



# REMAINDER REFLECTIONS

FOLLOWING JESUS OF NAZARETH, NOT JESUS OF SEPPHORIS

*Sally Mann*

URBAN TRACTS



# Remainer Reflections: Following Jesus of Nazareth, not Jesus of Sepphoris

Sally Mann

*Urban Tracts, Book 3*

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Cover image of the Emergency Food Hub at 'The Well' during the  
first lockdown, from [Bonny Downs Community Association](#).

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# 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.

The 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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# Introduction

In the first of these [Urban Tracts](#), reflecting on 40 years of urban mission in the UK, Greg Smith calls for relocators and remainers “to move in and live deep” in urban communities for the long term, perhaps as a lifetime vocation. There is also a challenge for Christians born and raised in such places to stay and serve the kingdom where they are.’ (Smith, 2020: p.43)

Me! Me! I accept and embrace the challenge to remain. I do it whole-heartedly, and with the benefit of twenty-five years’ hindsight. Staying put and ‘living deep’ could be my mantra. I am just not sure I chose it. It feels like it chose me.

I am the fourth of six generations of one family who have lived in the same four streets and attended the same church in East Ham, in the London Borough of Newham in the East End of London. Since my great-grandmother met a lay missionary in ‘Bonny Downs’, a slum community in the 1890s, my family’s life has been shaped by the call to stay and serve one specific neighbourhood. I am a ‘missional remainer’—someone who has discerned that following Jesus means staying put. In my experience it is a call that extends beyond one lifetime. It is a call to attempt, every day, to be a signpost to the wonderful rule of God’s love, the ‘kenarchy’ of God, in an inner-city neighbourhood. The term ‘kenarchy’ emerged from discussions in my church as we sought for a less gendered and imperial word for ‘kingdom’. Others have a more [precise meaning](#) for the term, but for us, it boils down to attempting to live out the rule of love in our community, modelled on the agape-love we have seen and experienced in Jesus.

Today, seven households of my immediate family live in the same four streets where my great-grandmother raised her sixteen children at the end of the last century. Today, I am the minister of the church where one of those sixteen children, my grandmother Rose, came to faith in Jesus. I recognise that this story of generational endurance in the inner city is unusual. I could be a missional specimen in the study

of urban ministry. Or perhaps my family are just unusually unimaginative when it comes to location.

My church, [Bonny Downs Baptist](#), has also been on a journey. We have been intentionally focussed on community organisation as a missional practice for decades, and this has shaped much of our church life, and indeed honed our theology. It has been a journey to allow missiology to shape ecclesiology. This went up a gear in 1998. As a small church with around 30 members and limited financial resources, we set up a [community association](#). This positioned the church as a broker of ‘soft power’ in our community. Given the socio-economic realities of our neighbourhood it is also a move which enfleshed Jesus’ promise that: ‘You will always have the poor among you.’ (Matt 26:11) In terms of the worshipping congregation, the shift meant a physical journey: the church ‘left the building’ and moved its Sunday gathering into the community centre. We have been ‘blurring the edges’ of worship and service in myriad ways ever since (some of which I will reflect upon here). It means that the majority of ministry at Bonny Downs happens apart from Sunday worship.

Our journey through staying put has given us impetus to innovate. We have been a Walking Church, a Garden Church, and a church which planted new expressions elsewhere. We are a church which shares meditative practices online and is fully signed up to the Inclusive Church charter. The one thing we are not is a typical Baptist Church—although the history of dissent and local autonomy is fully ours! Bonny Downs is gritty, diverse, activist, and refreshingly optimistic about transformation. There is nowhere on earth I would rather be a disciple.

In this tract, I reflect on being part of my inner-city church community and liken it to living in a place like Nazareth, with its experiences of economic and cultural marginalisation. I will reflect on some of the lessons I have learnt: the transformational power of sharing a story-rich life; and being place-makers in communities where many feel excluded.

# Chapter 1

## Why Stay Put?

### 1.1 East Ham

Newham is extraordinary. To stay put in East Ham, which is to the south of the London Borough of Newham swims against cultural tides which ‘convert and lift’ others out of the East End. Let’s be honest, ‘white flight’ is part of this. Today, 13.1% of Newham are ‘White British’; one of the lowest indigenous White British populations in the country in the 2011 UK Census. It has the second highest percentage of Muslims in the UK, after the neighbouring London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Part of what it means to stay put as a white Eastender is to embrace life as a shrinking minority ethnic group in a sea of cultural change. I love it. I feel I have more in common with the theism of some of my Muslim neighbours than with many secularist Brits. Plus, Newham is great for those who like to travel. I stay still and the world, with all its colour and variety, moves towards and around me. Wanting to live in familiar ethnic territory is one reason why white Eastend families move out of Newham. And why I can get a great Afghan takeaway on my doorstep but need to go to Essex for a ‘pie and mash’. [Newham](#) is a place of almost perpetual shift. Its churn rate is 21.5%, meaning that 71,798 people either left or arrived in the last year.<sup>1</sup> Nationally, the average is 0.72%. I believe staying put has exponentially increased the amount I have had to adapt and change as a minister. For me, this has

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<sup>1</sup> For further updated information on the Borough of Newham’s changing economic and demographic contexts visit [DataShine](#) and [government data](#).

been a very positive experience and led to a healthy focus on seeking the Kingdom of God rather than being a caretaker of a Sunday congregation. Why stay in East Ham? Ultimately, I think it has something to do with Jesus being from Nazareth and not Sepphoris.

