



WHOSE STORY ARE WE TELLING? REFLECTIONS ON URBAN MINISTRY OVER FOUR DECADES

Hilary Russell

URBAN TRACTS



William Temple
Foundation

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Urban Tracts, Book 6

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Hilary has written an accompanying working paper to this tract on the urban regeneration context in Liverpool. The Regeneration Game is available [here](#).

Editors' Introduction

Urban Tracts is a series of papers on urban mission and ministry commissioned in the lead up to the 40th anniversary of the Faith in the City report.

The Brixton disturbances of April 1981 prompted, among other things, Archbishop Robert Runcie to set up the Archbishop's Commission on Urban Priority Areas. This led to the publication of the Faith in the City report in December 1985 with its recommendations for church and nation, which proved a great stimulus for urban ministry across the whole UK church.

In 2021 the issues of social inequality, racial justice, and the failure of the Church to flourish and grow in urban settings have not gone away—although the enthusiasm for urban ministry of the late 1980s seems to have waned.

To mark the anniversary, the William Temple Foundation is commissioning and publishing (electronically) a new Temple Tract series on urban mission and ministry. Our aim is to produce three or four tracts each year in the lead up to the 40-year anniversary of Faith in The City in December 2025.

These tracts are aimed at practitioners and church leaders, offering reflection and experience from authors who have been involved in urban mission and ministry. We aim to highlight resources and lessons that are relevant for Christians in urban areas today and renew the challenge to the churches.

In seeking an appropriate style for the urban church there will be plenty of photos and links to writings, websites, and videos to explore if you wish to delve deeper or check out sources.

Greg Smith, Series Editor

Chris Baker, Assistant Editor

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Whose Story Are We Telling?

Reflections On Urban Ministry Over Four Decades

The invitation to write this urban tract was a prompt – or excuse – to reminisce about my experience over the past forty plus years. My home has been Liverpool but my work has taken me to other parts of the country. Over this period, I have been variously involved in community work, evaluating urban regeneration programmes, voluntary organisations, diocesan and national review bodies, Christian social action and campaigning. This is a personal perspective that makes no claim to be comprehensive. There are questions here that have troubled me for decades and still seem worth agonising over, even though there are no definitive answers. This paper focuses on church activity. The accompanying tract provides some context by tracing the development of urban policy.

Chapter 1

‘A Grave and Fundamental Injustice’

1.1. ‘Oh Hilary, isn’t it awful?’

It was the day before we were to launch the *Faith in the City* report¹ in the Diocese of Liverpool. I was on the panel to introduce it, and, as such, had received a pre-publication copy. A senior clergyman in the Diocese phoned me: ‘Oh Hilary, isn’t it awful?’ I couldn’t believe that someone so long based in Liverpool - David Sheppard’s diocese - could be taken by surprise by anything in the report. Perhaps one marker of the passage of time over the past thirty to forty years is that such a reaction, or at least the admission of it, would be much less likely today. What is less certain is how far this change has affected either Church or society. This question will be one thread running through this paper.

The Archbishop’s Commission on Urban Priority Areas were to ‘examine the strengths, insights, problems and needs of the Church’s life and mission in Urban Priority Areas (UPAs) and, as a result, to reflect on the challenge which God may be making to the Church and the nation, as well as to make recommendations to appropriate bodies’. (p.iii) Thirty-eight recommendations were made to the Church of England, and twenty-three recommendations were made to the Government and nation.

1.2. The social and economic analysis of [Faith in the City](#)

The Commission undertook a comprehensive review of the economic, social and physical conditions in UPAs. The term Urban Priority Areas was used to include ‘inner city districts, large corporation estates and other areas of social deprivation’. (p.iii) UPAs suffered from a mix of economic decline, physical decay and social disintegration. There was a clear geography of inequality. In his book, [Liverpool on the Brink](#)², also published in 1985, Michael Parkinson noted: ‘Cities are the creatures of economics. They survive as communities if they can cope with the vagaries of economic change. Once economic decline sets in, every aspect of their life is threatened. Liverpool is the perfect example of this...

¹ *Faith in the City: A Call for Action by Church and Nation*, The Report of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Commission on Urban Priority Areas, Church House Publishing, London, 1985. A summary version of this report was published by Christian Action is available [here](#).

² Michael Parkinson, *Liverpool on the Brink*, Policy Journals, Berkshire, 1985, p. 9.

And economic failure has produced a range of social problems in the city as intense and intractable as any in Western Europe.’ (p.9)

Commission members could draw an outline picture from statistical analysis showing ‘a growing number of people excluded by poverty and powerlessness from sharing in the common life of our nation’. (p.359) As many as 20% to 25% of the population were living in, or on the margins of, poverty, and a far higher percentage were so in UPAs. Yet it was the eye-opening meetings with people living and working in UPAs that supplied the detail and brought home the reality: meeting, seeing, listening, going beyond labels and stereotypes. This exposure changed the Commissioners’ perspectives. Through these encounters they felt called ‘to change our thinking in such a way as to help us to stand more closely alongside the living Christ with those who are poor and powerless’. (p.360) At its best, this sort of encounter encourages reciprocity and puts relationships onto footings other than ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’, upsetting the *status quo* instead of reinforcing it. In seeking to articulate questions of public policy arising from its enquiry, their starting point was the assumption that ‘one important touchstone for judging any public policy must be how it affects the poor’. (p.167)

1.3. A One culture Church?

The report admits that the Church of England never really had a “golden age” in the city. If the touchstone of success was in the number of communicants or regular churchgoers, then the efforts to attract the working class had relatively little effect. (p.31) The discussion that follows largely echoes comments by John Vincent³ a couple of years earlier about the Christian Church more broadly. First, it had tended to function as a *social escalator*, as ‘people from small inner-city working-class churches have got on and got out’. Secondly, it had become almost a *one-class* church with the poor left out. Thirdly, it had become a *one culture* church. ‘Only middle class educated people feel really at home enough to decide things. Other cultures hardly exist among churchgoers.’

This resonated with my experience in the 1960s when I was a neighbourhood worker in Harold Hill, a large estate near Romford in Essex, and attended the parish church. The very slight impression the church made on local life was evident. Even more striking, was the scant appreciation within the church of the depth and riches of the local community. A mile down the road in Gidea Park, it would have been taken for granted that the congregation had gifts to offer. Cultural blinkers meant that the many examples of service to neighbours, local community groups and care homes were taken for granted but not defined as ‘leadership’, which was only recognized when wrapped in a particular lifestyle or set of activities.

