

Sharing the Gospel of Salvation

Foreword

The gospel testifies to the uniqueness of Jesus Christ in God's plan for the salvation of the world. There can be no greater theme – and no higher calling for the Church than to bear witness to salvation in and through Christ. One might think that any attempt to address a matter of such magnitude in the thin pages of a Synod report is sure to be inadequate and, indeed, there is much that this report does not, and cannot do. Nevertheless, it is a timely and important report because it addresses the day to day impact of Christian doctrine on the life of the Church and our relationship with the people and cultures around us.

There is often a gap between the great declarations of Christian doctrine and the practical outworking of belief in the daily discipleship of Christian men and women and the communities they create and inhabit. The gap is not so much one of inconsistency but one of understanding the connections. The Church in every age must give close attention to how it lives as a neighbour amongst others, and how such neighbourliness is informed and shaped by its overarching beliefs about the nature of God and Christ's transformation of the world. This report is a bridge between what we believe about God's saving work in Christ and the practical implications for discipleship in a world made profoundly complex and confusing by rapid change and a deepening appreciation of social, cultural and religious plurality.

When Mr Paul Eddy moved the Private Member's Motion at General Synod which led to this report, he was supported, both on the platform and in the debate itself, by Synod members from right across the range of doctrine and practice within the Church of England. That breadth of support exemplified how the Church of England is strongly united in its commitment to the unique revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

How, then, shall we share this amazing gift with the people around us? This is where a note of uncertainty sometimes creeps in. In a society fixated on personal choice, it is sometimes, paradoxically, frowned upon to promote one's own choices as good for others. Our society is also acutely alert to instances of the abuse of power, and this sensitivity is greatly to be welcomed. It also makes us – rightly – alert to abuses of power perpetrated by Christians in the past, as well as to the social inequalities which make people vulnerable to the power of others today. The stronger sense of difference and diversity – including religious diversity – in Britain today has challenged us to become a more generous culture. Sadly, it has also made many nervous of publicly espousing a vision of the common good for all people. Yet, if the Good News of God in Christ is good for us, how can we refrain from commending it as good for others too?

Sharing the Gospel of Salvation makes two helpful points in this respect. First, it reminds the Church of its history in relation to other cultures around it. It was the desire to share the gift of God in Christ which brought the Christian faith to Britain, and it is that same desire which has renewed the Church through the centuries as it has come into contact with the insights, wisdom and challenges of others. The Church's history of mission, like all long histories, has its shadow side. The call to mission, when allied with political or economic power, has sometimes led to actions in Christ's name which have been inconsistent with Christ's own teaching. When evangelism and political dominance become intertwined there are always problems. But the fear of getting it wrong should never obscure the Christian's commitment to the good of all and to making Christ the centrepiece of that good. Too much reticence is as untrue to our history and our vocation today as was the cultural insensitivity of an earlier age. There is much to be thankful for in the faithful and sacrificial work and witness of two centuries or more of Anglican missions, most notably in the work of the mission societies, particularly where they have been ready to serve the priorities of the indigenous church.

Secondly, the report provides a salutary warning of just how dominant the language of the market – of choice, consumption and marketing – has become in our culture. Markets are a key part of a free and prosperous society. But they can never provide all that is needed to secure wellbeing and happiness. A confusion between mission and marketing is understandable but unhelpful.

Christ's saving work is not a commodity to be sold but a gift to be shared. If we keep always in mind the central insight that it is not we who bring others to Christ but God working in them, we can avoid colluding with the marketing mindset which would paint every evangelist as a huckster and portray God's children as 'targets' for conversion. When our encounters with our neighbours, of other faiths and none, are distinguished from exercises in salesmanship, we can be confident that we are sharing God's love rather than marketing another lifestyle choice.

But what does this mean in practice? A large part of this report is drawn from the work of parishes, clergy and lay people living out their discipleship, many in areas where, as in the early days of the Church, Christians live as citizens alongside large numbers of people of other faiths. The report places each example in its social context and goes on to show what real churches and real Christians are doing to proclaim Christ amongst their neighbours.

Because we share our humanity and citizenship with others, there is much common activity across differences of faith and religion. The best work recognises that, because we are Christians, our understanding of the good and our reasons for pursuing the good in real-life situations are grounded in the reality of Jesus Christ – and we must be entirely up front about that source of our commitment.

The experience of parishes and people working in multifaith contexts is that, whilst stridency is counterproductive, failure to be open about our beliefs is equally unhelpful. Others want to know why we do things as well as seeing what we do. Because God loves all His people, encounters begin with respect for the other. If we are too cautious of sharing openly the foundations of our beliefs and the nature of our discipleship – if we hold back the most important aspect of our motivation – we put constraints on that respect and deny a little of God's nature.

A word that has become most contentious is conversion. It is certainly a word that for some carries some unfortunate connotations. God's offer of salvation in Christ is not one consumer choice among others but a matter of profound importance to human identity and character. It is precisely because of this deep seriousness that, in a divided and unequal society, conversion can be perceived to carry with it the implication of betrayal – of extinguishing old identities and loyalties in which there was much that was good. Such sensitivities mean that our language of conversion must be generous and handled with care.

But conversion must never become a word of which Christians fight shy. In Christ, old identities are never the last word and the good is offered for all the world. So there should be nothing embarrassed or awkward about the Church's commitment to draw others to Christ. This we do, not in order to win favour for ourselves, nor to make others more like us, but simply because we want to share God's gifts as we have received them – freely and unearned.

If this feels like a delicate path to tread with integrity – and it often is – the guidelines for good practice developed from experience and offered in this report, make clear that it is far from impossible. Indeed, within these pages there are many inspiring stories of parishes and people who have made it happen, and happen well.

God reaches out in Christ to people everywhere. Christ is, for us, the final and unique revelation of what is good for all humanity. Together, as the Church, we seek to live more like Christ, offering

ourselves wholly and selflessly in pursuit of the good of all. This report gives us good examples and guidelines for doing just that, amongst people of other faiths and none, in a society more fluid and complex by far than most previous generations had to contend with. We commend this report. It is not the last word on the Church's practice in mission and evangelism, but it emphasises rightly that, for the Church, Christ is indeed the last – and the first – Word.

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April 2010

Sharing the Gospel of Salvation

1. In February 2009, the General Synod debated a Private Member's Motion from Mr Paul Eddy which, after amendment, was passed in the following terms by an overwhelming majority:

“That this Synod warmly welcome Dr Martin Davie’s background paper ‘The witness of Scripture, the Fathers and the historic formularies to the uniqueness of Christ’ attached to GS Misc 905B and request the House of Bishops to report to the Synod on their understanding of the uniqueness of Christ in Britain’s multi-faith society, and offer examples and commendations of good practice in sharing the gospel of salvation through Christ alone with people of other faiths and of none.”

2. Following the Group of Sessions, the House of Bishops nominated two bishops to convene a group which would be responsible for taking the motion forward. The group consisted of: The Bishop of Willesden, The Bishop of Southampton (now the Bishop of Southwell and Nottingham), The Revd Dr Toby Howarth (Interfaith Adviser to the Bishop of Birmingham), The Revd Dr Malcolm Brown (Director of MPA), The Revd Canon Guy Wilkinson (Advisor on Inter Religious Affairs to MPA and the Archbishop of Canterbury), and Dr Martin Davie (Theological Consultant to the House of Bishops).¹
3. Responding to the motion has not been an easy task – mainly because the motion encompasses so many potential themes. In one sense, the only adequate response to the motion is to present the whole gamut of the Church’s work in mission and evangelism, since the scope of our outreach to “people of other faiths and none” embraces all the outward-facing activities of the Christian Church.
4. We have, however, deliberately restricted the scope of our work to make it manageable. We recognise that there are major areas of specialised apologetics which we have not attempted to cover: for example, presenting the claims of Christ, the Kingdom and the gospel in the context of the strident atheism currently focussing its arguments on a presumed incompatibility between “science” and “religion”. We know that a Diocesan Synod Motion (forthcoming, at the time this report was being prepared) will allow proper attention to be given to this specific question.
5. Our focus, by contrast, has tried to reflect the course of the Synod debate by addressing first the question of proclaiming the uniqueness of Christ among people who are already committed to faith, usually as an adherent of one of the great world religions. As we note below, it is important to distinguish the major world faiths from the religious belief systems understood as New Religious Movements, and to distinguish both from belief systems which do not class themselves as religions or faiths. While many of the points in our report can be translated to the second and third of these contexts, we did not believe that we could do justice to all three when the questions arising in the first context were so complex, pressing, and of concern to Synod.
6. Our report begins a brief summary of the unique significance of Jesus Christ that draws on the work produced by Martin Davie for the General Synod debate last February. It then gives a brief overview of the Church of England’s mission activity among those of other religions, showing

¹ It is important to remember that the group’s report stands alongside other significant material on the same theme. On 2 March 2010 the Archbishop of Canterbury gave a lecture in Guildford on “The Finality of Christ in a Pluralist World” (<http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/2789>) Also in 2010, The Catholic Bishops’ Conference of England and Wales published the document *Meeting God in Friend and Stranger: fostering respect and mutual understanding between the religions* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2010).

that such activity has always been a feature of the life of the English Church. After that it looks at the social and religious context for mission and evangelism today and sets out some guidance for 'good practice' in sharing the gospel of salvation through Christ. It explores a number of case studies which demonstrate some of the potentials and pitfalls of work in this field, with much to celebrate and much to learn from.

7. In order to convey some sense of the sheer extent of the work currently going on within the Church, we have added a number of shorter descriptions of projects and initiatives, although this list cannot be exhaustive. In reflecting on the Case Studies, in the light of the theology and social context explored earlier, we offer some guidelines for mission and evangelism amongst people of other faiths (much of which can be developed for use among people of no faith) culled from the experience of the many practitioners with whom we have been in contact. We commend these reflections to Synod as tools for enhancing the Church's work of proclaiming Christ to the nation.
8. In compiling this report, the group is indebted to the many colleagues and contacts who have shared their work with us and assisted in the development of our thinking. While the content of the report is our responsibility alone, we could not have completed it without the enthusiastic support and generous sharing of time and expertise which we have enjoyed from others. In particular, we have learned much from the *Presence and Engagement* project, sponsored on behalf of Synod by the Mission and Public Affairs Division, and from many who have taken part in that work. In addition, we would like to thank: the Revd Dale Barton, the Revd Dave Bookless, the Rt Revd John Goddard, the Revd Jay Macleod, Dr Andrew Smith and Mr Richard Sudworth and the very many others who work with them

1. The unique significance of Jesus Christ

9. The basis for the Christian Church's understanding of the unique significance of Jesus Christ lies in the affirmation of the oneness of God which is found in the Old Testament in passages such as the following:

To you it was shown so that you would acknowledge that the Lord is God; there is no other besides him (Deuteronomy 4:35);

And Ezra said: "You are the Lord, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. To all of them you give life, and the host of heaven worships you." (Nehemiah 9:6)

I am the Lord, and there is no other; besides me there is no God; I arm you, though you do not know me, so that they may know from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other. (Isaiah 45:5-6).

10. In passages such as these, and in its overall storyline, the Old Testament teaches that The Lord, the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is unique because he is 'the one living and true God' (Article I). It is he who has created and who upholds the universe and everything that exists within it and he is the sole ruler of history.
11. On the basis of Jesus' teaching about himself and his mission and on the basis of his life, death, resurrection and ascension the first Christians came to believe that, in accordance with the promises that he had made to his people, the God of Israel, in the person of Jesus, 'took Man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance' (Article II) in order to proclaim God's kingdom and to bring it in by reconciling the whole universe through his life, death and resurrection. They also held that after his resurrection Jesus ascended into heaven and at the end

of the age he will come in glory to judge the living and the dead and to finally and fully manifest the kingly rule of God over all of creation.

12. The first Christians therefore believed that Jesus was God incarnate. This belief can be seen in passages such as:

***John 1:14** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father;*

***Colossians 1:19** For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross;*

***Hebrews 1:2-2** Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, who he appointed heir to all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.*

13. Although the first Christians believed that Jesus was divine they did not believe that God was simply Jesus. On the basis of the same evidence that had led them to believe that Jesus was God they also believed that God exists also as the Father, the one to whom Jesus prayed, to whom Jesus was obedient, who raised Jesus from the dead and to whom Jesus would hand over the kingdom at the end of time. On the same grounds they further believed that God exists as the Holy Spirit, the one who had dwelt in Jesus and empowered his mission and whom Jesus had poured out on his followers on the day of Pentecost.
14. The first Christians thus redefined the Old Testament belief in the oneness of God, holding that the Lord, the one God of Israel, exists as the Father, the Son who had become incarnate in Jesus and as the Holy Spirit. This redefinition can be seen in passages such as I Corinthians 8:6 'For us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist' and Ephesians 4:4-6 'There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.'
15. Where the first Christians led the Church of the Patristic period followed. When in the early centuries of the Church's existence people called into question the full deity of the Son or the Spirit or the true humanity of Jesus the Church re-affirmed both in the Apostles, Nicene and Athanasian Creeds and in the Chalcedonian definition.
16. There were Fathers such as St. Justin Martyr and St Clement of Alexandria who emphasised that all human beings could have access to some knowledge of God through the universal presence of God's Word or Reason (the Greek word *logos* could mean both). According to them it was this knowledge of God that led to the elements of truth in Greek philosophy and poetry and also led people like Socrates to criticise pagan religion.²
17. However, belief in this universal revelation did not lead these Fathers to call into question the unique significance of Jesus Christ. On the contrary, they argued that, as prophesied by the Old Testament and testified to in the New, the divine Word and Reason were incarnate in Jesus Christ who suffered, died, rose and ascended to set us free from sin and death. It was in Jesus

² See St Justin Martyr *First and Second Apologies* in *The Ante Nicene Fathers*, vol 1, Edinburgh and Grand Rapids: T&T Clark/Eerdmans, 1996, pp. 163-193 and St Clement of Alexandria *Exhortation to the Heathen*, and *The Instructor* in *The Ante Nicene Fathers*, vol 2, Edinburgh and Grand Rapids: T&T Clark/Eerdmans, 2001, pp. 171-298.

that the divine Word and Reason were thus fully revealed and all who wanted to live lives that were truly in accordance with them therefore needed to live as disciples of Christ within the fellowship of the Church.

18. As a church that belongs to ‘the One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church worshipping the one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit’ and professing ‘the faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds’ (Canon C.15), the Church of England follows the lead of the first Christians and the Church of the Patristic period. It bears witness in its historic formularies to the God who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit and who became incarnate in Jesus. It is this God whom it proclaims in its mission and evangelism. It is this God in whose name it baptises people.
19. It is its faith in this God that is also the basis for the Church of England’s engagement with people of all religions and none. It believes that the God it confesses is the source of salvation which is offered to all people everywhere (whether they are yet aware of the fact or not), and the ultimate source of the values that it shares in common with them. But it also holds that, in obedience to the commission given by Jesus to his disciples (Matt 28:18-20, Acts 1:8), all Christians are called to act as God’s instruments in bringing people to explicit faith in Jesus Christ and to membership of his Church through baptism.³

2. The history of the English Church’s missionary activity amongst those of other religions

20. Because those who have belonged to the Church in England have believed in the unique significance of Jesus Christ in the context of the Trinitarian understanding of God just described, a consistent feature of the life of the Church in England has been the desire to share faith in Christ with those of other religions.
21. We do not have precise information about how or when the earliest conversions to Christianity took place in Roman Britain, but in the nature of the case these conversions must have involved Christians sharing the gospel with non-Christians and these non-Christians then accepting Christianity in place of one of the many other forms of religious belief prevalent in the later Roman Empire. It is important, in the current debate about the Church sharing its faith with people of other religions, to remember that the very roots of the Church of England lie in this process taking place. The Church in England is passing on, as it has always done, what it first received from others.
22. If we move on to those periods for which we do have information, we find that the Church in what became England sought for and achieved the conversion of first the Anglo-Saxons and then the Vikings to Christianity and that this conversion involved an acceptance of Christianity in place of their ancestral religion.
23. The same pattern can also be seen in the case of the missionary work undertaken in the seventh and eighth centuries in Frisia (what is now northwestern Germany and the Netherlands) by members of the English Church such as St. Wilfrid of Ripon and St. Boniface. In this case also conversion to Christianity from ancestral religion was sought and achieved.
24. By the later Anglo-Saxon period and throughout the Middle Ages, England was an almost entirely Christian country on the edge of a largely Christian continent. This meant that English Christians had very limited opportunities to undertake missionary activity amongst those of

³ For a more detailed account of the issue covered in this theological summary see M Davie, *A Church of England approach to the unique significance of Jesus Christ*, Crowther Centre Monographs 7, Oxford: CMS, 2009.

other religions. However, attempts were made to convert members of the small Jewish community in England and there are records of conversions from Judaism continuing to take place even after the Jewish community as a whole was expelled from England in 1290. In the fifteenth century, for example, we find the case of Sir Edward Brampton, a Portuguese Jew who came to England and was converted to Christianity, taking the name Edward after his godfather King Edward IV.

