoods increasingly unknown to each other. The report 'Community Cohesion' by the Independent Review Team chaired by Ted Cantle in 2001 concluded: "The team was particularly struck by the depth of polarisation of our towns and cities. Separate educational arrangements, community and voluntary bodies, employment, places of worship, language, social and cultural networks… operate on the basis of a series of parallel lives"