³ [John Vincent, ‘Signs for mission’ in *Into the City*, Epworth Press, London, 1982, pp.109-115.](#) Included in *Urban Theology: A Reader*. Ed. Michael Northcott, Cassell, London, 1998, p. 300.

Faith in the City took up this theme in the chapter ‘Developing the People of God’: ‘A universal Church crosses boundaries between ethnic groups, classes and culture... an authentic mark of the presence of the Church in any specific place is being rooted in the culture and character of that locality.’ (p.107) In other words, ‘localness’ should be social as well as geographical. An earlier Liverpool Diocese UPA report had argued that ‘No Church can be a truly local Church as long as leadership and decision-making is in the hands of people who do not live there’. *Faith in the City* went further to say the shift should not only be towards those living in the area, but to those who belong to the predominant social class or group.

In a North American response to *Faith in the City*, contextual theologian Robert Schreiter⁴ found ‘the cross-hatch of paradoxes’ out of which it arose particularly striking. The parish system of the Church of England gives it responsibility even where it has little presence. As the Established Church, it was perhaps better positioned than other churches to speak on behalf of UPAs. Yet its most numerous constituents were not in UPAs and he detected a hesitant tone in parts of the report as it ‘stood before problems of great complexity’. How far, he asked, could the Commission speak *for* UPAs as well as *about* them? ‘An admirable history of pastoral commitment and social thought in the Church gives some warrant, though not a full one’ and the question needs to be revisited repeatedly.

1.4. Developing a Theology to Express Faith in the City

Schreiter also discussed the report’s call for a new theology to express faith in the city. ‘Such a theology functions at two levels: as an expression of Church policy and commitment in the public forum, and as an expression of a local congregation or UPA.’ For the public square, whilst the mandate to “remember the poor” could be seen as a more than adequate basis for engagement, the more that the Church challenges the public policy, the more its theological foundations need to be clearly expressed, if only to deflect accusations of meddling in affairs beyond its competence, and the more its analysis, assertions and proposals need to be couched in terms and understandings that resonate with discourse in the public realm. For the parish, a local theology should help to provide people with a better sense of their own identity, images and words that sum up the experience of the community, as well as give them a way of interacting with social change. Latin American liberation theologies exemplified how drawing upon memories of common community experiences as a basis for a theology of social change can begin to be linked with the broader social theology of the Church. But, as *Faith in the City* said, such theologies cannot be imported. The process needs to happen everywhere.

⁴ Robert Schreiter, ‘*Faith in the City: A North American Response*’ in *Poverty Network*, Church Action on Poverty, Summer 1986.

1.5. Amelioration or Radical Change?

Although *Faith in the City* was influential inside and outside the churches, even some of those who welcomed it had criticisms. The Commission took as self-evident that ‘the creation of wealth must always go hand in hand with just distribution’ (p.53) and took it for granted that people across the political spectrum wanted a fairer society. However, the days of ‘Butskellism’⁵ were over. The New Right regarded the pursuit of social justice as a ‘mirage’, something that governments should not and could not attempt. Redistributive welfare and fiscal policies were off the agenda.⁶ When the Commissioners talked about a ‘grave and fundamental injustice’, therefore, they were using a yardstick of justice not necessarily shared by the policy makers they hoped to influence. For the government, the proper working of the market required the dynamic of inequalities. Insofar as free market mechanisms notoriously produce winners and losers, it was a ‘strategy of inequality’.

Central to the social theology of *Faith in the City* is an unmet challenge to one of its central assumptions and one which goes to the heart of its presumed view about the nature and role of government.⁷ Its solutions amounted to Thatcherism with a kinder face, amelioration of the existing structures rather than fundamental change. Merseyside churches’ response said it should have ‘presented more sharply the failure to manage transition and polarisation as fundamental challenges to the moral credibility of capitalism. This is not part of the fine tuning of a free market economy, but a radical challenge to the acceptability of that system.’⁸ Thirty years later, Malcolm Brown talked about the present difficulties the churches have in discerning their role in society, as these difficulties have their origins in the ‘revolution of values and ideas’ that the Thatcher years inaugurated. The Commission’s work and subsequent report ‘failed to grasp the moral ambitions of the government’s economic policies. Rather it seemed to suggest that if only those in power could see the effects of policies on UPAs, they would change them.’⁹

There were grounds on which to challenge the New Right on the assertion of a necessary trade-off between equality and efficiency. They argued that if inequality results from a multitude of market transactions, then it is no one’s moral responsibility. However, if this is a deliberate policy and if it can be foreseen that particular groups are being asked

⁵ A term that came into use after the 1950s when two successive Chancellors of the Exchequer, Labour’s Hugh Gaitskell, then the Conservative, R. A. Butler, both favoured a strong Welfare state and Keynesian demand management designed to achieve full employment.

⁶ Raymond Plant in *Faith in the City: Theological and Moral Challenges*, An occasional Paper by the Theological and Social Values Group of the Diocese of Winchester’s Working Party to consider the report of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Commission on Urban Priority Area.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Faith in Our City: The Message of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Commission on Urban Priority Areas for Faith and Public Policy in Merseyside and Region*, ed. Hilary Russell, Liverpool Diocesan Publishing Company 1986. [This message can be accessed here.](#)

⁹ Malcolm Brown, “The Case for Anglican Social Theology Today” in *Anglican Social Theology: Renewing the vision today* ed Malcolm Brown, Church House Publishing, 2014.

to carry burdens for the rest of us, then the moral innocence of ‘leave it to the market’ state policies is open to question. Further, moral responsibility is not confined to how the inequity occurs, but also extends to the response made to it. Allowing painful and divisive consequences to go on happening without intervention is a failure of justice and responsibility.¹⁰

1.6. In the Church’s Bloodstream?

Faith in the City quoted John Atherton’s assertion that ‘*The exclusion of the poor is pervasive and not accidental. It is organised and imposed by power institutions which represent the rest of us.*’ (p. 360) Injustice and inequality are rooted in the structures of our society and traceable through all our institutions, including the Church. It also stated that ‘while many members of the Church of England have generally found it more congenial to express their discipleship by helping individual victims of misfortune or oppression, fewer are willing to rectify injustices in the structures of society’. (p. 49) The follow-up to the report seemed to bear this out.