25. Sadly, it has to be acknowledged that that in the background of the conversion of Jewish people to Christianity there was often explicit or implicit coercion against a background of anti-Jewish polemic. This does not, however, mean that all conversions were a result of coercion and that converts such as Edward Brampton never freely chose to embrace the Christian faith.
26. During the Middle Ages Christians from England were also involved in the Crusades. The Crusades were not examples of mission in that they were never intended to convert the Muslim world and the motives of those who took part in them were often secular as well as religious. Nevertheless, the significance of the Crusades for Christian mission needs to be acknowledged since the fear and mistrust between Christians and Muslims that were a legacy of the Crusades have continued to overshadow Christian-Muslim relations and Christian mission amongst Muslim people to the present day.
27. With the opening up of global communications in the fifteenth century the opportunities for more extensive missionary work amongst adherents of other religions opened up as well and from the seventeenth century onwards the Church of England came to recognise these opportunities and to try to take advantage of them. Thus the charter given to the Virginia Company in 1606 to found a new colony on the east coast of North America included the intention of 'propagating the Christian religion' and a chaplain was appointed for the purpose and the provision of a service of adult baptism in the 1662 revision of the *Book of Common Prayer* was stated to be 'useful for the baptising of the natives of our plantations and others converted to the faith.'
28. As in the cases of Jewish conversion noted earlier it has to be acknowledged that the propagation of Christianity in the context of slavery and colonialism was often problematic, and that the motives of those involved were often mixed. Nevertheless, a key point to note here is that it was assumed that the gospel of Jesus Christ was for everyone, of whatever religious or ethnic background, and that everyone had the right to become part of the Church through baptism.
29. The end of the seventeenth and beginning of the eighteenth centuries saw the foundation of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG). SPCK began with a focus on the Christian education of those who were already Christians, but subsequently became involved in missionary activity in India. SPG had overseas missionary work amongst those of other faiths as one of its key aims from the outset. These two bodies were the precursors of a series of other Church of England voluntary missionary societies that developed during the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the same intention. The overseas missionary work of the Church of England based mission societies has continued to the present day and their experience of engagement with people of other faiths is a resource on which the Church of England continues to draw.
30. During the eighteenth and most of the nineteenth centuries missionary activity amongst those of other religions was seen as something that needed to take place overseas (the presence of those of other religions in England being still very small), but with the growth of large scale Jewish immigration into England in the nineteenth century the Church of England undertook renewed missionary work amongst the Jewish community in England, this work being led by the London

Society for Promoting Christianity Among the Jews (what is now the Church's Ministry Amongst Jewish People, the CMJ). The twentieth century saw continuing Jewish immigration to this country. Latterly there has also been large scale immigration by those of other major world religions as well.⁴ Members of the Church of England have sought to show Christian hospitality to members of these immigrant communities and to develop good inter faith relations, but they have also shared the gospel with members of these communities in the hope that they will come to faith and be baptised.

31. What this brief historical survey shows is that there is nothing new or abnormal about members of the Church of England bearing witness to members of other religions in the hope that this will lead to them to come to faith and be baptised. On the contrary, it is something which Christians in this country have sought to do throughout the history of the Church in England. What would be abnormal would be for members of the Church of England to stop seeking to share their faith in this way.
32. The history of the involvement of members of the Church in England in mission has its dark side. The motives of those involved in mission have sometimes been mixed, the methods that have been used have not always been ones of which we would approve today and at times there has been an unhealthy connection between mission and colonialism. However, this ambiguous history is not a reason for members of the Church of England to give up on mission. Rather, it should be an incentive to try to ensure that our mission is always rooted in love for God and for our neighbours from other faiths and is undertaken in a way that appropriately reflects this love.

3. The Social Context of Mission and Evangelism Today

Post War Change

33. In 1945, taking stock and seeking new directions after a cataclysmic World War, the Church of England published a major report on mission and evangelism – *Towards the Conversion of England*. In many ways, the report now reads as if it came out of another world. Not only was the process – involving a working party of fifty people, including five bishops – unwieldy by today's standards, but the “mental atmosphere” of the whole report is redolent of a world in which Christians (and especially the Church of England) saw themselves called to define and embody the moral framework of the nation and able to call upon national institutions of all kinds to reinforce the church's message.
34. Other Christian churches and denominations are virtually invisible within the report's 172 pages, and the ethnic homogeneity of the English is simply taken for granted. The only reference to other faiths is the comment that the “Person and Character of Christ” was the element in Christianity which “appealed most to the Mohammedans in Persia”.⁵
35. The proper 21st Century reaction to the report's strangeness is not mockery but the realisation that social landscape which we take as given is, in fact, extremely recent in terms of human experience and memory. Our current members over the age of 80 would have grown up in the world portrayed by the report, and many more, though younger, would have recognised and owned the context through much of their life as disciples. An understanding of the rapidity of social change is just the first step towards developing strategies for addressing it – and evaluating such strategies in the light of experience takes even longer.

⁴ It should be noted that there has also been Christian immigration into this country from Africa, Asia and the West Indies and elsewhere.

⁵ *Towards the Conversion of England*, para.79.

36. *Towards the Conversion of England* addressed a degree of apathy and ignorance about the Christian faith that was perceived as new in England, but the character of English citizens was seen as a constant. Although the report explored theological issues to some extent, it was mainly with the purpose of reaffirming conventional pre-War understandings. The report addressed mission in ways which suggested that the great majority of the population remained residually Christian in their moral formation. The extent to which foundational Christian narratives have faded from the collective memory, as well as the diversity of the people of our communities are newer factors where the church has much less experience and engagement.

The Profile of Religion in Britain Today

Population of Great Britain: by religion, April 2001⁶

	Total Population		Non-Christian religious population (Percentages)
	(Numbers)	(Percentages)	
Christian	41,014,811	71.8	
Muslim	1,588,890	2.8	51.9
Hindu	558,342	1.0	18.3
Sikh	336,179	0.6	11.0
Jewish	267,373	0.5	8.7
Buddhist	149,157	0.3	4.9
Any other religion	159,167	0.3	5.2
All non-Christian Religious pop.	3,059,108	5.4	100.0
No religion	8,596,488	15.1	
Religion not stated	4,433,520	7.8	
All population	57,103,927	100.0	

Source: Office of National Statistics. Figures from 2001 census. (www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=954 – accessed 15 September 2009).

37. Religious affiliations in Britain are not geographically uniform. In 2001, people of non-Christian religions made up 6% of the population of England, 2% in Wales and 1% in Scotland. People of Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist and Sikh backgrounds were more likely to be found in London and other large conurbations, whereas Christians were more evenly spread across the country. 56% of the Jewish population lived in London, with 17% of the national population of Jews in the Borough of Barnet. 52% of Britain's Hindus lived in London as did 38% of Muslims. 31% of the Sikh population lived in the West Midlands, concentrated especially in Sandwell and Wolverhampton, and a further 31% of Sikhs live in London.
38. There are very substantial Muslim communities in many of the major cities and issues of diversity and cohesion have become of considerable significance in recent years, particularly for the situation of parish churches in such neighbourhoods.
39. Whilst those identifying themselves as Christians are more evenly spread across the country, the lowest proportion is in London (58% of the population), whereas in the North East and North

⁶ It is clear that these figures will look somewhat different when the 2011 Census returns are available. For example, the Office of National Statistics is currently working with an estimate of 2.4m Muslims in Britain today.

West people are most likely to describe themselves as Christian (80% and 78% respectively). People in the NW and NE were the least likely to describe themselves as having no religion.

40. A majority of people in all the main religious groups described themselves as British (including English, Scottish and Welsh). 95% of Christians and of people with no religion described themselves this way, as did: 78% of Sikhs, 70% of Muslims and 69% of Hindus.
41. 94% of those describing themselves as Christian, 83% of Jews, 56% of Sikhs, 46% of Muslims, 45% of Buddhists but only 37% of Hindus, had been born in the UK. (Source: Office of National Statistics)
42. These census-based figures refer to people's self-description and do not measure active religious participation. Nevertheless, they demonstrate the continuing strength of Christianity in the formation and self-understanding of British people. It must be noted, however, that the figures were collected almost a decade ago and we are likely to see some shifts in attitudes when the 2011 census figures are published.

History and Faiths in Britain today

43. It has been argued that the notion of religious uniformity in Britain ended in 1689 with the Act of Toleration which allowed freedom of worship to Trinitarian Protestant Dissenters. From that point, and especially after the Catholic Relief Act of 1829, religious practice very gradually became a matter of individual conscience rather than an integral element of national identity and loyalty to the Crown. The principle of religious toleration largely involved toleration of diversity amongst Christians. Diversity between faiths, principally the gradual accommodation of the Jewish community in Britain, was – perhaps paradoxically – less contested and therefore made less of an impact on thinking. Certainly, in the nineteenth century, the notion that Englishness required complete religious conformity was radically upset.
44. Adherents of faiths other than Christianity have been present in Britain for centuries, but so long as they remained tiny minorities they were simultaneously perceived as exceptional and too small to be publicly visible except where substantial immigrant populations had tended to live close together over several generations. Successive waves of migration, especially since the Second World War from Commonwealth countries, have multiplied the number of such communities and widened the number of faiths which are publicly visible to all.
45. It is worth noting that, whilst religious adherence and ethnicity are not the same thing, the visibility of many ethnic groups has often been conflated in popular thinking with religious diversity. The fact that, for example, Christianity in Britain is extremely diverse in ethnic terms has not significantly dented this tendency to conflate ethnicity and faith.
46. The twentieth century assumption that religion is a matter of individual conscience, confined in many respects to the private sphere, is strongly challenged by the presence of religious groups which are closely associated with visibly distinctive ethnic groups. Contemporary British attitudes to religion have not fully assimilated this shift.
47. Although the teleology of ecumenical and inter faith encounter is radically different, there may be lessons to be learned in the multi-faith context from our experience of Christian ecumenism. In particular, ecumenism required close attention to theology, to the history of intolerance, and to present inequalities in size and resources between churches. Negotiating these factors was (and remains) frustrating and time-consuming, but necessary if the churches' theology of engagement was to develop authentically.

48. However, looking beyond the churches to national policies regarding faith communities, these sensitivities seem often to be lacking. A recent report noted the lack of direct experience and understanding of any religious tradition amongst government ministers and senior civil servants.⁷ A similar lack of understanding from “within” probably pertains in the media. This may explain why religions and faith communities are so frequently portrayed essentially problematic, as equivalent to one another over against a default secularism, and equal treatment is often interpreted in ways which ignore historic and present differences.
49. What is often not appreciated by government, both national and local, and by many in the public sector, is the request regularly expressed by faith leaders from the great world faiths that Christians should speak authentically and clearly about our understanding of our faith, and that the country is best served, not by Christians downplaying our religious heritage, but by the public expression of Christian faith and practice in schools and other public institutions. Our other faith partners wish us to be unashamedly Christian.
50. It is too simple to assume a straightforward shift in culture from a position of a national Christian identity to a “multifaith” community in which a variety of faith positions relate to one another on a level playing field. In many ways, the metaphor of the market place, which is so pervasive in many aspects of our culture, encourages the erroneous notion that all religions and faith positions are of equal status and can compete with each other in a kind of spiritual free market. This view is ill-founded. The former dominance of Christian (and especially Anglican) norms in society places the Christian churches in a particular relationship to other faith communities which is not one of simple equivalence in the present. The historical role of Christianity in England is both an opportunity and a potential stumbling block to effective mission.
51. It is an opportunity because, however anxious some Christians may feel, they remain not only by far the largest practising religious group, but are by far the biggest group in the self-reported religious identity of English people. Life in Britain today means, for everyone, that some encounter with Christian ideas is inevitable (even if unconscious) and a full understanding of British institutions still requires some grasp of Christian thought.
52. But the historical fact of having once been a dominant feature of the social and political landscape is also a potential stumbling block to mission. The Church of England learned – sometimes painfully – how to work with other Christians in an increasingly secular context which affected them all. By extension, all Christians need similar skills in their relations with people of other faiths. Because being Christian and being British are often still conflated in the popular imagination, the political history of British attitudes and actions in other parts of the world, and toward people of other faiths, influences today’s relationship between faith communities. As the Church of England learned in the context of ecumenism, it is not we who have the authority to forgive old sins of arrogance and oppression committed in the name of our religion, our church or our nation.
53. In this context, it is worth remembering that unhelpful associations between Christianity and prejudicial attitudes towards people who are “different” are not quite dead. The adoption by the British National Party of explicitly Christian rhetoric in recent election campaigns has been especially worrying. There is a toxic mixture here of lingering colonial assumptions, racist attitudes, understandable anxieties and scapegoating of people who do not fit a narrow (and ahistorical) definition of British-ness. These attitudes are hard enough to disentangle from each other, and if they are then infused with Christian words and images the vulnerable groups

⁷ Francis Davis, Elizabeth Paulhaus and Andrew Bradstock, *Moral, but no Compass: Government, Church and the Future of Welfare*, Matthew James Publishing, 2008.

against whom such rhetoric is directed may be forgiven for being confused about where Christians really stand.

54. Yet despite all the historical complexities, Christians are still called to preach the gospel to all creation, making disciples of all nations through the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit.⁸ The Church's vocation is to go beyond tolerance into positive engagement and dialogue and change (tolerance having unfortunate overtones of indifference). The greatest challenge (numerically, at least) is still the indifference of many people to all notions of faith, and the pervasiveness of an essentially atheistic secularism as the default mode for understanding the social and human condition.
55. Among the objectives of mission, bringing people to faith, expressed in baptism, the catechumenate and discipleship, must always figure highly.
56. But mission priorities are not set solely by the numerical challenge they represent. The church's reflections on mission and evangelism must encompass the diversity of religious and philosophical affiliations to be found in the nation as a whole. Social plurality is a reality (even if the impossibility of wide moral agreements is often overstated) and strategies for evangelisation must be similarly multi-faceted.
57. It is also worth recalling that Britain today remains a highly unequal and stratified society. In one sense we are a "melting pot culture", but in other senses, the barriers which get in the way of friendly relationships are huge. As long as wealth and power are not only concentrated in few hands but are associated with specific social groupings, individual contact across the divides will be tainted by perceptions of inequality. Where disadvantage is felt disproportionately by some religious groups (who may experience compound disadvantage where religion, ethnicity, education and so on combine unfavourably) a great deal of trust-building is necessary to get beyond the barriers of inequality.

World Faiths, New Religious Movements and Secularism

58. It is sometimes helpful to use a three-fold model to look at the challenges posed to the church by the contemporary "religious geography" of Britain. First, there are the great world Faiths, present both through the faith and practice of fellow British citizens and as global phenomena impacting on our understanding of ourselves as global citizens.
59. Second, there are the New Religious Movements and Alternative Spiritualities – bodies without the long histories, extensive literature and evolved traditions of the great world religions.
60. Thirdly, there are the philosophies which are to some extent represented organisationally by two main bodies: the National Secular Society and the British Humanist Association. These bodies are relatively small in membership terms but claim to reflect the views of a much wider constituency.
61. The boundaries between these three groupings are contested (for instance, some pagans make the contested claim to be a more ancient religion in Britain than Christianity; some argue that the growth of NRMs is a by-product of secularisation, etc.). However, the Church seeks to differentiate between these three categories which suggest something of the complexity of relationships within which the church's mission takes place.

⁸ For example in Acts 1:8; Luke 24: 47—49; John 20: 21; Mark 13: 10.

62. One of the complexities of relating to other great world faiths is that, like Christianity itself, most faiths have an ongoing conversation between adherents about what it means to be a good member of that faith community. Christianity, like Islam, Judaism or other faiths with centuries of practice and politics behind them, is not one story, one set of practices or one structure of authority. (One is reminded of Fr. Chantry-Pigg's Anglo-Catholic mission to Turkey in Rose Macaulay's novel *The Towers of Trebizond* and his shocked reaction to a Billy Graham crusade. Christian mission is not one set of practices either!).
63. NRMs are too numerous to sum up in general terms, but some could be categorised as being derived from great world faiths. Jehovah's Witnesses, for instance, draw upon, even as they alter and add to, the central narratives of Christianity, and the Ahmadi community claims to Muslim identity are strongly contested by mainstream Islam. Others, such as Scientology, have no identifiable historical connections. These different lineages are important to bear in mind when discerning potential points of convergence and disagreement in the encounter with Christian missions.

The Gospel and its reception

64. Many within the great world faiths will share disquiet about the dominance of secularist thinking in British society today. Not all, however, are agreed in their analysis of what is going on – it is not a simple matter of “people of faith” versus “secular humanism”. Differences of emphasis in relating to modernity are to be found within Christianity as within other faiths. For example, Christian theology is often quite comfortable with a modernist focus on the individual as moral agent which contrasts with the more strongly communitarian focus of pre-modern times.
65. Christianity has especially interesting complexities here, since the Enlightenment itself (often seen as the harbinger of contemporary secularism) developed in Christian Europe largely amongst people who saw Enlightenment values as the embodiment of Christian virtues. The relationship between the Enlightenment and the Reformation is fascinating, contentious and far too big a subject for this paper!
66. Other faiths may share an ambivalence about the fruits of the Enlightenment, but the tension is perhaps most acute amongst Christians. Some Christians involved in evangelism amongst Muslims note that the call to personal decision is overshadowed in Islamic history and culture by more communal understandings and a more communitarian Christian theology may be especially resonant as a tool of mission.
67. This takes us back to the comment in *Towards the Conversion of England* that some aspects of Christian theology are more easily communicable to Muslims than other doctrines. The wording of that report may be very dated, but the sentiment is important. Similar observations could be made about communicating Christian ideas to members of all other religions.
68. *Towards the Conversion of England* made many good points about how effective mission involves the simultaneous ability to speak the language of contemporary culture(s) and the ability to address the gaps which cultures ignore – the human longing expressed in the (often unspoken) question, “there must be more to life than this”. The missionary or evangelist (on a Pauline model) must be fluent in the ways of contemporary cultures and in the eternal truths of the gospel. This is as true in encounters with people of other faiths as it is with those whose faith is lapsed or non-existent. Somehow, all these languages must be made comprehensible to each other.

69. It remains true that mission and evangelism are much more than exercises in propositional knowledge. Words without example are not likely to convince, and it is the example of the Christian community in its ability to mediate God's love through its own corporate life which may be the essential background to evangelism. At the same time, words are still important and often inescapable. Testimony stands alongside practice and the words used must connect with the life in the Christian family. This centrality of the Church – the real, empirical, Church, not just an ideal construct – means that mission always requires ecclesiology. The nature of the community which sends us is key to our identity as missionaries.
70. And yet we live in a culture where words are received, interpreted and disseminated with extraordinary speed – often to the detriment of nuanced understanding. While this points to the importance of the face-to-face dimension in mission and evangelism, where time and trust can enable deep understanding, it also alerts us to the need to be “media-savvy” and to recognise how our words and actions can be (mis)interpreted by unsympathetic cultures.

The Christian Narrative

71. It is worth looking at how two major contemporary Christian theologians whose work calls us to remember and give attention to the narratives and practices which form the Christian community understand the way the Church attracts new members⁹ John Milbank and Stanley Hauerwas come from very different Christian backgrounds, but both reject the liberal idea that our common humanity, or universal understanding of rationality, must be privileged above the specifics of tradition.¹⁰
72. For Milbank, the Christian story is, quite simply, the most attractive account of the world and the human condition. Theology is not an adjunct to the social sciences – on the contrary, Christian theology is the prism through which the social sciences make the most sense. The task of Christians is not to persuade others of the truth of the gospel story through propositional argument (which, he claims, always carries undertones of violence) but to “out narrate” other, rival and less attractive narratives. Christians must so live out their faith, in communities which embody the gospel (especially in practices of worship) that others are attracted by the sublime beauty of God reflected in the Church. Conversion, he suggests, is a matter of “taste” – but in a much more profound sense than that expression is usually used.
73. Hauerwas's position is similar, although it is arrived at from different starting points. The Church, he argues, is called to be a “community of character”, embodying “the peaceable kingdom”. It is not called to prop up other social institutions, such as democracy or capitalism, however useful they may be, but to exhibit in its corporate life the radically alternative life of those who follow Christ. Others will wish to join this community, not because they are convinced intellectually of its arguments but because they are captivated by its example of virtuous living.

⁹ Although we have chosen to use two contemporary theologians to illustrate our point here, many others have also written helpfully on these topics. We would particularly wish to acknowledge the work of Leslie Newbigin (especially in *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, SPCK/Eerdmans 1989) and John V Taylor (especially in *The Go-Between God*, SCM 1972).

¹⁰ Milbank is an Anglican who has worked in England and the USA and is currently a professor at Nottingham University. He is prominent in the theological movement known as Radical Orthodoxy, his best known book being *Theology and Social Theory* (Blackwell: 1991). Hauerwas is, famously, the son of a Texan bricklayer whose Christian identity was formed eclectically in the Southern Methodist and Anabaptist/Mennonite traditions, who taught for many years in a Roman Catholic university and who is now most closely associated with Anglicanism. He is a prolific writer, preacher and essayist.

74. Both these examples from contemporary theologians are important because they offer a radical missionary ecclesiology. This is an understanding of ecclesiology as the unique vocation of the Church, rather than ecclesiology as the theology of church structures. Similar themes are reflected in the work of many other contemporary theologians, Stephen Bevans and Graham Tomlin being among the better-known examples.
75. Most important, perhaps, Milbank, Hauerwas and others make the life of the Church, rather than propositional argument or the techniques of communication, central to the calling of evangelisation. In the context of evangelism amongst people who have their own rich religious culture with its own developed “language of faith”, this may be an important approach to overcoming the immense difficulty of translating between languages of faith. It makes example – the example of the Church as a whole, as well as of individual Christians – the shared vocabulary through which the Christian story may become known.

Trust and the Common Good

76. While the history of Christian missions sometimes suggests otherwise, it is generally accepted in Britain today that people cannot and indeed should not be coerced into a relationship with Christ. The Great Commandment alone causes us to draw back from coercive approaches to mission. But if the theological approach noted above is valid, there must be occasions when people of different faiths can encounter each other in sufficient depth for the example of their lives to be knowable. The key to this kind of encounter may lie in the concept of the common good.
77. To work together for the common good does not, in any way, entail sacrificing the distinctive stories and practices which distinguish the faiths. It is, emphatically, not a reversion to the normlessness which assumes that differences can be subsumed in a single grand narrative.
78. The pursuit of the common good starts from the observation that we inhabit the same world. In terms of practical politics, the interests of one group or faith are not wholly different from those of another. Examples of such co-working abound, including some of the case studies elsewhere in this report.
79. Working together for the common good is an end in itself consistent with the Great Commandment, but it is not the only Christian imperative in relating to other faiths. The challenge, as this report will go on to explore, is so to expose ourselves in the process that the very ground of our being – the love of God in Christ – is evident in our lives so that others may encounter Christ and come to faith. So evangelisation starts in the holiness and integrity of the lives of Christians, but must then include all manner of communicative actions.
80. The case studies in this report exemplify this process in action. The guidelines which follow seek to extrapolate from our learning in specific situations so that it can be applied more widely.

4. Good Practice Guidance

“In your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect”

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

81. This section seeks to hold together three interconnected strands in considering the matter of ‘good practice’. It offers first, a range of general reflections drawing on scripture and theology, on the Church’s teaching and on the wide body of experience gained from reflection on engaging as Christians with individuals and communities of other faiths. These are from a wide

variety of sources with different levels of authority: some are codes of practice and guidance which may include formal canonical requirements of the Church of England such as in relation to worship and the use of consecrated buildings. Others derive from documents of the Anglican Communion and the Lambeth Conferences, thereby drawing on the experience of the wider Church. Others draw on ecumenical and inter faith experience. Some of these sources of teaching and reflection are given at Annex 1.

82. Secondly it offers a number of case studies drawn from the actual experience of Christians and the Church in a range of local situations. These are in one sense typical and in other senses particular, but seek to capture something of what it might be to offer the gospel of salvation in word and deed in the circumstances of daily living.
83. Thirdly reflections are offered from each of the case studies and from the wider experience of the Church. From these three strands comes a picture of good practice. It is a general picture which will need to be worked through in each actual situation in which the gospel is lived.
84. In considering the Church's teaching, a distinction may helpfully be drawn between theology of religions on the one hand and theology of inter faith relations on the other. Theologies of religions are important in offering a framework for thinking about the relations under God between religions as a whole and are often the unarticulated but formative backdrop to the way in which attitudes are shaped. The Vatican II document, *Nostra Aetate*¹¹, provided a major impulse for new thinking and reflection on the Christian understanding of other religions in the economy of God.
85. In 1995 the Doctrine Commission report *The Mystery of Salvation*¹² looked at some of the issues involved here. It suggested that:
- "...there is a plurality of ways by which people are being made whole in the here and now; these are ways the Spirit of God is working. And there is an expectation in the future, that, while people may have the freedom to reject the salvation that is available to all, through God as Trinity, God will save ultimately those who are willing to be saved, by their penitence and acceptance of the love which stretches out to them, in the way that it meets them in their lives and within their traditions. There is only one way, but that way is one that is without barbed wire or boundary fences, so that all may join this way. If we think of salvation in the broadest as encompassing all that heals and enhances human life, then clearly aspects of salvation are available in many ways, not only explicitly through Jesus Christ. In the ultimate sense, salvation is defined by having Jesus Christ as its source and goal. To use the terms we deliberately put aside earlier, this pluralism and this exclusivism are reconciled, not in some form of exclusivism (in the usual sense) but eschatologically, in the final purposes of God. To recognise the life, death and resurrection of Jesus as 'constitutive' of salvation as well as revelatory, as Christians do, is to anticipate that he will prove to be the definitive focus of salvation in its fully comprehensive form. It may be, too, that our understanding of Christ will itself be enhanced when people of other faiths are gathered in."*¹³
86. The report further declares that although we restrict the fullness of God's love if we deny:
- "...the truth and goodness which Christ as Logos, and God by the Spirit, can also inspire in those of other faiths and of none", nevertheless Christians believe:*

¹¹ www.vatican.va/.../documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html

¹² *The Mystery of Salvation: The Story of God's Gift. A Report by the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England.* London: Church House Publishing, 1995. 225 pp.

¹³ *The Mystery of Salvation* London: CHP 1995 p.183-4

...that God has chosen to provide the fullest revelation of his love for all humanity in the cross and resurrection. Hence we naturally pray that God will bring all people, including those of other faiths, to explicit faith in Christ and membership of his Church. This is not because we believe that the God revealed in Christ is unable to save them without this, but because Christ is the truest and fullest expression of his love, and we long for them to share it. In the Lord's words in St John's Gospel, 'I came that they might have life, and have it abundantly.'¹⁴

87. The approach taken in the Doctrine Commission's report explains why the Church of England can seek simultaneously to develop good relations with people of other faiths, to work constructively with them in projects that promote the common good and at the same time be committed, in obedience to the great commission, to enabling all people, including those of other religions, to come to faith in Jesus Christ, to baptism and to full participation in the life of the Church.
88. A theology of inter faith relations speaks into the situation of actual engagement between human beings, particularly with other faiths than Christian. It discourages prior assumptions about the other and encourages consideration of the gospel bases for engagement. Particular mention may be made here of the recent document: *Generous Love – an Anglican Theology of Inter Faith Relations* discussed at the 2008 Lambeth Conference¹⁵. This offers a theology of inter faith relations which is shaped by the contours of the fundamental Christian doctrine of God as Trinity.
89. *Generous Love* speaks helpfully of 'embassy' and 'hospitality' as two 'heart' movements of the mission of God: embassy, as the necessary consequence of the outward moving nature of the love of God expressed most fully in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and in the work of the Holy Spirit; and hospitality as the welcome and openness that is at the heart of the God who is love. Both these movements should be observable in the life of Christian communities as they relate to those amongst whom they live, not as means to an end, but as a natural outworking of lives oriented to the gospel.
90. A rootedness in scripture and in an understanding of its originating contexts, provides a foundation for good practice in sharing the gospel. A Church which has generally been unused to reading and studying the Bible with its multi religious context in mind will find much to wrestle with and to be encouraged by. A note of caution is in order, that as in biblical interpretation in general, it is important to avoid taking individual texts out of their wider context. There can be a temptation to apply particular texts to current inter religious settings inappropriately.
91. Both Testaments offer a challenging range of encounters between the people of God and people and communities of other religions. Sometimes the encounters appear aggressively and violently hostile as in the accounts of Elijah and the prophets of Baal; sometimes there are deeply moving stories involving human relationships across religious divides, as in Ruth; other stories illustrate the profound challenge to existing ways of thinking as in the encounter of Jesus with the Syro-Phoenician woman. Perhaps above all the stories of mould-breaking encounters with Samaritans¹⁶ - the Samaritan village and Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob¹⁷ for example - provide much apposite reflection for our present society. Some examples of these ways of

¹⁴ Ibid p.184

¹⁵ *Generous Love: the truth of the Gospel and the call to dialogue. An Anglican theology of inter faith relations.* A report from the Anglican Communion Network for Inter Faith Concerns. Published by the Anglican Consultative Council 2008

¹⁶ Matthew 10.5, John 4.9, Luke 10.25, Luke 17.10, John 4.6, Acts 8.25

¹⁷ At the end of the passage her compatriots proclaim Jesus 'Saviour of the World'. This is the one occasion in the New Testament where this expression is used. It is of interest therefore that this is as the result of a dialogue between two people that this confession is made and provides a model for evangelism

reading scripture and particularly in this case in the Old Testament, are to be found in the recent publication: *Encouraging Reading*¹⁸ from the Presence and Engagement programme