Four years after *Faith in the City*, a follow-up report *Living Faith in the City* assessed what had been achieved. Although there seemed to be increasing public concern, the gap between rich and poor had widened. The report was more optimistic about the Church’s response, centrally in dioceses and parishes, but by 1995 the picture was less encouraging.¹¹ The Bishops’ Advisory Group on UPAs felt it had to say ‘If the Church of England is committed to staying in the city, it must ensure it does indeed give priority to deprived urban areas’. Hardly a ringing endorsement of progress in 10 years! Other observers thought that the Church of England failed to take *Faith in the City* into its bloodstream.¹² The CUF Review in 2000¹³ noted that the Church as a whole too often tends to be inward-looking, replicating and reinforcing the oppressions and divisions of the outside world, with the community of believers insulated in its own concerns and interests and with religious language no longer that of common human experience. This remains a recognizable tendency.

Some Church leaders were prompted to take politics more seriously. This is a trend that has probably been reinforced by the continuation of public policies seen to be damaging and divisive. The later 1980s and 1990s also saw the Churches – ecumenically and across

¹⁰ Plant, *op cit.*

¹¹ *Staying in the City: Faith in the City ten years on*, A report by the Bishops’ Advisory Group on Urban Priority Areas, Church House Publishing, London, 1995. Available on Amazon [here](#).

¹² Canon Bob Langley, *Theological Reflection* in the Report of the 6th National Consultation co-ordinated by Church Action on Poverty, October 1994.

¹³ *The Church Urban Fund Review 2000*, The report of an independent body set up by the Archbishops’ Council, The Church of England, London.

different denominations – becoming more significant advocates for more just social and economic policies.

1.7. Faithful Cities

In 2004, a new ecumenical Commission for Urban Life and Faith was launched to listen to and reflect on the experiences of individuals in urban communities. The resulting report [*Faithful Cities*](#)¹⁴ sought to answer the question ‘what makes a good city?’¹⁵. It argued for an effort of regeneration grounded in a vision of justice and human dignity and asserted the role of faith as a source of dynamism and hope for cities. It contained a wealth of material but stayed at the local and micro level of interventions rather than any broader critique of a market-based economy or national fiscal and economic policies. It felt very much a ‘Third Way’ document in accepting that markets can co-exist with social justice without more radical change and focusing on civic society as a way of ‘rescuing’ downtrodden citizens.

‘Faithful capital’ is a key concept in *Faithful Cities*. This moves on from ‘social capital’: the social ties and networks associated with ideas of trust, mutual understanding, reciprocity and shared values and behaviours that can enable co-operative action. Robert Putnam¹⁶ talked about three types of social capital:

- *Bonding*: strong, exclusive ties that people have with their families, close friends or immediate circles;
- *Bridging*: networks and ties spanning people with less in common - weaker but more inclusive ties;¹⁷
- *Linking*: formal and informal community ties with decision makers or service providers, enabling people to exert influence and reach resources outside their usual circles.

The idea of social capital has been criticized for its language of ‘capital’ and seemingly reducing human relationships to the currency of the marketplace. Nevertheless, it recognizes that the *quality* of our relationships matters not only to individual lives but also to our common life. It resonates strongly with theological precepts such as human worth

¹⁴ [*Faithful Cities: A call for celebration, vision and justice*, Church House Publishing & Methodist Publishing House, 2005.](#)

¹⁵ This question was explored by Elaine Graham & Stephen Lowe, *What Makes A Good City? Public Theology and the Urban Church*, Darton, Longman & Todd, London, 2009.

¹⁶ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, Touchstone, Simon and Schuster, New York 2000.

¹⁷ See <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7UDiSlsmmA8RFF5RWN3YIBhbHc/view?resourcekey=0-NjmIV9FT2UDAwkH3saPM4w> for Greg Smith’s review of *faithful Cities* in *Urban Bulletin*, issue 18, 2007

and dignity, hospitality, love for neighbour and care for the stranger. Faithful capital focuses on what faith communities might particularly bring, but there needs to be a guard against over-claiming distinctiveness for them. As with social capital, faithful capital is not necessarily benign. For some groups, being tightly bonded and deriving mutual support can bring an unhealthy “us against the world” stance rather than giving the security and confidence that allows openness to others.

Both social and faithful capital often ignore questions of power and fail to acknowledge the conflicting and different interests in society. Forty years ago, there were parallel debates about social work and community work. Were they only enabling people to bear the unbearable, tolerate the intolerable? Were they in that sense colluding with the powers; helping to prop up inequitable systems? Social capital alone cannot compensate for the lack of other forms of capital. The questions can be asked “Who exactly are we bonding, bridging and linking with, and for whom?” and “What issues of control are being created?”¹⁸ Faithful capital, though a useful concept, is also insufficient on its own, and needs to be used cautiously.

¹⁸ Andrew Davey, “*Faithful Cities: Locating Everyday Faithfulness*” in *Contact practical theory and pastoral care*, Issue 152 *Faithful Cities*, 2007, p.17

Chapter 2

Examples of Faith-Based Responses to Need and Inequality

“Social action is not an optional side project for the Church, it is core to its heart and mission.”¹⁹

This section looks at five organisations – three national, one city-wide and one across six churches – to illustrate the scope and diversity of church-based social action.

2.1. CUF

The Church Urban Fund The Church Urban Fund (CUF) set up in 1987 was one of the most tangible outcomes of *Faith in the City*. Its purpose was ‘to strengthen the Church’s presence and promote the Church’s witness in the urban priority areas’.(p. 165) By 1994, when *Hope in the City? the local impact of the Church Urban Fund* ²⁰ was published, nearly £17m had been invested in more than 700 projects. The report stressed that CUF had done much valuable work. However, it also noted that although situations of poverty and a sense of powerlessness had worsened, CUF had tended to move away from the use of words such as poverty and exclusion to the language of administration: of practical action, flexibility and locality. It was largely consistent with an earlier ‘Anglican social tradition’ but much of its activity set aside the issues of powerlessness and political marginalisation that were raised but not developed in *Faith in the City*.

Hope in the City? found that in some ways CUF was paralleling the thrust of state urban policy. Certainly, both Church and State shared a reluctance to identify, at least explicitly, the problems of UPAs as *endemic*, even *necessary*, corollaries of a rapidly restructuring, globally integrated capitalist economy and society. Was CUF witnessing to the deep

¹⁹ Bethany Eckley & Tom Sefton, *Church in Action: A National Survey of Church-Based Social Action*, Church Urban Fund & Church of England, London, 2015.