92. From these and many other sources of teaching and reflection it may be said that what is good practice will be rooted in a profound reflection on and appreciation of the *Missio Dei* – the outward movement of the God who is love towards the creation that is the focus of that love. From this understanding of the nature of love and truth in Trinitarian relationship comes an approach to mission that gives the Church a central role but one which is subordinate to the overarching and prior mission of God.
93. It is an approach that gladly acknowledges that the Holy Spirit is at work in the world and that its fruits are seen in lives of love, joy and peace. It holds together in creative tension both hospitality and embassy – the roles of host and guest. It proclaims gladly and openly the uniqueness of the work of God in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ and for that reason it gives extreme value to each human being in their own right. It forbears from making ultimate judgements about others, always preferring to leave that to the loving mercy of Christ.
94. In this approach, sharing the gospel of salvation through Christ alone is not an exercise in the selling of a product in a competitive marketplace of religions or philosophies, it is proclamation. In response to a recent question¹⁹ on this the Archbishop of Canterbury responded: *“Evangelism in the New Testament is first of all, proclamation. ‘This has happened. This is the door that is open. Walk in and welcome.’ And that is what I believe the Church should be saying every hour. ‘Come in. It’ll challenge you and change you and it won’t be easy; but you can live with that!’ Evangelism then becomes primarily saying to people, ‘There are more possibilities for you than you could ever have imagined, thanks to the grace and mercy of God and Jesus Christ’. Now, I think that’s a bit different from saying, ‘This is the best product in the market and unless you buy it your friends won’t want to know you’, (which I caricature as a sort of marketing strategy). I believe that the Christian faith is true. I believe that the God it speaks about is the real, living God. And I believe that the highest and fullest possibilities of human beings are realized in Christ-like relationship through the Holy Spirit with that one, true, living God our Father. That’s axiomatic for me. And that doesn’t mean that I want to say at the same time, ‘Outside that, everything is darkness, failure and hopelessness.’ It means I know what God has shown himself to be in Jesus Christ; I want others to see that, to share it and live in it and with it. Exactly how God relates to those who don’t see their way in, is God’s business. And that for me is not at all incompatible with wanting to say to my Muslim, or Hindu or Buddhist friends, ‘I wish you could see things like this.’ Meanwhile, in that encounter, when they are saying the same thing back to me, I hope I’m growing a little bit in response to that challenge. Where you can say, ‘Yes, when the Muslim says that, that’s not stupid or trivial. I hadn’t thought of that’ or when the Buddhist says, ‘Life is like this’ and you think, ‘Well, maybe the way I’ve assimilated Christianity has left that out. I need to hear that’, that’s the joy of inter faith encounter which sends me back to my starting point: I still believe that door is open, and that’s what I proclaim and offer.*
95. *Now, I think the practical difficulty in deeply plural communities these days of separating that glad invitation from what’s felt to be bullying or manipulative or threatening, is not straightforward - because we have a history (as also do other religions) of being bullying and manipulative. We’ve all fallen short of the glory of whatever God we turn to, and that’ll always*

¹⁸ *Encouraging Reading – bible studies for P&E parishes.2009 Available from www.presenceandengagement.org.uk or in hard copy from the guy.wilkinson@c-of-e.org.uk*

¹⁹ At a seminar in June 2009 by the Contextual Theology Centre at The Royal Foundation of St Katharine

cloud people's perception of one another. So it's a hard line to tread; but I don't think it's impossible.

96. In this way of understanding there is no conflict between 'dialogue' and 'evangelism' since both are part of proclamation. These are not 'either/or' but 'both/and', held together as our response to the mission of God in Christ. Dialogue may sometimes mistakenly be seen as something completely separated from evangelism; it may also be given a mistakenly restricted meaning and role. To speak of dialogue is not just to refer an esoteric activity undertaken by experts or enthusiasts. It is to speak of the many ways in which human beings relate to each other particularly across religious or other difference.
97. Much has been written about dialogue and many guidelines helpfully offered. Some of these are given in Annex 2. The commonly used fourfold classification of dialogue is helpful: the dialogue of daily life – encounters on the doorstep or at the checkout; the dialogue of the common good – engagement together in tasks beneficial to the community; the dialogue of mutual understanding – often in more formalised structures or conversations such as Scriptural Reasoning²⁰; and the dialogue of spiritual life – encountering each other at prayer and worship.
98. There are of course very many situations and contexts in which Christians share the gospel of salvation with others. Any selection of particular cases raises questions about what it means to share the gospel, about understandings of salvation, about criteria to be used in discerning good practice and about the selection of one particular set of case studies rather than others.
99. The simple testimony of the spoken word describing personal experience will always be a part of the Christian life, but fully to share the gospel of salvation is to live a life which offers to others the possibility of choosing to be a disciple of Christ as Lord and Saviour. This requires some combination of word and deed. Such a life, lived individually or collectively, may have as a conscious intent the sharing of the gospel story with others; or the life may simply be lived in Christ and in so doing may be so attractive that it raises questions amongst those who observe it and are affected by it. There is a continuum from living as an explicit and overt witness, to a life which is known to God alone.
100. Nevertheless, to say as above that evangelism and dialogue are held together in proclamation, is not to say that there are no distinctions between them, and it is important to address specific issues in relation to evangelism²¹ in multi faith contexts. What follows are some reflections on evangelism from a multi religious parish context:
101. *"We are aware in our parish that evangelism is a sensitive issue not least because the majority of people who live in our area hold to a different faith. Some of these people may not like us wanting to share our faith with them, for a variety of different reasons. This is a particular issue with Jewish people because of the Church's painful history of anti-Semitism and the deep concern of some Jews about so many young people 'marrying out'. But also Hindus, Sikhs and Jains find the thought of conversion very difficult, and this has been a painful issue over the last few years especially in Hindu Christian relations. We know too that the consequences of evangelism for some converts, especially from different faiths to Christianity, could be great hurt to their families and themselves and could even lead to danger. There is the historical heritage of which we are reminded where Christians, particularly in colonial contexts, have*

²⁰ Scriptural Reasoning is the communal practice of reading sacred scriptures, in small groups, together.

<http://www.scripturalreasoning.org/index.php>

²¹ Christian discourse uses a range of words to speak of the activity of presenting the gospel: evangelism, mission, witness, proclamation, proselytism. Care needs to be taken in the use of the different terminology each of which carry different meaning and implication. Increasingly, 'proselytising' has been used with negative connotation to imply the use of inappropriate methods.

used positions of power to exert unethical pressure on people of different faiths to convert to Christianity. There is also a feeling by some both outside of and inside the Church that evangelism will inevitably create conflict and possibly even violence, and so should be avoided.

102. *Nevertheless, Christians in our congregation still pray for and desire to share their faith with others, of all religious backgrounds. The foremost reasons stated probably among our congregation would be that Christians are called to do this in the Bible, and that there is a natural desire on the part of Christians to want to share the good news that they have found in Christ with others. It is important also to us that we have fellow Christians among us who have come to Christ from a variety of different religious backgrounds, and these people are clear that what they have found is a good thing and they are grateful that someone shared Christ with them, even if their road has been difficult. There is also a sense among some of us that our whole society and particularly our political and educational systems are based on the assumption that people have a right to persuade others and to be persuaded by others in a whole variety of disciplines from science to politics. If a politician can show up on my doorstep to persuade me to vote for her and not the candidate I have voted for in the past, or a television programme can try to persuade me to accept a position for (or against) global warming, why can't a person try to persuade someone else to embrace a faith or a different faith? We know Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and Humanists who share their faith (or lack of it) with us, and who have 'converts' within their respective communities so that faith sharing and conversion is for many simply part of the experience of living in a multi faith society.*
103. *The real issue for us as a congregation, however, is not whether we should engage in evangelism, but rather how we should do that, and in particular how we can do it ethically. In this area we are grateful for the work done by the Christian Muslim Forum, established under the patronage of the Archbishop of Canterbury, in taking forward an initiative of the Youth Encounter Programme of Scripture Union known as 'Ethical Guidelines for Christian and Muslim Witness in Britain'. Although these guidelines have been developed in the context of Christian Muslim relations, they offer help and encouragement in the wider context of faith sharing between members of different faiths²².*
104. *Part of our experience of being a minority community as Christians in our particular context is an increased confidence that if our motivation is genuinely loving, and we are careful to be ethical in the way we evangelise, we don't need to be apologetic about sharing who we are and what we have discovered in Christ. Our religious context increasingly feels like a 'level playing field' with the different faith communities rooted and confident in themselves and a clearer sense that we can all relate to each other as co-citizens rather than as 'hosts' or 'guests'.*
105. *Our experience is that Churches of all denominations in multi faith areas often engage in evangelistic activities similar to those in other non religious contexts, neither 'targetting' people of other faiths, nor excluding them either. So, for example, many churches offer the Alpha Course to which, from time to time, people of different faiths will come, and some of those will over time become Christians. Congregations in multi faith areas will often participate in a wider 'mission' event and invite their friends and neighbours to come along. Our experience is that these invitations are often warmly received, with maybe a comment such as, 'We're glad that the Church is doing something to show people a different way than the immoral and self-destructive ways that we see them living.' Congregation members will be encouraged to invite their neighbours to special services such as 'Back to Church Sunday' and we find that in a multi faith area some of these people who come will be from different faith backgrounds. Mostly people will hear about the Christian faith simply through a friendship, but for others it may be through a specific initiative of the church such as the distribution of DVDs of the 'Jesus' film, or*

²² Annex 4 and at www.christianmuslimforum.org/downloads/Ethical_Guidelines_for_Witness.pdf

teams of congregation members visiting homes to offer to pray for specific needs. Many clergy in multi faith areas have had the experience of being approached by people of a different faith for some kind of deliverance ministry, and when this is provided it sometimes leads to the person embracing the Christian faith.

106. *Our multi faith society is in a constant process of change, and there are many from different faith backgrounds who are more prepared than before to move outside of the faith communities into which they have grown up. While not necessarily wanting to ‘sign up’ as Christians, there are those who are deeply drawn to the person of Christ as they find him in and through the Christian community, or directly through dreams and healings. Our churches have found that we need to let people come at their own speed and in their own ways, and not try to rush a decision that they are not yet ready to make. Our experience is that those who come into the church fellowship from different faith backgrounds, often have a long and difficult journey. Some of those who come into the church come from the ‘edges’ of their own communities, and many do not have the same sense of loyalty to a particular congregation as we see in those who have grown up in the church or who come from a nominal Christian background. ”*
107. In relation to people and communities of other faiths, there are many ministries which seek consciously to offer the gospel story in ways that are specifically designed to speak appropriately to Muslims, Jews or Hindus for example. Various ministries to and amongst people of other religions seek to understand those religions and to offer the gospel story to them in terms which connect with their narratives and cultural contexts. There are also courses and programmes which seek to equip Christians to understand their own faith more deeply with the intent to better equip them for the contexts in which they will encounter people and communities of other faiths, particularly where these also have their equivalent of approaches to mission.²³
108. Other gospel ministries are committed to the provision of particular services of care to the homeless, to broken families, to children and youth, to the sick or to any number of communities of need. These are driven by a desire to share the gospel of salvation through practical witness to the love of God for all people as expressed in the healing and reconciling ministry of Christ. Such ministries may be intentionally located in particular social environments or may simply grow from a life lived and the religious composition of the people ministered to will vary according to the locality
109. Chaplaincy is a particular form of Christian ministry which has developed over many centuries and is widely recognised and appreciated. Chaplaincy is essentially a pastoral ministry, offering the gospel of salvation through the pastoral, prayer and liturgical ministry of countless Christians, stipendiary and voluntary. This may be in public institutions such as hospitals and hospices, prisons, the armed forces, higher and further education institutions; but also across the whole range of society, in industry, schools and sport and in a myriad of other contexts where people are gathered for particular reasons and purposes. Where chaplaincy ministry is offered through public sector institutions, the National Health Service for example, it is increasingly offered alongside and in collaboration with chaplains of other faiths than Christian. Christian chaplaincy in the public sector seeks to maintain a distinctive Christian witness whilst respecting the norms of the public sector institutions.
110. The teaching ministry of Christians who specialise in the scholarly and academic work of understanding other religions and making that understanding available to others to assist them in their ministry is of great importance. This is a form of witness which is undertaken within theological colleges and courses, within academic contexts with a Christian framework and

²³ The Awareness Foundation <http://www.awareness-foundation.com>

other academic institutions of a secular nature within the norms of the Academy. The Centre for Muslim-Christian Studies in Oxford²⁴, the London School of Theology's Centre for Islamic Studies²⁵, and the Heythrop College Centre for Christianity and Interreligious Dialogue²⁶ provide three examples of such institutions but there are many other such ministries. These include the work of the St Ethelburga Fellow in Christian Muslim Relations²⁷, the work of the Archbishop of Canterbury's *Building Bridges Seminar* of Christian and Muslim scholars and others involved in a very wide range of study and publication. The Christian Muslim forum arranges seminars and discussions between scholars of both traditions.

111. A further major context within which the gospel of salvation is offered and from which examples of good practice may be drawn, is that of primary and secondary education through nearly 5000 church schools – and by individual teachers in other maintained sector schools. The Church of England and other Christian Churches provide education within a Christian framework to millions of children and young people in maintained sector neighbourhood schools across the country. The religious composition of the neighbourhoods in which schools are located varies widely, but in many areas now include significant communities of other faiths than Christian. In such contexts the pupils at a school may be religiously mixed or in some cases may be substantially of one non-Christian religion. Christian ministry in schools respects the religious belonging of all pupils but offers a context within which Christian faith is lived and taught empathetically and openly. It is for these reasons that so many families of other faiths than Christian are content for their children to attend Church schools²⁸.
112. There has in recent years been a remarkable growth in the number and scope of structured multi religious Forums and Councils²⁹, very often initiated and sustained by Christians. These have come together for the purposes of greater mutual understanding and for common action for the benefit of society. Whilst many motives may be involved in their development, including the support of government cohesion and other policies, at the heart of Christian engagement is a desire to know the other and to be known truthfully and empathetically by the other. This is an important means by which Christians and people of other faiths witness to each other in the integrity of their self understandings. The situations in which such Forums and Councils have grown up and the ways in which they operate are multifarious and in some cases longstanding, with the Council of Christians and Jews having been founded in 1942³⁰. Others, the Inter Faith Network for the UK, the Christian Muslim Forum³¹ and work towards a national Hindu Christian Forum are further examples of national structures, although there are also many regional and more local forums and Councils as well.
113. In addition to these specific ministries and usually inter-related with them, is the life of the local parish church in all its varied expressions which is the bedrock of the Church of England. It is in and through the collective life of worship and service to the people of the parish that the gospel of salvation through Christ alone is most widely lived out and offered to people of all faiths and none in the ordinary circumstances of their daily lives. It is from this context that the case studies which follow have been mainly chosen on the basis that it is in this context that most

²⁴ <http://www.cmcsoxford.org.uk>

²⁵ <http://www.lst.ac.uk/smartweb/cis/centre-for-islamic-studies>

²⁶ <http://www.heythrop.ac.uk/outreach/centre-for-christianity-and-interreligious-dialogue.html>

²⁷ <http://www.stethelburgas.org/islam.html>

²⁸ The General Synod debated the Church of England Schools' Strategy in February 2007. The document '[Achieving the First Two Hundred Years](#)' reviews achievements against the recommendations of the Dearing Commission, *The Way ahead* published in 2001 and develops the strategy for the period up to the bi-Centenary of the [National Society](#) in 2011.

²⁹ The Inter Faith Network for the UK mentions 25 national, 14 regional and 217 local inter faith bodies in its 2007 Directory of Inter Faith Organisations in the UK

³⁰ <http://www.ccj.org.uk/>

³¹ <http://www.christianmuslimforum.org/>

people encounter the lived life of Christian communities and from which very many of the specific ministries are grown and nurtured.

114. The charge given to the minister of a parish is that of the ‘cure of souls’, a responsibility for the care and cure (healing) of what is essential to the wellbeing of human beings³². This traditional phrase provides a very positive present day means of understanding what the offering of the gospel of salvation involves in the context of parishes with the widest variety of parishioners of all faiths and none.
115. There are some 13,000 Church of England parishes across the country each offering its way of living out the gospel story of salvation through Christ amongst its wider parish community. Approximately 1,000 of these parish churches live their lives amongst parish populations in which more than 10% of people are of other faiths, accounting in total for about one quarter of the total population of England. The *Presence and Engagement* programme initiated by General Synod in 2005 seeks to support and equip these parishes and to enable a sharing of the wide variety of ways in which they live out and share the gospel³³.
116. The case studies which follow are drawn from the contexts of these parish churches and therefore have a particular focus on mission in significant communities of people of other faiths. Six are given, drawn from a countless number which could have been provided. A further ten are mentioned in Annex 3 to provide a glimpse of the wider backdrop from which they are drawn. The *Presence & Engagement* website at www.presenceandengagement.org.uk has been developed to gather the widest range of ways in which the gospel is lived out and offered amongst people of all faiths and none.

5. Examples and commendations of good practice in sharing the gospel of salvation through Christ alone with people of other faiths and of none.

117. In considering the following case studies it will be important to hold in mind the general assumptions about good practice sketched above; that these are a small sample from only one arena in which the gospel is shared with others; and that these are summary descriptions of situations involving many people over long periods.
118. The examples summarised below – in which the local church tells its own story - are drawn from the dioceses of Leicester (St Philip’s), London (Southall), Birmingham (Springfield), St Albans (All Saints, Bedford), Blackburn (Building Bridges in Burnley) and Bradford (St Clement and St Augustine) and to that extent seek to encompass a wide geographic range and a variety of different contexts.
119. From Leicester the example of a church striking out in a radically new direction to offer its experience as an asset for the wider Church. From Southall comes an example of the way in which the gospel is shared through common action for the improvement of the local environment. From Birmingham an illustration of the ways in which a local church’s involvement with the families and children of its parish has led to a major public investment. From Bedford the work of a parish church through story, song and sport. From Burnley the engagement of churches with other faith communities for understanding and reconciliation; and

³² “The word ‘cure’ has two overtones. It means ‘care’, and it means ‘cure’ in the sense of ‘healing’. When we use the phrase we are saying that the church has responsibility to care for those in the community, but also has responsibility for bringing healing into people’s souls. It must work to enable their souls to be healthy.” The Rt Revd Brian Smith June 2009

³³ GS 1577. *Presence and Engagement – the churches’ task in a multi faith society*. Report by the Mission and Public Affairs Council July 2005

from Bradford an example of the life of a church in one of the most multi religious contexts in the country

5A. St Philip's Centre for Study and Engagement in a Multi Faith Society

120. Leicester developed as a city with significant communities of other faiths primarily from the early 1970's with the expulsion of Asians from Uganda under General Idi Amin. From that time have grown substantial Hindu and Sikh and also Muslim communities, including latterly a significant Somali population. The city authorities suggests figures of 41% non-indigenous population, and 52% in the schools (of a population just less than 300,000). Estimates are that Hindus and Muslims are about equal in number, and there is a significant move of more prosperous South Asians to suburban and rural Leicestershire.

121. An indication of the impact of these developments across some 26 parishes in Leicester can be seen in the following table based on the 2001 census and the parishes in existence at that time

Presence and Engagement parishes in the Diocese of Leicester

Name Leicester	Popn	% Christian	% Buddhist	% Hindu	% Jewish	% Muslim	% Sikh	% All
LEICESTER: ST PAUL	4554	49.5%	0.4%	5.6%	0.2%	4.0%	0.9%	11.1%
LEICESTER: ST MARY DE CASTRO	275	46.5%	0.0%	2.9%	0.0%	4.7%	4.0%	11.6%
LEICESTER: ST ANNE	5149	63.3%	0.2%	7.7%	0.1%	1.5%	2.5%	12.0%
KNIGHTON: ST JOHN THE BAPTIST	11915	52.7%	0.9%	4.0%	0.8%	4.2%	2.9%	12.8%
LEICESTER HOLY TRINITY WITH ST JOHN THE DIVINE	2722	48.9%	1.3%	3.2%	0.4%	6.5%	1.8%	13.2%
BEAUMONT LEYS: CHRIST THE KING	13494	54.4%	0.3%	7.7%	0.1%	4.0%	1.3%	13.5%
LEICESTER THE ABBEY	12185	58.1%	0.1%	8.8%	0.0%	2.0%	2.4%	13.5%
BARKBY: ST MARY	1740	67.4%	0.0%	12.6%	0.0%	0.3%	1.0%	13.9%
LEICESTER: THE HOLY APOSTLES	12296	51.4%	0.2%	6.3%	0.1%	2.4%	5.4%	14.4%
THURMASTON: ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS	11235	62.7%	0.1%	12.4%	0.1%	1.0%	2.3%	16.0%
LEICESTER ST MARTIN	256	40.2%	0.0%	7.4%	0.0%	2.7%	6.6%	16.8%
LEICESTER: THE MARTYRS	9459	45.0%	0.4%	10.3%	0.1%	4.9%	4.0%	19.8%
THURNBY: ST LUKE	6129	65.0%	0.0%	9.7%	0.3%	3.0%	7.1%	20.0%
LEICESTER THE HOLY SPIRIT	3371	45.6%	1.0%	8.0%	0.3%	7.8%	3.6%	20.7%
KNIGHTON: ST MARY MAGDALEN	15550	55.1%	0.3%	8.1%	0.9%	4.3%	7.2%	20.8%
OADBY: ST PETER & ST PAUL	20712	57.3%	0.2%	10.9%	0.5%	4.6%	7.1%	23.3%
LOUGHBOROUGH : ALL SAINTS	10804	49.5%	0.4%	11.0%	0.0%	12.0%	0.3%	23.7%
HUMBERSTONE: ST MARY	9709	51.2%	0.1%	19.0%	0.1%	5.1%	5.3%	29.7%
LEICESTER: ST JAMES THE GREATER	3552	30.3%	0.5%	9.2%	0.5%	29.8%	2.7%	42.7%
EVINGTON: ST DENYS	9838	41.9%	0.2%	18.7%	0.3%	13.6%	12.6%	45.3%
LEICESTER: ST CHAD	9408	38.9%	0.2%	19.1%	0.1%	16.5%	9.5%	45.4%
THE RESURRECTION	37198	25.5%	0.2%	43.9%	0.1%	9.4%	5.1%	58.7%
LEICESTER: THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST	24144	22.9%	0.2%	11.7%	0.1%	46.0%	3.0%	61.1%
LEICESTER: ST PHILIP	9050	16.2%	0.2%	25.8%	0.1%	33.7%	12.6%	72.3%
LEICESTER: ST THEODORE OF CANTERBURY	6116	16.9%	0.0%	55.8%	0.0%	6.2%	12.0%	74.2%
NORTH EVINGTON: ST STEPHEN	8784	10.8%	0.1%	23.9%	0.0%	49.2%	7.3%	80.5%

122. St Philip's parish has been amongst many parishes that have changed dramatically in recent decades. From being a substantial congregation drawing on a parish population of Christian culture, the church has moved to being a small congregation in a parish with the 8th smallest Christian percentage population in the UK and set in the midst of Muslim, Hindu and Sikh people. The church building now faces a substantial newly built mosque across the road, a miniature version of one of the great domed mosques in Istanbul, with several hundred attending each day, and with no places available on Fridays or during Ramadan.

123. Two crucial decisions were made in relationship to the church. A major fire in 1996 led to debate as to whether to remain open, in view of the changing demography around. The Bishop of the time took the decision that for this very reason they should remain open as a living witness, and a major refurbishment took place, to allow for community use. The second decision was made in 2005 to remain present and to engage with this changed context in a strikingly new way and the ‘St. Philip’s Centre for Study and Engagement in a Multi Faith Society’ has developed from this decision.
124. The Parochial Church Council decided to enter into a partnership with the Diocese of Leicester and the national Presence and Engagement programme to become a means through which the experience of living out the gospel in the midst of people of other faiths could be offered to other churches locally and regionally. To this end it invested part of its financial reserves, its vicarage, its church buildings and its lived life in the creation and sustaining of the St Philip’s Centre.
125. St Philip’s Centre requires a new term to be coined to define its current function. It does not present itself as a university college or a charitable NGO focusing on social work; nor does it present itself as a local or regional Faith forum, nor as a community centre. It is a community whose trustees are Christian and which is rooted in living out the gospel story, contributing to all these roles through a highly flexible and multifaceted team of employees and volunteers.
126. St Philip’s Centre is rooted in the multi faith context of Leicester and is a national ecumenical training centre under the Presence and Engagement initiative. It provides training for Christians, for those of other faiths and for civic partners. It enables Christians and churches to be a confident presence in a multi faith world, prepared to share their own faith and learn from others. Good working relationships and dialogue with peoples of other faiths serve to promote the common good. The emphasis is to include those who live, work and minister in suburbs, small towns and villages, who are all in various ways and with various challenges, part of a multi faith society,
127. From its experience of engagement with congregations, other faiths and public sector authorities, a range of programmes and opportunities have been developed including for example:
128. **Unfamiliar Journey** – an ecumenical course for people who are interested in encouraging Christian witness and building good relations with people of different faiths. **Presence and Engagement in a Multi Faith Society** – a three day course for clergy and experienced lay people of all denominations. **Course for Chaplaincy and Pastoral Care** in a multi Faith Society. **MA in Inter religious Relations**, accredited by the de Montfort University. **Senior Leadership Training Workshops**. ‘Presence and Engagement in a Multi Faith World - evangelism and people of other faiths’.
129. Alongside these professional training courses, the Centre also hosts a range of forums: a ‘Family of Abraham’ group made up of people in mixed faith marriages; two Muslim Christian dialogue groups, one for women only; a Sikh-Christian forum and a Hindu-Christian Forum. Many of these have met regularly for over 6 years. Wider outreaching activities include high profile sporting events including annual football and cricket matches between Imams and Christian clergy both locally and inter regionally which spread a Christian message of harmony and the enjoyment of life together. It is a key partner with the Leicester Council of Faiths (now 23 years in existence), the Faith Leader’s Forum convened by the Bishop, and facilitated by the Director and Bishop’s Chaplain since 2001, and the newly formed Leicestershire Faiths Forum.

130. St Philip's has a collaborative relationship with the Islamic Foundation's educational centre at Markfield in the training of Muslim chaplains to work in hospitals, prisons and Higher Education.
131. As a direct result of the Centre's dynamism the whole Christian congregation of St Philip's church has flourished, sharing in and contributing to the sense of energy, achievement and shared purpose of the Centre. There were over 43 events in the church building over 2009, its Centenary Year, which is now seen as the centre of a small but thriving Christian community rather than a partially disused building. The congregation has grown to include young children and people from different ethnic backgrounds.
132. What might be the learning to be drawn from this experience and to be shared with others?
- That continuous physical presence in a community whose nature is radically changing provides the basis for deep engagement with incoming people of other faiths
 - That a shared and mutually supportive relationship between the local church, the diocese and other Christian denominations brings benefits of resources, encouragement and common purpose. Core support from the Bishop, the Bishop's Council and the Diocesan Synod, has been vital, and generous, as the Centre is seen as a Centre for mission.
 - That an explicitly Christian community can be appreciated, respected and used by other Faith communities and by secular authorities in a wide range of programmes for the common good.
 - That a strong local centre can contribute greatly to the international, national and regional Church and beyond, through the wide use of its staff, several of whom have an academic reputation, and especially are known for their link of the academic with the practical.
 - That multi faith relations are about relations also with particular faith communities. Leicester and the Centre provide an ideal base for engaging with 'Indic' faiths, in balance with Islam and Judaism.
 - That a Centre can be deeply rooted in Christ, and in Christian scripture, clear about the saving grace of God offered in Christ, but at the same time, be deeply committed to the message that 'There's a wideness in God's mercy...'

5B. A Rocha, Southall

133. Southall is a community with one of the most diverse religious populations in England and with a particularly large Sikh community and the largest Gurdwara in the country immediately opposite the church of St John the Evangelist, Southall Green. It includes some 52 separate places of worship amongst which are six Church of England parish churches all with congregations of great ethnic diversity. The diversity of the congregations of Southall speaks strongly to the universality of the gospel.

Presence & Engagement parishes in Southall, Diocese of London

	% Chr	% Buddhist	% Hindu	% Jewish	% Muslim	% Sikh	% All faiths
SOUTHALL ST GEORGE	16.3	0.4	20.9	0.0	19.2	36.0	76.5
ST. JOHN SOUTHALL GREEN	24.3	0.3	13.7	0.1	18.4	31.0	63.5
HOLY TRINITY SOUTHALL	23.0	0.5	16.7	0.0	17.1	31.2	65.5
CHRIST THE REDEEMER SOUTHALL	37.5	0.5	15.6	0.0	11.4	23.3	50.8
ST MARY NORWOOD GREEN	31.4	0.4	11.1	0.1	9.9	32.6	23.3
EMMANUEL, SOUTHALL	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

134. A Rocha UK is part of the international A Rocha movement, a family of projects and initiatives running practical environmental projects in 18 countries across six continents. It is a Christian organisation, working to show God's love for the whole creation and to take the creation care message to those that need to hear it. A Rocha's vision is "the transformation of people and places, as individuals and communities do their bit to care for God's world." A Rocha UK has now grown into one of the UK's leading Christian environmental charities, with several projects around the country, and partnerships with several major Christian bodies

135. A Rocha UK began its life in Southall. The initiatives in Southall played an important part in transforming the local environment of Southall beginning simply with the placing of recycling banks on local church premises and developing into a concern about high levels of air pollution and large amounts of litter in public places. Southall also had the lowest ratio of public green space per household in England with an accompanying increased likelihood of mental health difficulties among those deprived of access to green spaces.

136. *"A Rocha Living Waterways: A 'Greener, Cleaner Southall and Hayes' was our first practical conservation project, was launched in early 2001 with a multicultural community celebration in a local school. A Rocha Living Waterways is based in Southall and Hayes in West London, a heavily built-up, culturally diverse area where we aim to reveal the wonders of God's creation to people who previously had little opportunity to enjoy the beauty of the natural world first hand*

137. *We have been working with local landowners, Hillingdon Council and other community groups to turn 90 acres of wasteland between Southall and Hayes into the Minet Country Park, with recreational space and nature conservation areas. The site, which used to be full of burnt-out cars, and was a magnet for fly-tippers and illegal motorbike scramblers has been transformed and now contains nature trails, areas of open green space, and a children's playground.*

138. *We carried out the ecological impact assessment for this work, and co-ordinated working parties to clear up the rubbish. We conducted detailed wildlife surveys - identifying over 100 bird species on or over the site, and more than 20 butterfly species, making this one of the most important unprotected wildlife areas in West London. It's an important site, and we have a long-term commitment to helping with its management.*
139. *We don't just do practical, local conservation projects. We are also helping the Christian Church in the UK recapture God's original commission for mankind to care for all of creation. The Churches' programme aims to resource today's Church and impact the next generation of Church leaders.*
140. *We want to be a catalyst in helping local communities to understand, respect and enjoy the local environment. We have been welcomed by the faith communities in Southall, and the common agenda of 'creation-care' is an opportunity for building on shared values. Through our environmental education programme, A Rocha Living Waterways aims to help the children and young people of Southall and Hayes appreciate and understand the natural environment around them, through both curriculum based and out-of-school activities.*
141. *Our aims have been:*
- *To transform a derelict 90 acre site into the Minet Country Park and nature reserve, bringing green space to a cramped and overcrowded area. Our ongoing role includes wardening the park and providing environmental expertise*
 - *To shape the values and attitudes of the next generation through environmental education in assemblies, national curriculum based activities at Minet Country Park, after-school clubs and playschemes*
 - *To create a floating classroom on a purpose-built boat on the Grand Union Canal*
 - *To publish a community newsletter, in a variety of local languages, that brings faith groups together on the common agenda of creation care*
 - *To create 'model gardens' that demonstrate how to bring beauty, wildlife and home-grown fruit and vegetables to small, urban gardens*
 - *To create a community environmental centre, a place for the team and visitors to live, and for local people to explore creation care and sustainable living. Our centre on Avenue Road in Southall has begun to fulfil this role.*
-
142. What might be the learning to be drawn from this experience and to be shared with others?
- That a concern for the stewardship of the local environment goes hand in hand with a concern for the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of those who live in it
 - That explicit Christian concern and action can be a powerful source of energy to bring together people of all faith and none
 - That small local and local initiatives can grow to have national impact.
 - That the relationships and shared values of care for creation also provide an opportunity for Christian witness and sharing of faith

5C. St Christopher, Springfield Children's Centre, Birmingham

143. The Diocese of Birmingham, after the Diocese of London, had the highest proportion of parishes with more than 10% of people of other faiths at the 2001 census and this will have grown significantly since then. Although the main faiths are all present across Birmingham, many Presence and Engagement parishes in the south and east of the city have predominantly Muslim communities, with others in the northern and western areas having in addition significant Hindu and Sikh communities.