²⁰ R. Farnell, S. Lund, R. Furbey, Paul Lawless, Benita Wishart, P. Else, *Hope in the City? The local impact of the Church Urban Fund*, CRESR, Sheffield Hallam University, 1994.

rootedness of the issues? The report challenged the whole Church to address the still evident gulf between the realities of life in UPAs and the experiences of the wider Church. – in its attitudes, its behaviour and its spending. The rationales of projects supported by CUF were almost all ‘founded upon the incarnation of Christ and embraced a view of God’s attitude to the poor and the urge to seek the welfare of the community in which the projects were set.’ The challenge to the wider Church, therefore, ‘can be expressed in the question, “to what extent are these *theological roots* allowed to act as a critique and mould the church generally?”’²¹ (Original italics). In response, CUF set up a Development Fund to assist the development of the Church’s ministry and mission in theological development and strategic planning and to use its experience to make a difference to the way poverty is perceived and tackled at structural and policy levels. By 2000, and the CUF Review ²², CUF had awarded over 2,900 grants, totalling £37.1m. However, the wider task of giving explicit priority to strengthening the Church’s presence in UPAs had barely begun. Many dioceses still did not have a UPA strategy. When they did, they varied enormously in scope.

The Church context has changed again over the past two decades or so. Financial pressures are felt at every level, nationally, in dioceses and in parishes. With the exhaustion of its original endowment, CUF itself had less money to disburse to local projects. It had to turn to private philanthropy and government grants whilst still having to remain responsive to outside circumstances and tailor its role to perceived needs both within the Church and in society. The three current strands of activity are:

- facilitating church-based social action through the *Together Network* (<https://togethernetwork.org.uk/>);
- improving social cohesion and strengthening diverse communities through *Near Neighbours* (<https://www.near-neighbours.org.uk/>);
- promoting a fairer financial system and tackling inequalities caused by financial exclusion and debt (<https://www.justfinancefoundation.org.uk/>).

Fundamental to CUF’s work is asset-based community development (ABCD), that is, making the most of the skills and capacity of local residents, groups and businesses to build thriving communities. There is nothing very new in this approach even though the terminology has changed – it would be very recognizable to some community workers active in the 1960s onwards - but it has become more widely accepted and used.

²¹ *Ibid*, p.144.

²² *The Church Urban Fund Review 2000, op cit.*

2.2. Church Action on Poverty

‘Instead of imposing policies or top-down solutions, we use radical, participatory tools that help people in poverty access power and education, creating a network of grassroots social change.’

- Niall Cooper, CAP Director

[Church Action on Poverty \(CAP\)](#) was founded in 1982 as a national ecumenical Christian social justice charity committed to tackling the root causes of poverty in the UK. It works in partnership with churches and with ‘the real experts’ - people who live with poverty. Its vision is of a society reflecting the Gospel values of justice and compassion and its aim has always been to build a movement ‘to loosen the grip’ of poverty here. As such, it has initiated and supported a diverse range of local projects and been on the frontline of campaigning, often putting together national coalitions that can reach wider audiences.

‘It is not acceptable to roll back the frontiers of the state to the extent we have if this produces such devastating suffering for the least well-off. The trickle- down effect does not work. We do not want a society in which from Monday to Friday we fight each other for profit in the marketplace and jog around it for charity over the weekend! Christians have a responsibility to challenge the injustice we see daily and work for a fairer society.’

Paul Goggins, CAP National Co-ordinator (1989)

A significant milestone was the publication of *Hearing the Cry of the Poor* in 1989. Over a year in the making, this was a declaration based on consultation with national agencies, local churches and community groups and individuals. It issued out of bewilderment, sadness and anger that divisive tendencies in Britain were being reinforced by the direction of public policy. It asked, ‘what has happened to our common life?’. Of course, it did not start a revolution, but it did gain attention. Written endorsements came from many church leaders across denominations and from Opposition MPs. It featured not only in the Church press but also in all major newspapers, mainly, sympathetically (‘. . . a genuine ring of the Gospel...’ *The Guardian* leader comment,) though not always (‘Churches should stick to saving our souls’ *Sunday Times* headline). Just as, or more importantly, it gave affirmation and a spur to further action to some communities like Meadowell in North Shields who felt that they had been heard for the first time.

In 1994, CAP set up a Policy Group largely comprising people living on low incomes who met regularly to discuss their experiences, analyse the context and causes of that experience and propose policy improvements. The Group's thinking was also informed by 'Poverty Hearings' held around the country as part of the *Local People National Voice* project.²³ In 1996, about 600 leaders from churches, national and local government, public, private and voluntary sectors attended CAP's National Poverty Hearing. Usual roles were reversed. They were there to listen to the 'real experts'. Feedback from the Hearing showed that, as well as sharpening people's understandings about specific policy issues, this approach influenced their thinking about the nature and value of consultation.

CAP has always combined its advocacy role with active involvement in grassroots projects. It identifies problems unequivocally and speaks out in the public arena but is still prepared to enter the less pristine, more uncertain territory of working with others to find solutions. CAP looks for responses that go beyond sticking plasters. One among many current examples, is helping communities experiencing food insecurity to set up 'Your Local Pantry' member-run food clubs²⁴. The Your Local Pantry network currently comprises 70 Local Pantries and over 24,000 low income member households across the UK. 'This is part of a broader movement-building strategy which emphasises the importance of working with local people, churches and communities to build dignity, agency and power together.'²⁵

2.3. Together for the Common Good (T4CG)

[T4CG](#) began in 2013 inspired by the long partnership in Liverpool between Bishop David Sheppard and Archbishop Derek Worlock and their Free Church colleagues. It began in 1975 and coincided with a time when Merseyside suffered multiple problems. A joint response to the Government's Inner Cities White Paper 1977, prompted by their concern about unemployment, was the start of nearly twenty years of practical community collaboration and advocacy on behalf of the city. The context was economic decline and associated social problems, plus an external image that discouraged inward investment. The 1980s saw the major crises of the City Council and central government at war with one another, the Toxteth uprising and the Hillsborough disaster. What inspired Jenny Sinclair, David Sheppard's daughter and founder of T4CG was the quality of the Church leaders' relationships that enabled the partnership to work. Ecumenical bridges were built which generated the mutual trust that enabled them to be effective advocates for the area in the public square and press the case for social justice. They were politically involved

²³ *Speaking from Experience*, the Local People National Voice Policy Group Report, *Poverty Network* 24, February 1996.

²⁴ Naomi Maynard & Fiona Tweedie, *Dignity, Choice, Hope*, Your Local Pantry :Social Impact Report 2021, rooted research, Brendan Research, Church Action on Poverty, February 2021.

²⁵ Niall Cooper, *Building dignity, agency and power together: Practical steps to building a grassroots social movement to challenge poverty*, Church Action on Poverty, May 2021.

but their partisanship was not party political, it was for the city. Their solidarity was with local communities. This meant they were trusted across the political spectrum.

Collaboration became the keynote of T4CG. Its theological and political analysis of the common good` primarily draws upon Catholic Social Teaching. T4CG defines the common good as ‘the shared life of a society in which everyone can flourish – we act together in different ways that all contribute towards that goal, enabled by social conditions that mean every single person can participate. We create these conditions and pursue that goal by working across our differences, each of us taking responsibility, according to our calling and ability.’

T4CG produces a variety of resources on common good thinking for church leaders, lay people and young people. It holds public conversation events on topical issues, produces newsletters that reach a wide audience across Christian traditions and cultivates close links with people of other faiths and non-religious traditions. It aims to strengthen the wider movement committed to the common good and help people fulfil their civic vocation.



2.4. Feeding Liverpool

[Feeding Liverpool](#) was set up in 2015 as a local pilot of Feeding Britain, an independent charity established following the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in the

United Kingdom in 2014. The Inquiry report resonated with what was being experienced in Liverpool.²⁶

Feeding Liverpool began as an informal ecumenical partnership committed to working with people of all faiths and none aiming to:

- Create arenas for practitioners to share and shape good practices in relation to good food for all;
- Draw on experiences from the ground to contribute to and influence policy debates locally and nationally;
- Raise awareness and develop greater public understanding of food poverty and related issues.

Its emphasis is on being what Bishop Paul Bayes described as a ‘line of sight to the street and back’, ensuring the stories of people with first-hand experience of food insecurity and those working to tackle these issues, are heard by local and national policy makers.

‘Food insecurity is systemic and we need to reconstruct that system. I believe we can create a city where everyone can eat good food.’

- Kevin Peacock, Chair of Liverpool Food Insecurity Taskforce

Feeding Liverpool’s role grew during the Covid 19 pandemic when it was able to access funding to disburse to front-line emergency food providers, for example, to boost foodbank parcels with fresh fruit, vegetables, eggs and fish. It also supported the creation of community food spaces across the city, including a ‘Your Local Pantry’ network in south Liverpool in collaboration with Church Action on Poverty. It created interactive city maps showing the location and details of community food spaces. It has brought together people and organisations interested in community growing to share their stories and ideas. This activity has taken place in the context of the development of a Good Food Plan by Liverpool’s Food Insecurity Task Force, which brought together the City Council, Public Health and a range of voluntary sector partners. The Plan has five goals: ‘Good Food’ at points of crisis; uncovering the true scale of food insecurity; enabling food citizenship; shifting policy and practice; connecting the community. Feeding Liverpool enabled the first phase of the Plan to be co-produced with residents who shared their perceptions of problems and solutions.

²⁶ *Feeding Britain: A Strategy for Zero Hunger in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland*, A Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into hunger in the UK published by The Children’s Society, December 2014.

In mid-2021, the Taskforce asked Feeding Liverpool to take on the role of the city's Food Alliance, connecting and equipping people and organisations to work towards good food for all with significant local authority funding. Accepting the invitation brought challenges, including gaining charitable status and expanding the staff and trustee board, but was also a moment to reflect on why it was entrusted with this role. The answer was probably multi-faceted: the evident competence of the Feeding Liverpool representatives on the taskforce, the contribution already made, the approach and values already demonstrated and the absence of any empire-building ambitions. Notably the church connection was no obstacle.²⁷

2.5. The Urban Ministry and Theology Project

The Urban Ministry and Theology Project (UMPT) was based in six churches in the East End of Newcastle upon Tyne in the Diocese of Newcastle. Calling it a 'project' was shorthand for a multi-faceted approach to achieving a vision of:

- Regeneration in the East End of Newcastle that embodied Gospel values;
- A church presence that honoured the local context;
- A learning and reflective community extending into the wider church.

It was less a set of activities tacked onto other work and more a matter of values imbuing the whole work of the churches concerned. Three broad task areas were linked to this vision:

- Community engagement - co-ordinating the church's involvement in regeneration structures.
- Church development – new ways of being church including increased community engagement.
- Theological education and training - exchanging learning with people outside the area.

Several considerations prompted this new direction. The Diocese of Newcastle's strategy for mission and ministry gave a significant role to the deanery as 'an important unit in encouraging local identity and interdependence'. There had been previous church involvement from the 1980s onwards in regeneration initiatives such as the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation, Single Regeneration Budget schemes and the Ouseburn and East End Partnerships. Declining numbers and problems with church buildings meant that area regeneration needed to be matched by 'regenerating' the life of local

²⁷ See also <https://www.gold.ac.uk/news/keeping-the-faith-report/>, a report looking at the way faith communities partnered local authorities during the Covid pandemic.

congregations. There was also a perceived need to establish closer links between experience of urban ministry and formal theological education.

Although lasting only a few years largely because key leaders moved on, much was achieved in a short time within all three areas of work. UMTTP worked through institutions including the Church to accompany local people in their engagement with problems and challenges. Increased local capacity to influence the future of the area had a beneficial effect on local quality of life, and more rooted mission and ministry within the Project churches. Its influence also extended to city thinking on neighbourhood renewal, the diocesan framework for church development in areas of multiple deprivation and training for urban ministry.

Some of these lessons, success factors and wider questions raised were captured in two reports after five years of the project.²⁸ There were lessons about project design, implementation and management, in particular about lay development, partnership working and the critical importance of keeping contextual changes and internal and external demands under constant review. Cutting edge projects are always likely to face ongoing frustration and a high level of contextual difficulty, but initiatives such as UMTTP provide lessons that need to be heard by the wider church. ‘Turning round an oil tanker is easy and instantaneous compared with changing the direction of the Church of England.’²⁹ Some of the factors that generated the need for UMTTP’s approach remain significant challenges. The flexibility of the structures and processes of UMTTP continued under the name of Mission Initiative Newcastle East, which came into being under a Bishop’s Mission Order.