Some Presence and Engagement parishes in the Diocese of Birmingham

	Popn	% Chr	% Buddhist	% Hindu	% Jewish	% Muslim	% Sikh	% All
HALL GREEN : THE ASCENSION	14080	59.5%	0.1%	4.9%	0.2%	10.4%	6.3%	22.0%
WARD END	5669	57.1%	0.2%	0.3%	0.0%	25.2%	0.8%	26.4%
BORDESLEY GREEN	8297	42.8%	0.1%	0.7%	0.0%	41.9%	0.9%	43.6%
SPRINGFIELD	7298	28.9%	0.3%	6.6%	0.3%	44.1%	4.7%	56.1%
BALSALL HEATH	8859	22.6%	0.3%	2.0%	0.1%	55.1%	2.6%	60.2%
BORDESLEY SPARKBROOK W	9975	26.7%	0.0%	1.0%	0.1%	59.1%	2.0%	62.2%
BALSALL HEATH	4311	20.9%	0.4%	5.0%	0.0%	57.1%	3.0%	65.6%
WASHWOOD HEATH	9697	18.8%	0.1%	0.4%	0.1%	65.5%	0.3%	66.4%
SMALL HEATH	24748	21.0%	0.1%	1.0%	0.0%	64.6%	1.6%	67.3%
SALTLEY AND SHAW HILL (ALUM ROCK)	15328	20.6%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	67.9%	0.5%	68.7%
SPARKHILL SPARKBROOK:	20228	16.0%	0.2%	6.4%	0.0%	64.1%	3.1%	73.8%
CHRIST CHURCH	8027	14.3%	0.1%	2.6%	0.0%	72.8%	2.2%	77.7%

144. The neighbourhoods of Saltley, Bordesley, Small Heath, Sparkbrook, Sparkhill and Springfield include between them the largest Muslim community in the country. The life and witness of the Churches and Christian communities in these neighbourhoods must take this fully into account if the gospel of salvation is to be attractive and attracting.
145. St Christopher's, Springfield is an inner city parish with a majority Muslim community but also with smaller Hindu and Sikh communities. In serving these and families of no faith in the area, key points in the Church's calendar and in the rhythms of the project have provided opportunities for creative expressions of the Christian story. *"In appropriately ethical ways, the Church has been exploring ways of learning from South Asian spiritualities in a Christ-centred journey that facilitates connections with our community and honours the search for God that is so real for many in our context. Again, those involved tell the story in their own words:*
146. *Over recent years, a vital relationship of dialogue has developed with the large mosque facing the church. The very nature of our environment and the problem of religious extremism globally, gives us a keen sense that we should foster a spirituality that is faithful to our texts and tradition and equally committed to be a blessing to all in our city, whatever their faith. The congregation consists of old and young, white, black, South Asian, professional and non-professional and believes that diversity within the church is part of the gospel we offer to the world."*
147. The Springfield Project is a community project established in 2000 by St Christopher's church and the Springfield Children's Centre is a completely new facility for childcare.
148. Birmingham City Council chose the existing 'Seedlings' project, a multi faith playschool run by St Christopher's church, as the basis for an investment of over £2 million and to create one of the City's Children's Centres. The Springfield Project had began when a few mothers within the congregation started a play school but when only two or three families attended for the first year they came close to giving up. However, in the second year Seedlings began to flourish. One key aspect of the earliest phase was that the people involved had some professional training as nursery workers and put much work into developing a structured programme of games and learning activities. It was the quality of the environment, the play-materials and the attention of the carers that made it grow in popularity. From the beginning, Bible studies that resonated with the Muslim faith were read in story time and prayer was offered and accepted.

149. The Springfield Centre is one of sixty seven Children's Centres being built across Birmingham but is distinctive in a number of respects. It is the only faith-based Children's Centre in Birmingham, having a vision to engage as a faith-based project with other faith groups, in particular the majority Muslim community. The Centre is physically connected to the church building and is unashamedly part of the parish church site. It has become trusted in the local area so that large numbers from different cultural and faith communities attend and make use of its services and support. It has a very strong volunteer base and is pioneering inter faith youth activities and nationally is working closely with Faith to Faith, Scripture Union, the Christian Muslim Forum, the Church of England, and locally with schools, mosques and the Springfield Neighbourhood Forum.
150. The growth of the project is testament to the dedication of the voluntary workers from St Christopher's: out of a congregation of 130 over 40 volunteer to work every week. The decision to allow the Centre to be invested in by the City Council was made very slowly as the church was clear about maintaining its open Christian witness. Gradually a series of decisions were made that allowed for increasing partnership with statutory services, local government and community groups. This was a deliberate move away from a model of simply providing services that the church controlled for the community or handing over church buildings for others to use. As the Centre has grown, Muslims have been employed in roles at all levels within the Centre and are currently involved in most decision making processes.
151. The Springfield Centre currently provides nursery, health and family support and employment and training advice. It aims to host professionals - midwives, counsellors and nutritionists in its next phase of expansion.
152. Not all the work takes place in the Centre and the work is wider in scope than a normal Children's Centre. The Springfield Project includes Seedlings, a 'stay and play' group and the 'SKATS' after school clubs which both meet in the church building.
153. The Springfield Centre is also home to Youth Encounter, a project of Scripture Union that runs Faith and Young People events for Christian and Muslim young people and provides training and resources to help churches equip Christian young people to live out their faith confidently and humbly amongst their Muslim friends. It also particularly helps Christian youth workers to equip their young people in relating with Muslim friends and neighbours.
154. What might be the learning to be drawn from this experience and to be shared with others?
- That when a consistent commitment is shown by the people of a church to all the people of a parish whatever their faith, then the secular authorities may be willing to invest public funds and to accept the continuing witness of the Church.
 - That being a minority within a Muslim majority neighbourhood does not inhibit a Christian community from being outward looking, confident and inspirational
 - That engaging on equal terms with people of other faiths does not compromise Christian faith and witness to the gospel of salvation through Christ alone
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5D. Bedford: All Saints, Diocese of St Albans

155. The Diocese of St Albans had some 35 out of 335 parishes with more than 10% of their populations of other faiths at the 2001 census. The parishes include some 20% of the diocesan population. All Saints, Bedford in the Queen's Park area has a significant Muslim community as well as smaller Hindu and Sikh communities.

Presence and Engagement parishes in the Diocese of St Albans

Name	% Chr	% Buddhist	% Hindu	% Jewish	% Muslim	% Sikh	% All
CHORLEY WOOD: CHRIST CHURCH	71.4%	0.3%	4.8%	3.9%	1.5%	0.2%	10.6%
KEMPSTON: THE CHURCH OF THE TRANSFIGURATION	66.7%	0.3%	3.4%	0.1%	1.2%	5.7%	10.6%
LUTON, ST HUGH, LEWSEY	64.4%	0.2%	3.8%	0.3%	5.9%	0.6%	10.9%
ST ALBANS: ST LUKE	62.6%	0.5%	1.1%	0.7%	8.4%	0.2%	10.9%
WATFORD: ST JOHN	57.4%	0.6%	1.8%	1.8%	6.7%	0.1%	11.0%
LUTON	60.3%	1.1%	1.6%	0.2%	7.7%	0.7%	11.2%
LUTON: ST ANNE	66.1%	0.4%	2.9%	0.2%	7.3%	0.5%	11.3%
BOREHAM WOOD	64.2%	0.3%	1.4%	8.2%	1.4%	0.1%	11.4%
WATFORD: ST LUKE	68.9%	0.3%	3.3%	3.3%	3.8%	0.7%	11.5%
BUSHEY	65.0%	0.2%	2.2%	8.3%	1.1%	0.1%	12.0%
BARNET VALE: ST MARK	61.4%	0.5%	3.6%	5.0%	2.8%	0.2%	12.1%
CHIPPING BARNET WITH ARKLEY (L.E.P)	63.9%	0.6%	3.2%	4.2%	4.2%	0.1%	12.3%
LUTON: ST MATTHEW, HIGH TOWN	58.5%	0.4%	1.9%	0.8%	8.0%	1.3%	12.4%
MARSH FARM	59.2%	0.2%	3.1%	0.1%	8.7%	0.4%	12.6%
ALDENHAM	61.7%	0.4%	3.3%	7.0%	1.6%	0.5%	12.7%
RICKMANSWORTH	64.2%	0.3%	5.6%	4.3%	3.0%	0.5%	13.6%
FARLEY HILL: ST JOHN THE BAPTIST	61.2%	0.2%	2.2%	0.1%	11.4%	0.2%	14.1%
NEW BARNET: ST JAMES	60.2%	0.5%	4.0%	6.1%	3.7%	0.2%	14.4%
LEAGRAVE: ST LUKE	63.4%	0.2%	3.3%	0.4%	10.6%	0.8%	15.3%
SHENLEY	64.8%	0.6%	1.6%	11.9%	1.2%	0.4%	15.8%
EAST BARNET	63.8%	0.7%	4.5%	6.3%	4.5%	0.2%	16.3%
LYONSDOWN: HOLY TRINITY	57.1%	0.6%	3.6%	8.5%	3.5%	0.2%	16.3%
WATFORD	57.6%	0.5%	2.4%	0.8%	12.7%	0.8%	17.2%
WATFORD: ST MICHAEL AND ALL ANGELS	59.1%	0.4%	1.9%	0.8%	13.7%	0.9%	17.8%
BEDFORD: ST PAUL	51.6%	0.3%	2.7%	0.2%	14.4%	0.5%	18.1%
BEDFORD: ST JOHN & ST LEONARD	51.8%	0.2%	9.2%	0.0%	5.9%	4.6%	19.9%
LUTON: ST SAVIOUR	53.5%	0.3%	1.5%	0.3%	19.6%	0.2%	21.8%
BISCOT: HOLY TRINITY	57.9%	0.2%	3.7%	0.3%	17.5%	2.1%	23.9%
RADLETT: CHRIST CHURCH	52.2%	0.3%	2.5%	23.9%	0.8%	0.1%	27.6%
BUSHEY HEATH: ST PETER	49.4%	0.4%	3.1%	27.2%	1.2%	0.2%	32.0%
BEDFORD: ALL SAINTS	39.8%	0.2%	3.1%	0.0%	27.3%	4.0%	34.7%
TOTTERIDGE	41.1%	2.4%	5.4%	26.0%	3.7%	0.8%	38.3%
ELSTREE	38.4%	0.3%	4.9%	34.8%	3.9%	0.3%	44.2%
LUTON: ST ANDREW	36.7%	0.4%	1.8%	0.3%	42.6%	0.9%	46.1%
LUTON: ALL SAINTS WITH ST PETER	27.8%	0.1%	4.0%	0.1%	55.2%	0.9%	60.4%

156. Put simply, All Saints Parish Church fosters friendships across religious lines. The church runs several community projects with strong though often understated inter faith components. Church members work closely with the leaders of the nearby mosque and gurdwara and have developed a Faith Tour that brings thousands of school children to the three places of worship each year.

157. The Bedford Charity and the Big Lottery have enabled two faith-based community workers to be employed by the Church. Both grew up in Queen's Park and draw on a wealth of local

experience and community contacts. They support existing community projects and respond quickly and creatively to local needs in order to develop new initiatives

158. As a parish church, All Saints has developed a number of initiatives which seek to witness to the love of God in Christ for all and which engage with the lives of parishioners of all faiths and none, young and old. **All Saints Basketball Club** was started by eight teenage church members in 2003. A year later it had grown to include eighty children. The players and volunteer coaches reflect the religious and cultural diversity of the neighbourhood. Nearly half the players are girls who may train and play with the boys but who also have their own teams. Players improve their sporting ability but the emphasis is on their emotional, social and spiritual development.
159. **Queens Park Lives** is a local history project that has expanded to include an inter faith element. A series of workshops enabled a multi-faith team of adult learners to create a DVD, completing the technical tasks themselves from script to sound to editing. The Faith in Queen's Park DVD explores Islam, Sikhism and Christianity from the perspective of people 'on the ground'. It was launched with a multicultural celebration and has received very positive reviews as a teaching resource. There are also monthly 'Talking Faith' sessions where Christians and Muslims meet up to discuss theology.
160. **Fusion Youth Singing** uses music to foster social cohesion. In 2008 the group turned to drama and presented Musical called Jigsaw with support from the pupils of Queen's Park Lower and Westfield Middle Schools. Over 700 people attended the 4 performances. Jigsaw was about the waves of immigrants arriving in the local community, but casting for the show was intentionally counterintuitive. The Sikh hero was played by an African-Caribbean child, as were Italian, Polish and British characters. British girls were cast as Jamaican men. A Punjabi Christian girl played the part of a Pakistani Muslim elder. The drama enabled young people to engage with the stories of those from very different backgrounds and to begin to see the world through different eyes
161. **Bedford Blessings** is an off-shoot of Fusion for Muslim women and children. The sessions are led by a Hindu vocal coach and supported by two Christian volunteers. The project allows women and children to explore their faiths and to make new friends. They performed alongside Ulfa Arts in Birmingham and to sell-out crowds at Queens Park Community Centre. In line with religious and cultural sensitivities, most of their performances are to women-only audiences.
162. **Queen's Park Youth Cricket** started in January 2006. The neighbourhood had dozens of adult cricket teams but children and young people were only playing on the street and in occasional school matches. The church continues to be an important catalyst in the Club's development, but most of the volunteers come from the mosque. Whereas the adult teams tend to be culturally homogenous, Queen's Park Youth Cricket brings players, parents and coaches together across the lines of race and religion. Six teams play in the county youth league, and the Club has 170 players on its books. Girls may play in mixed teams, but there is also a girls-only team with female coaches. This enables girls to train in an all-female environment that is culturally appropriate.
163. For Deputy Churchwarden Neslyn Pearson, inter religious encounter affords opportunities to both proclaim and deepen her faith: *"Whether coaching a girls' team on the cricket pitch or conversing with Muslims over a plate of samosas about our self-surrender to God, I'm often called to re-think my faith and to articulate it in new ways. Being a Christian in a multi-faith parish is a wonderful vocation."*
164. What might be the learning to be drawn from these experiences and to be shared with others?