²⁸ Hilary Russell, *Urban Ministry and Theology Project Newcastle East Deanery*, August 2004; Adrian Dorber, Geoff Miller, Karenza Passmore and Kevin Hunt, *A Review for the Bishop of Newcastle of the Newcastle East Deanery Urban Ministry and Theology Project*, November 2004.

²⁹ Russell *op cit*, p.55.

Chapter 3

Making a Difference Through Faith-Based Social Action

A recent report by Dame Julia Unwin identified the three inter-related manifestations of faith based social action:

- the provision of support, hospitality, friendship and care;
- the expression of solidarity – standing with people who are dispossessed;
- the use of sacred space – offering spiritual space for celebration, grief, shared understanding.³⁰

At its best, she says, such activity is:

- deeply rooted in place and neighbourhood;
- relational, building reciprocity and mutuality;
- collaborative and humble, working with others and using a range of leadership behaviours;
- bold and ambitious, seeking out the difficult and uncomfortable.

This section looks at other research studies focusing at the role and impact of faith-based social action that illustrate and expand her findings.

3.1. North West Survey

In the early 2000s, a Churches' Officer for the North West was based in the Northwest Development Agency (NWDA) to act as a conduit between the churches and regional and local authority level bodies. In 2003, the NWDA funded a survey of more than 2,300 faith communities in the North West³¹ across eight faith groups to explore the role of faith communities in civil society beyond their worship activities. In addition to being providers

³⁰ Dame Julia Unwin, *Faith in Society*, a report commissioned by the Church Urban Fund, December 2021.

³¹ [*Faith in England's Northwest: The contribution made by faith communities to civil society in the region*](#), NWDA, NWRA, Churches' Officer for the North West, November 2003.

of care and social support, patrons of the arts and sports and custodians of the built environment, the survey found their activity was strongly concentrated in areas of greatest social need.

Some impacts are impossible to measure, but it was valuable to be able to quantify some activities – always helpful when seeking funding. It also came as a revelation to some faith communities themselves to that they were playing a part in regeneration, social inclusion or sustainable development. In giving them a new vocabulary, groups gained more confidence to engage with public agencies because it showed that if you cut through the jargon on both sides, there were shared goals and faith communities were already pursuing these goals whether or not they had previously articulated it in this way.

Follow-up research in 2009 examined 12 diverse projects in greater detail.³² This study showed that faith organisations represented a powerful community resource with a deep reach into communities, particularly to the most marginalised groups. There were messages for public bodies:

- Their roots in deprived areas meant that faith communities could contribute to regeneration outcomes with the added bonus of contributing to trust and sustainability.
- Some were uniquely positioned to deliver projects relating to interfaith and social cohesion issues or ones meeting the needs of specific cultural groups.
- Some delivered services on a par with non-faith based Third Sector provision and should be assessed in these terms.

Emerging messages for faith groups were:

- Their credibility rested considerably on them being in touch with and responsive to local needs, but they also gained strength from using their wider institutions for support.
- Engaging well with statutory and other partners was linked to recognizing and being able to articulate and demonstrate how their concerns overlapped and show they understood where they might fit within local service provision.
- Different faith groups have a lot in common and there is significant advantage to be gained from establishing links with other faith groups, whether through informal or working relationships or through inter-faith bodies.

³² *Faith in England's Northwest: How Faith Communities Contribute to Social and Economic Wellbeing*, Change Institute, NWDA, Northwest Forum of Faiths, Churches' Officer for the North West, October 2009.

3.2. To Promote Flourishing

In 2012, I conducted a national Church of England study of Christian Community Action.³³ This was two years after David Cameron’s ‘Big Society’ initiative, but, far from being strengthened, the voluntary sector faced a potential funding gap resulting from estimated cuts of £3.3 billion in statutory funding.³⁴ The combined effects of the economic downturn and the government’s austerity measures meant that resources were diminishing just when there was a rising tide of need especially amongst already vulnerable groups in already deprived neighbourhoods. Services were shrinking, and eligibility criteria were becoming stricter.

The underpinning of faith had often remained implicit in projects but was apparent as the motivating force. Quality of relationships was stressed. For care projects, their starting point was the individual in front of them. *‘We can cross barriers that other agencies with more limited remits cannot and we can deliver help that is more personal to the specific family’*. Many looked to their local church for support and encouragement: for prayer, as a source of volunteers and for direct or in-kind giving. These links could embody and reinforce the ethos of the project. Rootedness in the area and local knowledge helped towards being accepted and responding effectively to need. Even where projects themselves were relatively new, they could benefit from the church’s longstanding presence. On the other hand, it was all the more disappointing when negative attitudes towards some client groups such as asylum seekers were evident as much amongst people within the church as outside it. Those running projects also felt impoverished and potentially compromised when fellow church members sometimes saw community action either as an optional extra or only as a means of getting more people into pews, not as a good in itself. There could be wider strains: *‘To some extent there is a tension between the pressures around the Diocesan Growth Strategy (numerical growth on Sunday mornings) and what we feel called to do in our neighbourhood.’*

In general, these projects were a reminder that the Christian mission in the world *“is not just to enable the church to flourish but to promote the flourishing of all people”*.³⁵ They demonstrated theological themes that could inform other dimensions of church life:

- *Caring* – and the value attached to every individual as the motivating force for that care.
- *Hospitality* – most obviously in relation to asylum seekers and refugees.

³³ Hilary Russell, *Resourcing Christian Community Action: Parishes and Partnerships*, 2012.

³⁴ *The Big Society Audit*, Caroline Slocock, Civil Exchange, 2012.

³⁵ Malcolm Brown, “Church of England and the Common Good Today”, p.3.

- *Presence* – being there, often the most longstanding presence in the community and represented ‘*an enduring, faithful presence so that the flux and uncertainty all around could be more bravely confronted*’³⁶.
- *Liberation* – often struggling to help people escape the shackles of poverty, unemployment, homelessness, broken relationships or isolation.
- *Inclusion* – not only social inclusion but overcoming any strict divide between helper and helped, recognising their mutuality; in Rowan Williams’ words, ‘. . . *a robust sense of inter-dependence. A sense that we all, each one of us, we all are who we are because of the neighbour, because of relationship.*’³⁷
- *Creation* – not only environmental and climate change projects, but also extending to the vision of global interdependence and responsibility to future generations.
- *Justice* – not only speaking out about injustice and inequality, but also recognizing the importance of not becoming so enmeshed in ‘the system’ when delivering services commissioned by public agencies that the capacity to speak truth to power is lost.

3.3. Not Just Bums on Seats

The strapline of the Diocese of Liverpool over the recent years has been ‘a bigger Church making a bigger difference, more people knowing Jesus, more justice in the world’. This can work the other way: making a bigger difference resulting in a bigger Church. In 2018, the Diocese commissioned the Church Army to look at social action and church growth.³⁸ This research showed the range and depth of parish-based activity. If Liverpool had been a diocese of 100 churches, the picture would be:

74 involved with foodbanks

48 with toddler groups or playgroups

44 with lunch clubs or drop-ins

32 with community cafes

26 with pastoral provision for the community

25 with youth work for the wider community

³⁶ Don May and Margaret Simey, *The Servant Church in Granby*, Centre for Urban Studies, University of Liverpool, 1989.

³⁷ Rowan Williams, ‘How should churches respond to the Big Society’, July 2010.

³⁸ Naomi Maynard, *A Bigger Difference: Social Action and Church Growth in the Diocese of Liverpool*, Church Army Research Unit, 2018.

21 with money matters and debt advice

17 with breakfast, holiday or after-school children's clubs

16 with provision for the homeless

Parishes understood social action as more than regular, church-based activities. It extended to one-off events, use of resources, involvement in politics and small neighbourly acts. Growth was not the main motivation and 'growth' could be numerical or spiritual. It was not necessarily reflected in larger Sunday congregations. Numerical growth was a slow process, but even where congregations remained small, parishes were often engaging large numbers in conversations about faith through the week and social action activities led to people having greater involvement in the wider church community. Key learning points were the importance of reflecting on how social action relates to evangelism/outreach and the need to develop the level of welcome on Sundays to mirror that of the social activities.

There were echoes of these findings in the Grace Report³⁹ in 2020. Quantitative and qualitative research over three years looked at the relationship between social action, church growth and discipleship in the Church of England. Among the characteristics of those churches growing through their social engagement, *presence* and *connection* to the local area were important especially when building on longstanding perseverance in presence. *Hospitality* and *generosity* together with *adaptability* helped towards building meaningful relationships. *Participation* by local people could offer them a practical route to faith.⁴⁰

³⁹ Hannah Rich, *Growing Good: Growth, Social Action and Discipleship in the Church of England*, Theos and CUF, 2020

⁴⁰ These are all themes that are explored in the *Growing Good Toolkit*. <https://growing-good.org.uk/>

Chapter Four

Taking the Mess Seriously

*Christian hope is never naïve wishful thinking, it always takes the mess seriously.*⁴¹

4.1. Still ringing true

Faith in the City ‘took the mess seriously’, to use Tom Cullinan’s words, by examining urban deprivation descriptively and analytically. This paper has looked at some features of its legacy and follow-up. This final section seeks to reflect further on what it means to take the mess seriously.

Things have not changed in Church or nation as much as we might have hoped and expected in 1985. In society, we are all too aware today that disparities have continued and, in some instances, grown. Recent political promises included one to ‘level up’ the country, but two years after this commitment was made, an IPPR North Report⁴² showed that the UK is more regionally divided than ever and patterns of centralisation are intensifying. The geography of cities still reflects social and economic divisions and mirrors the different degrees of control people have over their lives. The already vulnerable have the least power in the marketplace whether for public or private goods. The gap between the worst off and the rest has continued to widen in times of economic boom as well as recession.

There are pragmatic as well as principled reasons for countering social injustice. Poverty and exclusion are extremely expensive, directly in terms of transfer payments – social security benefits – and indirectly in the opportunity costs of failing to develop human potential to the full. Showing that social injustice has a price for everyone, however, has to be in the context of articulating a positive vision of a more just society. We need to be able to say what we are *for* not just what we are *against*.

In political terms, the old ‘capital versus labour’ dichotomy no longer applies. The division is more between the comfortable and those who aspire to join them and the more disadvantaged and those seeking a more compassionate society. Political parties all tend to appeal to the middle ground and those trying to protect what they see as their interests.

⁴¹ Thomas Cullinan, *The Passion of Political Love*, Sheed and Ward, 1987, p.87.

⁴² J. Webb, M. Johns, E. Roscoe, A. Giovannini, A Qureshi, R. Baldini, *State of the North 2021/22. Powering Northern Excellence*, IPPR North, January 2022.

Fault lines such as gender and race are still glossed over. People in poverty, though numerous, are in a minority. They are often little involved in, and disenchanted with, political processes. In any case, electoral geography and a first-past-the-post voting system can mean that their votes count for little in either local or national elections.

4.2. What Kind of Church?

‘We believe that Churches in UPAs have to become local, outward-looking and participating churches; they must also have a clear ecumenical bias.’⁴³

In the Church, too, although there are individuals, groups and churches whose lives, mission and ministry illuminate and embody Gospel values, wider organisational change has been less apparent. How far does the Church as an institution model the interdependence and interconnectedness so often found in local stories? The Generosity, Mutuality and Diocesan Finances motion at General Synod November 2021 sought to remove the restriction on the use of historic diocesan endowments - just one obstacle in the way of levelling out the inequality of funding between dioceses.⁴⁴ It seems amazing that this situation prevails in the twenty-first century.

Reflecting on Urban Ministry 25 years after *Faith in the City*, Adrian Newman was dismayed that ‘the meta narrative of the Anglican Communion is currently one of division and dissent – we are known by others for a focus on gender and sexuality... So, the invisibility of urban ministry within the broad landscape of the Church of England is extraordinary. given the significance of the urban context in national life, and the widening gap of income and opportunity between rich and poor.’⁴⁵

Cultural blinkers are still often evident. Even reliance on asset-based community development can seem narrow, forced and contrived - a technique for certain situations instead of an expression of the respect and listening fundamental to all our relationships. On the eve of his retirement as Bishop of Liverpool, Paul Bayes commented on the reactions within several dioceses to reorganisation proposals aiming to meet resource challenges: ‘It worries me that all that is resisted, and that the Church is being fractious. Candidly, most of the people who are in relatively wealthy parishes... are trying to get in the way of dioceses helping the poorest.’⁴⁶

⁴³ *Faith in the City* op cit p.74.

⁴⁴ The 2019 table ranking dioceses by historic assets shows Oxford at the top (£166m) and Liverpool at the bottom (£1.5m) The motion was put by Rt Revd Pete Wilcox, Bishop of Sheffield.