- That a local parish church can engage creatively with the stories of parishioners from all faiths and none in ways that open doors to trusting relationships which are a witness to the gospel
- That music and song can be a means to bring young people, including young Muslim people, together provided that cultural norms are respected
- That living out the Church of England's self understanding of having the cure of souls is capable of effective re-articulation in a multi religious environment

5E Building Bridges, Burnley

Presence and Engagement parishes in the diocese of Blackburn

	% Chr	%Bud	%Hindu	%Jew	% Musl	%Sikh	%All
FULWOOD: CHRIST CHURCH	73.4%	0.1%	1.6%	0.1%	8.2%	0.6%	10.6%
GREAT HARWOOD: ST JOHN	72.6%	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	11.9%	0.0%	12.0%
HASLINGDEN : ST JAMES	64.5%	0.1%	0.2%	0.2%	14.3%	0.0%	14.8%
PRESTON: ST JOHN	56.2%	0.7%	2.9%	0.4%	11.1%	0.1%	15.2%
NELSON: ST BEDE	62.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	17.1%	0.0%	17.2%
BURNLEY: ST PETER	62.1%	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%	19.8%	0.0%	20.9%
GREAT MARSDEN: ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST	58.0%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	21.5%	0.0%	21.8%
PRESTON: ALL SAINTS	56.3%	0.2%	2.9%	0.1%	19.0%	0.4%	22.6%
ACCRINGTON : CHRIST the KING	59.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	23.7%	0.1%	23.9%
WITTON : ST MARK	60.5%	0.1%	0.5%	0.0%	24.3%	0.4%	25.4%
PRESTON: ST STEPHEN	49.1%	0.4%	13.5%	0.1%	12.1%	0.2%	26.3%
PRESTON : ST MATTHEW	54.9%	0.2%	5.3%	0.0%	22.2%	1.2%	28.9%
PRESTON: ST JUDE	48.0%	0.4%	2.4%	0.0%	29.1%	1.3%	33.2%
BRIERFIELD : ST LUKE	52.9%	0.1%	0.5%	0.0%	34.4%	0.1%	35.1%
BLACKBURN : CHRIST CHURCH WITH ST MATTHEW	45.1%	0.2%	0.5%	0.0%	34.3%	0.3%	35.4%
BLACKBURN : ST SILAS	52.0%	0.2%	1.4%	0.0%	33.5%	0.3%	35.4%
BLACKBURN : ST BARNABAS	42.8%	0.2%	1.2%	0.0%	36.2%	0.0%	37.6%
LITTLE MARSDEN: ST PAUL	46.8%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	38.5%	0.0%	38.7%
BURNLEY: ST ANDREW with ST MARGARET	45.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	38.4%	0.0%	38.8%
PRESTON: ST OSWALD	46.4%	0.0%	2.6%	0.1%	35.9%	0.5%	39.1%
BLACKBURN : CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER	41.3%	0.1%	0.3%	0.1%	38.8%	0.2%	39.4%
BLACKBURN : ST JAMES	47.9%	0.0%	0.5%	0.1%	39.8%	0.2%	40.7%
BLACKBURN : ST JUDE WITH ST THOMAS	40.0%	0.2%	0.3%	0.0%	42.7%	0.1%	43.3%
BLACKBURN ST MARY THE VIRGIN AND ST PAUL	36.0%	0.0%	0.7%	0.0%	44.0%	0.0%	44.8%
BLACKBURN : ST STEPHEN	33.4%	0.0%	0.2%	0.0%	51.7%	0.2%	52.1%
BLACKBURN : ST MICHAEL'S WORSHIP CENTRE	16.2%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	70.6%	0.1%	71.1%

165. In 2001 there were serious disturbances in Burnley and in other northern towns and cities involving young people from different communities. Since then the whole community has worked together to increase understanding between different ethnic groups and a number of initiatives have resulted involving mainly local churches and mosques. Those involved tell the story in their own words:

166. One central initiative has been **Building Bridges Burnley**, which was founded in the year following the riots. BBB is based in the Masjid-e-Ibrahim Mosque and involves almost all the Christian clergy in the borough as well as all the Imams. They run regular inter faith events including shared meals involving over over 400 people attending these events, hosted by local churches and mosques alternately, discussion forums and a range of women-only seminars. BBB has a full time staff of eight people and over 20 volunteers. It also runs the **Bridge Project** out of St Peter's church which is a free after school club and youth centre.

167. One of the considerable innovations has been the development of pilgrimages, which regularly involve some 15-20 people, both Christians and Muslims, men and women. These pilgrimages have been to such places as London, Rome and Jerusalem. The experience widely shared with others in Burnley has led to a deepening understanding and trust between the faith communities. The Forums between Imams and Christian priests and ministers have begun to tackle the difficult issues relating to conversion and the blasphemy laws in Pakistan.
168. A further initiative has been the **Burnley and Pendle Faith Centre**, part of Lancashire County Council's 'Building Schools for the Future' initiative. Located on a brand new campus to host nursery, primary, and Sixth Form education, it also includes a facility for disabled children, a sports centre, a dance studio and a hydrotherapy treatment area. The Faith Centre is at the heart of the modern spiral shaped campus and is the responsibility of a Christian who works closely with a local congregation. Now it currently offers pastoral support to all pupils and their families and provides worship space for different faiths, including an evangelical healing group and a bereavement group. The Faith Centre is used for a range of activities for churches, secular organisations and other faiths.
169. It was to the Faith Centre in 2009 that Archbishop Rowan came to meet some 50 representatives of differing faiths, all Lancastrians committed to dialogue. Presentations were given by Building Bridges' personnel regarding the vision and hope for change and development. Burnley's mayor and political representatives were also present, which reflected the importance in Burnley of the Building Bridges programme
170. **Faiths4Change** is an inter faith group supported by the Lancashire Council of Mosques and the Islamic Foundation for Ecology. F4C initially grew out of a group surrounding the Bishop of Liverpool but it now has a budget of £1 million and over 1500 volunteers. F4C is primarily involved in the transformation of neighbourhood environments through small scale initiatives - planting seeds in hanging baskets, pots and window boxes and starting, maintaining Community gardens and offering sustainability audit Training days. The Churches Together in Lancashire as well as local mosques and church congregations have been engaged in the Faith for Change programme.
171. Faith Friends has been operating for over twelve months at one of the 11-16 schools at the Faith Centre and two posts, Muslim and Christian, are currently being formalised to spend time with volunteers at the pre-school breakfast club getting to know pupils, taking part in the PHSE and RE lessons and advising and helping in the College to develop a programme of community cohesion activities.
172. What might be the learning to be drawn from this experience and to be shared with others?
- The key need is to develop trust between what were once separate communities; the separation being on faith, race and cultural lines. The local Presence and Engagement churches have been committed to this reconciliation.
 - That in situations of tension, Churches, other Faith communities and local authorities working together can ease the possibility of conflict.
 - Being nice to one another is not enough. Hard questions have to be faced once trust is established.
 - An awareness that we are in for the long haul and this is more important than quick results.
 - Commitment to inter faith dialogues requires a readiness to be honest, open to challenge and public scrutiny.
 - That Christians and churches working together ecumenically are a stronger witness to the gospel than being perceived as separated or discordant.

5F. St Clement and St Augustine, Bradford

Presence and Engagement parishes in the diocese of Bradford

	% Christian	% Buddhist	% Hindu	% Jewish	% Muslim	% Sikh	% All
CLAYTON: ST JOHN THE BAPTIST	68.6%	0.0%	3.0%	0.0%	6.7%	1.5%	11.3%
FAIRWEATHER GREEN: ST SAVIOUR	63.0%	0.1%	1.8%	0.0%	8.6%	1.4%	12.0%
BOWLING: ST JOHN	58.0%	0.0%	0.6%	0.0%	8.2%	6.9%	15.7%
BOLTON: ST JAMES WITH ST CHRYSOSTOM	64.3%	0.0%	1.5%	0.1%	7.1%	7.2%	15.8%
HEATON: ST MARTIN	64.4%	0.0%	1.0%	0.0%	15.7%	0.6%	17.4%
WOODHALL : ST JAMES THE GREAT GREAT HORTON: ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST	63.6%	0.1%	2.3%	0.2%	5.1%	10.5%	18.1%
KEIGHLEY: ST ANDREW	47.5%	0.1%	0.3%	0.0%	25.2%	0.1%	25.6%
LAISTERDYKE: ST MARY	53.0%	0.2%	0.7%	0.1%	21.7%	3.0%	25.6%
UTLEY: ST MARK	52.9%	0.1%	0.4%	0.1%	31.7%	0.2%	32.5%
HORTON: ALL SAINTS	36.5%	0.7%	1.9%	0.1%	30.1%	0.7%	33.5%
KEIGHLEY: ALL SAINTS	49.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.4%	0.1%	33.6%
BRADFORD: ST AUGUSTINE	45.8%	0.1%	0.7%	0.0%	31.1%	2.7%	34.7%
BRADFORD: ST OSWALD	42.9%	0.0%	2.5%	0.1%	32.7%	1.5%	36.8%
BOWLING: ST STEPHEN	36.1%	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	38.2%	2.0%	41.4%
FRIZINGHALL: ST MARGARET	39.5%	0.3%	0.8%	0.0%	38.9%	1.5%	41.4%
HEATON: ST BARNABAS	41.7%	0.3%	1.8%	0.4%	37.0%	2.3%	41.7%
BRADFORD: ST WILFRID	32.5%	0.1%	7.7%	0.1%	41.1%	1.4%	50.5%
THORNBURY: ST MARGARET	29.2%	0.1%	1.0%	0.1%	47.0%	7.0%	55.1%
GIRLINGTON: ST PHILIP MANNINGHAM (TOLLER LANE): ST CHAD	25.7%	0.1%	1.7%	0.2%	57.9%	1.2%	61.1%
BRADFORD: ST COLUMBA WITH ST ANDREW	15.4%	0.1%	0.9%	0.1%	67.3%	0.8%	69.2%
MANNINGHAM: ST PAUL & ST JUDE	11.1%	0.1%	5.8%	0.1%	65.1%	0.6%	71.6%
BRADFORD: ST CLEMENT	10.9%	0.1%	1.0%	0.0%	71.2%	2.0%	74.3%

173. The congregations of the parishes of St Augustine and St Clement in the Barkerend and Undercliffe neighbourhoods of east Bradford live their Christian lives in a context in which nearly three quarters of their parishioners are Muslim. They offer an experience of gospel proclamation from which the wider Church can learn.

174. *From the gospel according to St Mark 4.26: "Jesus also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain--first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come"*

175. *"It is clear that this kingdom is not one that provides simple answers. We live in one of the most Muslim contexts in the UK. In addition there is the main Hindu temple, and five of the six Sikh gurdwaras of the city are in our neighbourhood.*

176. *There are two buildings with Anglican congregations in this area which probably has 20,000 people. It is one of the most overcrowded areas of the UK and it is in the poorest 1%. A Council officer said that they do not usually bother means testing benefits in our postcode district. 95% of the applicants will qualify, and it is not worth the bureaucratic effort of eliminating the rest.*

177. *That the parish priest is the only ordained paid minister of the Christian gospel living in the area is a credit to the Church of England. We engage with three other congregations locally who share our frailties. Life is a struggle and demanding. One of the churches has only seven people in full time work on the electoral roll.*
178. *Yet we have probably had more vocations to the ordained ministry than any other church in our Diocese. Two deacons and two priests at this year's ordinations came from us, and one ordinand has just begun a two year residential training course. We also have home grown mission partners in Pakistan, North Africa and in Christian radio ministry in the UK.*
179. *We contribute to the training of ministers. There has been a steady flow of ordinands from residential colleges for day long visits to the two parishes; there has been participation in the training of ordinands from non residential colleges and one ordinand had a placement for two months pre residential training, and is now considering a curacy in another multi faith city. We have also participated in training schemes for senior clergy.*
180. *Every weekday we pray the morning office at 9am and announce this prayer using our bell. This is noticed. In the same way we hear the call to prayer particularly on Fridays and during Ramadan. As we open the church building we are likely to be the only Christians on a busy street. During the elections in Pakistan last year we had a half night of prayer. It was a good opportunity to witness to our neighbours.*
181. *We have nine primary schools and three secondary schools in our neighbourhood. We reckon that there are 4,500 children of primary school age in the two parishes in school, and over 2,000 of secondary age. Last year we had five hundred children visit one of our church buildings as part of their RE programme. Their question was "Why is this a special place?". We look for the things that are different from home. The altar - Jesus' last meal, the lectern - Jesus' book, the pulpi - Jesus's words to us; the cross, the art, the angels, the calligraphy, the mosaic, even the stained glass - all bear witness to Jesus.*
182. *There have been opportunities to engage with the secondary schools too. We saw the whole of a year eleven of the local comprehensive school during the course of a day, over two hundred students doing RE. What we thought was a visit to a private secondary school became a question and answer session for most of the school and the staff. "Why are you a Christian? What is the Bible? When Jesus died on the cross was it his humanity or his divinity which died? Have you considered becoming a Muslim?" - "I have submitted to God, I seek to obey God, am I a Muslim?"*
183. *It is normal for people of other faiths to walk into both of our buildings because of our social action which is freely offered, no strings attached - indeed one of our buildings houses a municipal library. One mother who came in said that she had never felt closer to God than in our building as a child. Will she become a Christian? It is not for us to ask. There is too much at stake for her. But she will influence her children. And if family structures and mosque structures break down for her, as they are for many, she may put her trust in Christ too. Possibly another member of her family may come to faith and pave the way for her .*
184. *Our social action includes caring for mainly white Christian elders, offering a toddler group, teaching gardening, showing people how to plant tubs and baskets for their yards. These actions, and a community centre in which the church was a founding partner, are one of the few places our area of the city where people meet across race, faith and cultural boundaries.*
185. *There have been a number of visits to places of worship of the other faith communities locally. When a large new mosque was built close to one of our churches, and right in our view of the*

centre of our city, we arranged a visit. The parish priest was invited to the opening and took a guest from the church who lived very close. We welcomed the world leader of this sect of Islam to our city in the name of Jesus Christ. Either we could see this community as an intrusion, or as neighbours for whom Christ died. The follow up visit was for many in the churches their first visit to a mosque. We were very well received. Yes we are aware of the evangelical intent of this group. But they have reciprocated our visits, and there is a genuine dialogue and mutual listening”.

186. What might be the learning to be drawn from this experience and to be shared with others?

- The cross and the resurrection of Christ, as always, are subversive of political and religious authority. Facile answers to questions about mission, race, faith, culture and power will not do. It does not matter whether these questions come from the local authority, other faith communities or from within the Christian faith.
- The continued Christian presence in the inner city is subversive too for any who think of it as their space and for some who think of it as not their space.
- Stories of mission in the face of the cross are needed. Telling stories of triumph at the expense of loving relationships formed sometimes with difficulty and pain is not appropriate.
- Mission is experienced in three categories: embassy, host and guest. With school children the church is an ambassador for our governor, God. With social action the church is often a host, offering hospitality. But perhaps the best position from which to share faith in Jesus Christ is as a guest on other people’s territory or needing their help. There might in fact be a fourth category of mission: mission to the Church; the Church needs the gospel too.
- It has been said that most churches either obey the great commandment to love our neighbour, or the great commission to make disciples. They rarely manage to do both.

Reflections

187. What additional reflections about good practice can be drawn from these few examples beyond those from existing documents and publications? Although this document has given particular attention to contexts in which people and communities of other faiths are significantly present, nevertheless good practice in sharing the gospel has the same characteristics in all contexts and so these reflections refer more widely.

188. Christianity takes the facts of human existence and the context within which human lives are lived, very seriously. The incarnation: the coming–amongst–us of Jesus Christ, his life, death in the raw situations of human communities and their politics, his relationships of challenging love with those around him from high to low and with fellow Jews and pagan Romans, his continuing resurrected encounter with people today - all these provide the rationale for taking these things seriously in our own times and places.

189. Sharing the gospel is always done in the context of the lives of other people who are created in the image of God. There is always a context of place and time, of relationship, of history and of mutual knowledge or ignorance. Without a whole hearted attempt to enter into such contexts, the risks of the gospel being misunderstood, unappreciated or rejected outright are greatly increased. ‘Guarding the treasure that has been entrusted to us’ is not a responsibility to be taken lightly and for the treasure to be appreciated and desired requires as much understanding of situation as can be achieved.

190. The cases cited above have this in common: that those whose ministry is illustrated in them take seriously the context within which the gospel is to be shared. They live and work in the

places and amongst the people who are their neighbours, their colleagues and their friends and they see them as such and not as targets or markets. They spend time, often years, understanding what might tend to the wellbeing of individuals, families and communities before advancing new initiatives and projects.

191. Sharing the gospel comes from the common life of a Christian community and is not primarily the action of individuals alone. The life of a local church or of other forms of Christian community is the seedbed and without the nurture, critique and encouragement that comes from mutuality, the gospel so easily becomes no more than an expression of individual desires or at worst neuroses.
192. The life of a local church consists of a number of components which might be characterised as: praying and worshipping, caring for one another, learning and growing in faith, sharing our faith and working for social justice. Each of these contributes to the way in which a Christian community is shaped and impacts in turn on the way in which the gospel is shared with others. Sharing the gospel comes best from those who do so from confidence and trust in God, not from fear of the other. It comes best from those who engage fully with the richness of their local context and culture.
193. Sharing the gospel with people and communities of other Faiths is a challenge and an opportunity which must be understood in a humble spirit. Not only are individuals to be regarded as of equal value and worth as children of God and created in God's image, but their religious or other beliefs are not to be discounted or treated lightly or as of no worth. To disagree, and to disagree profoundly with someone, is not a licence to disparage or to demean. The history of relations between religions and cultures and the all-too-many hostile contemporary situations around the world mean that we come to encounters with others not in a neutral environment but one which may be highly charged by views drawn from other parts of the world and other times. If there is proper opportunity in such encounter, there is also a challenge to a contrasting lukewarmness and lack of confidence
194. In the cases illustrated, there is a deep concern to take seriously the human person whatever their religion or none – and to take religious beliefs seriously as an expression of a serious attempt to come before a God who is holy.
195. Sharing the gospel requires relationships of trust and indeed the processes of developing trust itself are themselves part of gospel sharing. Without trust there will always be suspicion and a sense of being used for some other purpose. Our society is an anxious one in which mistrust of motive is now deeply rooted. Trust is created through personal human encounter, often in the simplest human activities of conversation about the ordinary things of life, through sharing of food and through little gestures of kindness and appreciation. Trust is created by openness and transparency and the avoidance of poor communication especially where tensions are created by other surrounding issues.
196. In several of the case studies warm personal relations had developed between leaders in the different communities and in the public authorities which had enabled tensions to be overcome and initiatives taken. The Church of England has a particular responsibility in this respect as a result of its role as the established Church and its presence in all communities. Many bishops have for example been entrusted with the work of convening the leadership of other faiths in their dioceses.
197. Sharing the gospel is rooted in the question of intent and motivation. Always to be “prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” is commanded. But it is moderated by both the “to everyone who asks you” and by the “do it with

gentleness and respect”. This implies not only a proper reticence, but also a question of motive. Gospel sharing should be motivated by a holistic concern for the wellbeing of the other and the wider community rather than by a personalised desire for the conversion of the other.

198. It is noticeable that in the cases cited, there is relatively little overt reference to evangelism or conversion and the language is for example of “opportunities for creative expressions of the Christian story” and about “how to engage effectively in the community and be a confident Christian presence” and these indicate something of the ‘sensitive confidence’ that best expresses the gospel way. In the end conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit, witness and proclamation is the work of the Church.
199. The phrase: “to share the gospel of salvation in Christ alone” may by some be considered confrontational and incompatible with current cultural understandings of freedom, inclusiveness, cohesion and choice. It will also and sadly, be sometimes misunderstood as provocative or even hostile. How the gospel is shared and how it is received will depend on the extent to which examples of the kind illustrated are taken to heart. The challenge is to show clearly that our intention is to express the overflowing love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for all human beings as expressed in the life, death on the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, freely offered to all.

ANNEX 1 A selected reading list

- 1956 Kenneth Cragg *'The Call of the Minaret'* OUP
- 1984 *'Towards a theology for inter-faith dialogue'* published by BMU
- 1988 Lambeth Conference, *'The truth shall make you free'* section reports - Christ and people of other faiths. Also the appendix *'The way of dialogue'*
- 1991 CCBI Committee for relations with People of Other Faiths, *'Christian Identity, Witness and Interfaith dialogue – a discussion document for the Decade of Evangelism'*.
- 1992 David J. Bosch *'Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission'* (American Society of Missiology)
- 1993 Inter Faith Network for the UK Mission, *'Dialogue and Inter Religious Encounter'*.
- 2003 Inter Faith Network for the UK, *'Building good relations with people of other faiths'*.
- 2003 World Council of Churches, *'Ecumenical considerations for dialogue and relations with people of other religions'*.
- 2005 Andrew Wingate. *'Celebrating Difference, Staying Faithful: How to Live in a Multi-faith World'*. Darton Longman Todd.
- 2005 *Presence & Engagement: the churches' task in a multi Faith society*
General Synod (GS 1577)
- 2007 Gerald O Collins *'Jesus our redeemer: A Christian approach to salvation'* OUP
- 2007 Richard Sudworth *'Distinctly Welcoming'* Scripture Union
- 2008 Gerald O'Collins *'Salvation for all: God's other peoples'* OUP
- 2008 Michael Nazir-Ali, *The Unique and Universal Christ*, Paternoster Press.

ANNEX 2

Existing Guidelines and codes of practice

1. 1981. *Relations with people of other Faiths: Guidelines on dialogue in Britain*. British Council of Churches
2. c 1989 *Invitation to Dialogue: Theological Issues Consultative Group of the CCBI Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths* (Ed Clinton Bennett)
3. 1991. *In Good faith: The four Principles of Interfaith Dialogue* – a brief guide for the Churches. CCBI Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths
4. 1991 *Christian Identity, witness and Interfaith Dialogue* – a discussion document for the Decade of Evangelism/ Evangelisation. CCBI Committee for Relations with People of Other Faiths.
5. 1991. *Mission, Dialogue and Inter Religious Encounter*. The Inter Faith Network UK
6. 1992. “*Multi-Faith Worship?*” Inter Faith Consultative Group
7. 1993 *Guidance on multi faith worship*. Church of England House of Bishops
8. 1994. *Dialogue and Evangelism among people of other faiths: principles for dialogue and evangelism* A Methodist reflection on the Inter Faith Network's Code of Conduct, The Methodist Church adopted by the Methodist Conference in 1994 and published with a study guide in 1997
9. 1996. *Communities and Buildings: Church of England premises and other faiths*. Inter Faith Consultative Group.
10. Conference of European Churches/Council of European Episcopal Conferences. *Marriages between Christians and Muslims: pastoral guidelines for Christians and churches in Europe*. Christopher Lamb
11. 1997, *Use of Church Premises by People of Other Faiths*. Methodist Church; a report from the Faith and Order Committee of the Methodist Church, which was adopted by the Methodist Conference of 1997
12. 1998. *Room for religion: shared facilities for religious use*. Inter Faith Consultative Group
13. 2000. *Guidelines for Inter-Faith Marriages, adopted by the Methodist Conference in 2000*. Methodist Church
14. Inter Faith Consultative Group, *Sharing One Hope?: the Church of England and Christian Jewish relations*.
15. 2003 Inter Faith Consultative Group, *Guidelines for Inter Faith Encounter in the Churches of the Porvoo Communion*.
16. 2004 Guidelines for the Celebration of Inter Faith Marriages. Inter-Faith Consultative Group Available on-line: <http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/interfaith/marriageguidelines>

ANNEX 3 Brief accounts of other examples.

Diocese of St Albans

1. Luton: St Mary

St Mary's is a town centre evangelical church. This year St Mary's theme of '**Christmas Unwrapped – God's gift for all**' seeks to show the relevance of the Christmas story to all faiths emphasising the uniqueness of Jesus

Diocese of Blackburn

2. The ExChange Project at Blackburn Cathedral

ExChange is the community cohesion, inter faith and education development agency at Blackburn Cathedral. Spear-headed by Anjum Anwar MBE, the first Muslim to work on the staff of a cathedral anywhere in the world to foster dialogue, and Canon Chris Chivers, the first canon in a cathedral appointed to a similar brief, it models public dialogues, discussions and debates around sensitive issues and undertakes exhibition- and class, and lecture-room-based education with young people to address the most difficult and sensitive issues affecting the community. Show-cased in the Government's face to face and side by side strategy document and in the North West Regional Development Agency's recent report of the economic and social value of such projects, exChange has been recognised by the Council of Europe and international conferences in South Africa and the USA as a leading initiative of its kind. In 2009 it founded the grass-roots movement Woman's Voice across Lancashire.

Diocese of Bradford

3. Girlington St Philip's

The Jesus DVD project in the Girlington area of Bradford. An ecumenical project when people from local churches knock on doors in a Muslim majority area. First they introduce themselves and offer to bring a copy of a DVD about the life of Jesus. If this is accepted, they call again and bring the DVD, asking if they might call again to ask for people's opinions about what they have seen. There is a positive local response in terms of a quite high level of acceptance of the DVD, requests for prayer and meaningful dialogue taking place. Some individuals chose to become enquirers. From a church perspective, people feel more connected with their local area and encouraged by the many homes where they are welcomed.

The Maryam Project is at an early stage and offers women newly arrived to Bradford the opportunity to learn English in a safe and supportive environment. Its aim is to empower local women, giving a voice to the voiceless; and also it is a way for volunteers to form friendships with students and be enriched by their perspective. Volunteers deliver the teaching, including some from local churches. These volunteers are motivated by their Christian faith and also happy to be using church premises.

4. Manningham, St Paul

The Sharakat Project: A series of inter faith meetings held in Manningham where local people discuss issues and ways forward. The meetings involve eating together and are always held at different venues. This initiative is ground breaking in that it draws in a wide range of Muslim institutions that have not previously been involved in inter faith and builds confidence and relationships locally.

Diocese of Guildford

5. Woking St John

The Across project is a collaboration between 8 churches in Woking, 5 of them being Anglican. Its aims are several:

- To help build bridges of friendship and understanding to our local Asian communities.
- To help local Christians to appreciate and understand the lifestyles, cultures and faiths of those from other ethnic backgrounds.
- To train and organise volunteers in a wide range of outreach and serving activities.
- To share the love of God in both word and deed with those from a different culture and help others to do the same.
- To see people from all backgrounds become disciples of Jesus Christ and part of His Body, the Church.

In recent months, a number of seekers have ‘just turned up’ in churches or have deliberately sought out Christians, asking questions. Most of these are now committed Christians, and involved in the life of one Across church or another.

Diocese of Manchester

6. Sanctus 1

A “fresh expression” in Manchester City Centre “for those who... are not indifferent to spirituality and who may be influenced by New Religious Movements”.

Sanctus1 is a Christian community exploring spirituality in contemporary culture. Sanctus1 seeks to push at the boundaries; exploring God and spirituality within the city, in contemporary film and art, and within each other.

Sanctus1 is committed to the city centre community of Manchester. The nature of the city centre reflects the people that we are; a fluid organic community that believes that the creative spirit of God is active and moving in culture.

7. St Bride’s, Old Trafford

A thriving conservative evangelical Anglican church serving a small parish hosting Manchester’s biggest mosque and striving to be an indigenous congregation of people living locally . Their approach is that through love and grace, the right to share the Christian message with people from other world faith communities is earned. The ministry has resulted in a trusting relationship with the local Muslim communities as well as in people being drawn to Christ through a combined respect and friendship and a healthy and uncompromising evangelistic ministry.

Diocese of Birmingham

8. Birmingham City Mission Solid Rock Holiday Club

This is a holiday bible club begun in 2000 and drawing on children from two local junior schools where 75% of the pupils are from Muslim families. It attracts about 100 pupils for the available 75 places and uses a team of about 20 voluntary helpers who must agree to and abide by two half days training in working with children from other faith backgrounds The material used is carefully selected and delivered to reflect the fact that the majority of children come from a faith background other than Christianity, but presents Christian beliefs clearly and unambiguously. It respects the faith viewpoint of children and their parents and is open at all times for parents of children attending

Diocese of Chelmsford

9. The Froud Centre and Islamic Circles

The Froud Centre is a multi-purpose community facility where people of all abilities, ages, cultures and faiths come to learn, share experiences, socialise and play. With Aston-Mansfield Charities Trust and St. Michael's Church as two of its main partners, the centre commits its resources and energies into working with the local community of Newham.

Islamic Circles is a community-based initiative that has been running at the Froud Centre since January 2001. Islamic lectures and Arabic classes are held on a weekly basis, with a wide range of other regular events and activities also organised. These include short courses, seminars, workshops on issues relevant to the Muslim community, social gatherings such as Eid parties, matrimonial services and events and much more.

Through renting space at the Froud Centre to Islamic Circles relationships have been built which have led to: Christian speakers being invited to talk to Islamic Circles about Christianity; a large community meeting being hosted by Muslims after 7/7 together with a community barbeque; and inter-leaved Bible and Koran studies where groups of Christians and Muslims have together studied the Bible one week and the Koran the next. Revd. Brian Lewis, Vicar of St Michael's Church says that their initiative in working with Islamic Circles is about building friendship, trust and understanding in local communities because you never know when you might need it.

10. Faithful Friends

Since its launch in February 2007, Faithful Friends has been helping people from different local faith communities get to know one another, through evenings of food, chat and sharing of each others experiences of life and faith. It began with 'First Steps', an opportunity to visit each others' places of worship - and to learn something of the beliefs, practices and values of each faith. Since then, members have attended each others major religious festivals as observers, and have met every couple of months to discuss a topic of common interest and share a meal together.

It has had two main positive effects: friendships between people of different faiths and cultural backgrounds; greater confidence to share what their faith means to them, helping counter ignorance between groups through meaningful conversations between local people of faith.

In addition, Faithful Friends Youth has developed as a group of young people from the different faith communities in Forest Gate getting to know one another in a fun, friendly environment, sharing each other's experiences of life and faith, and deciding for themselves what they want to talk about and how.

ANNEX 4

Christian Muslim Forum: Ethical Evangelism guidelines

As members of the Christian Muslim Forum we are deeply committed to our own faiths (Christianity and Islam) and wish to bear faithful witness to them.

As Christians and Muslims we are committed to working together for the common good. We recognise that both communities actively invite others to share their faith and acknowledge that all faiths have the same right to share their faith with others.

There are diverse attitudes and approaches amongst us which can be controversial and raise questions. This paper is not a theology of Christian evangelism or mission or Da'wah (invitation to Islam), rather it offers guidelines for good practice.

The Christian Muslim Forum offers the following suggestions that, we hope, will equip Christians and Muslims (and others) to share their faith with integrity and compassion for those they meet.

- 1) We bear witness to, and proclaim our faith not only through words but through our attitudes, actions and lifestyles.
- 2) We cannot convert people, only God can do that. In our language and methods we should recognise that people's choice of faith is primarily a matter between themselves and God.
- 3) Sharing our faith should never be coercive; this is especially important when working with children, young people and vulnerable adults. Everyone should have the choice to accept or reject the message we proclaim and we will accept people's choices without resentment.
- 4) Whilst we might care for people in need or who are facing personal crises, we should never manipulate these situations in order to gain a convert.
- 5) An invitation to convert should never be linked with financial, material or other inducements. It should be a decision of the heart and mind alone.
- 6) We will speak of our faith without demeaning or ridiculing the faiths of others.
- 7) We will speak clearly and honestly about our faith, even when that is uncomfortable or controversial.
- 8) We will be honest about our motivations for activities and we will inform people when events will include the sharing of faith.
- 9) Whilst recognising that either community will naturally rejoice with and support those who have chosen to join them, we will be sensitive to the loss that others may feel.
- 10) Whilst we may feel hurt when someone we know and love chooses to leave our faith, we will respect their decision and will not force them to stay or harass them afterwards.