⁴⁵ Very Revd Adrian Newman, ‘So Yesterday Urban Ministry 25 years on from *Faith in the City*’, a Sabbatical Reflection in *Resourcing Mission Bulletin*, August 2010. Available here.

⁴⁶ Bishop Paul Bayes, ‘I’m a man in a hurry, says Bayes’ – interview with Madeleine Davies’, *Church Times*, 18th February 2022.

4.3. Getting Involved in the Mess

Responsible theology can no longer self-forgetfully screen out its own social and political reality...' ⁴⁷

*'Christian believers in every age have to ask with proper humility: "What is God saying to us in this situation?" and that question leads to a more general one: "What can we trace of God's hand in the events of our time?"'*⁴⁸

There can be tensions in social action between the pastoral and prophetic roles; between meeting needs and speaking out about the impact of the economy and public policies on vulnerable people and communities. Yet the strong social bonds that these projects are trying to generate should be embodied in economic and social policies and institutions as well as expressed in inter-personal relationships. The existence of this Christian community action, its presence and sustained service in all parts of society gives the church the experience and authority to be able to speak with integrity in the public arena with and for those who would not otherwise have a voice. It enables the Church to 'speak truth to power' and to ask how far the public policy choices on offer tackle poverty and inequality. The capacity of churches to monitor the impact of policies in their own communities gives them a credibility that is not always fully exploited. 'The local can be a place of encounter which points to the "how" of restoring relationships of justice on a larger scale.'⁴⁹

Christians have had different attitudes towards involvement in politics or regeneration programmes such as New Deal for Communities. Such participation means getting your hands dirty. Some Christians (and others) think that the Church's proper sphere is the spiritual one. Some with a less negative view nevertheless fear being yoked to prevailing culture, losing the distinctiveness of the Gospel message and colluding with the powers. Others think it an appropriate expression of neighbourly love or view such programmes as at least going in the direction of 'Kingdom' values. Trying to get to grips with structural and systemic injustices that damage communities and individuals and wary about just patching up problems, they want the Church to have a prophetic voice while not staying above the fray.

⁴⁷ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Experiment Hope*, SCM Press, London, 1975, p.102.

⁴⁸ V.A.Demant, *Religion and the Decline of Capitalism*, Faber, 1952, p.177.

⁴⁹ Kathy Galloway, *A Story to Live By*, SPCK, London, 1999, p.99.

4.4. Whose Theology?

*A prophetic theology to unmask the suffering in our society can only be developed if it arises out of the Church's critical engagement and draws on the experience of those at the sharp end. Anything less risks, in the terms of the Kairos Document, being seduced either by a 'state theology' that simply baptises the powers... or by a 'church theology' that ignores social, economic and political realities.*⁵⁰

The task of critical engagement is the same whatever government is in power. In 1997, after eighteen years of warranted but almost knee jerk opposition to the Conservative Governments, some of us had to remember that! The rhetoric of New Labour still had to be tested. The banking crisis in 2008 was a defining moment that exposed the fragility of capitalism and globalisation. Roger Bolton, the British economist, said on *Newsnight* it was no longer possible to believe the simplicities about the working of the capitalist system with all-conquering markets.⁵¹ Jeremy Paxman asked Rowan Williams whether he thought it odd that in an era of credit and greed, so many of its 'apostles', including Tony Blair and George Bush, were Christians. Williams admitted he did think it odd. Although some of Blair's inspiration came from communitarian and non-capitalist origins, the Archbishop said there had been an enormous wave of unreality in the whole system whereby the connection of financial instruments with production and relationships, etc. had disappeared. He wished the Church had spoken out more but guessed that, like others, people in the Church felt intimidated by 'expertise' even though it was now apparent that the 'experts' did not know what they were talking about. The crisis had left a sense of diffused resentment, with no feeling of closure nor any admission that the whole principle on which we had worked was wrong. There had been a failure to name what in the past Rowan Williams called idolatry: the projection of substance onto things which don't have it. This chimed with my concern at that time that this festering resentment along with the legacy of inequality was being displaced - entirely inappropriately - onto certain groups such as Muslims and giving fertile ground for the exploitation of racial and religious stereotypes. Williams mentioned the 'r' word of repentance but did not restrict it to bankers, rather extending it to all of us who colluded. We could all look back and see that we were hypnotised and failed to recognise the gap building up between how finance was really operating and what it appeared to be generating - or failing to generate - in terms of wellbeing for a community. What we have learnt, Williams said, is that there is a role of 'awkward amateurs' - whether artists, historians or theologians - to ask what is this wealth that we are creating.

⁵⁰ Hilary Russell, 'Believing in politics' in *Foundations*, William Temple Foundation, Manchester, Vol. 2, No. 1, January - March 1999, pp 28/29.

⁵¹ *BBC Newsnight*, 15 September, 2009.

4.5. Entering into the Argument

‘One of the most radical disadvantages suffered by the powerless and marginalised of our society is their ultimate exclusion from the conversation which creates society.’⁵²

In an interview⁵³, soon after *Faith in the City* was published, David Sheppard said: “Listening” is one of the big words for the church in UPAs. Father Austin Smith in Liverpool has long been saying we ought to have a listening campaign. He’s now moved on to say, “you mustn’t just listen, you must enter into the argument.” Now that’s taking people seriously... You need to enter into the argument.’ I have been trying here to say that ‘entering into the argument’ is many faceted. It involves on-the-ground social action, active participation in social and political life and modelling justice within the life of the Church, but it also requires unmasking some of the assumptions and values justifying the policies and systems and structural and systemic pressures that lead to injustice and inequality. There is a part for all of us to play. Edward Said⁵⁴ talked about intellectuals having a specific public role in society which ‘has an edge to it, and cannot be played without a sense of being someone whose place it is publicly to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than to produce them), to be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations, and whose *raison d’etre* is to represent all those people and issues who are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug.’ This is equally a task for theologians and for the rest of us ‘awkward amateurs’.

⁵² Austin Smith, *Journeying with God: Paradigms of Power and Powerlessness*, Sheed and Ward, Wisconsin, 1990, p 132.

⁵³ David Sheppard interview with Hilary Russell, *Poverty Network*, Church Action on Poverty, Summer 1986.

⁵⁴ Edward Said and Richard Sennett, *Respect: The Formation of Character in an Age of Inequality*, Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, London 2003, p 13.