## 1.2 Nazareth and Sepphoris

Nazareth was a nowhere place. A village of probably 200 people—like the four streets of the original Bonny Downs slum community (there are pictures and a bit more of the Bonny Downs story [here](#)). In a community the size of Nazareth, everybody knew everybody. It is part of what makes Jesus' claims astounding. His community knew who he was and how he lived. They would have seen and heard much of it first-hand. Before his public ministry, Jesus' occupation is described in a word best translated as a 'peasant artisan carpenter'. This phrase should not conjure up romantic images of a gentle life whittling spoons. A peasant artisan was often pitied in agrarian societies. It meant that Jesus' family had most likely lost ownership of their land at some point, and now sold their labour. Sepphoris, the capital city of Galilee was just three to four miles away. While all four Gospels tell us that Jesus came from Nazareth, there is not one mention of the capital city of Galilee, Sepphoris. The Gospel is of Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus the peasant artisan. This matters because it is a story written from an innocuous place of no prestige. It is more 'East Ham' than 'Westminster'. Sepphoris had a regional armoury. It was cosmopolitan and monied. In Jesus' childhood, it is reported that locals ransacked the armoury and that, in response, Rome crucified 2000 people along the Galilean highway and destroyed a good number of the buildings in Sepphoris (Plekon et al., 2016: p.139). Likely, as a landless carpenter from a small nearby village, Jesus worked to rebuild Sepphoris. He would have walked to work six days a week, in a kind of gig economy of his day. He surely noticed that the aqueducts flowed in one direction—taking water from the hills of Galilee into the wealthy villas of Sepphoris, with their private bathhouses. Nazareth was undoubtedly grubbier.

### 1.3 Jesus and the Precariat

As I reflect on the socio-economic particularity of the incarnation, I believe Jesus could relate to the lives of the precariat today ([Standing, 2014](#)). The precariat is the emerging class replacing the old working class. They have emerged from British post-industrialisation, globalisation, and neo-liberal politics. They are the gig economy workers. Many of today's workers will never have a stable salary or benefit from post-war employment rights. The precariat lives with multiple insecurities. Theirs is 'in-work poverty':

As a society we believe that working families should have a decent standard of living, yet one in eight workers now live in poverty. ([Innes, 2020](#))

My borough, Newham, has a 37% poverty rate, which is the second highest rate in London. It has one of the highest proportions of low earners in England, with more than a third of workers paid less than the Real Living Wage, which was £10.20 per hour for workers in London when the data was compiled. The latest figures from the [Office for National Statistics](#) show 33.8% of jobs in Newham pay less than the Real Living Wage—around 23,000 workers in total.

The working lives of the precariat are often a mishmash of temporary or zero-hour contracts: delivery drivers, cleaners, retail staff, and care workers; sometimes under-employed, sometimes overworked. They cannot easily budget or access mortgages or credit and perpetually 'rob Peter to pay Paul'. This is East Ham through and through. Here, low wages are exacerbated by high rents, resulting in overcrowding and a good deal of informal, and often abusive, tenancy agreements. Today's precariat class are forced to take on multiple contracts when work is available, losing social contacts and travelling huge distances for work, making them less connected to one neighbourhood. They take the hit of market fluctuations. As work dries up, they face months of low or no pay, often living on informal handouts, overdrafts and payday loans, and dreams of winning the lottery to put an end to the stress of [in-work poverty](#).

Like Jesus, the peasant artisan from Nazareth, many of the precariat work to build dwellings they will never afford, and prop up economic systems they will never truly benefit from. The metaphorical aqueducts flow one way. Gentrification can make levels of inequality even more stark with extremes of poverty and wealth living cheek by jowl. Many of my neighbours in East Ham are part of the precariat. Others have '[no recourse to public funds](#)' as a condition of their immigration status, and so have

no safety net at all beneath their family's finances.

So, what has this to do with our discussion of urban mission? If, like the first disciples of John 1:35-39, we want to follow him, we might well ask with them: 'Where are you staying?', and hear the call 'Come and see'. And if we do, we won't find Jesus ministering in Sepphoris. We might find him in the outlying towns and villages, and he might well take us to Samaria to eat with people whose ethnicity and religion disturbs our sensibilities. In the Gospel accounts of Jesus' three-year ministry, he is never once recorded as going back to Sepphoris. It is Jesus of Nazareth we are called to follow. I believe East Ham is exactly the right place to meet him. It offers alterity, marginality, and authentic opportunities of community.

## Chapter 2

# Life at Bonny Downs

Over the years, Bonny Downs has taught me that community is the opposite of poverty, and that justice is part of mission. I have seen this expressed in many ways, but two themes come to mind: building a story-rich community and the transformation of place.

Community does not just make it easier to withstand poverty and insecurity; it can build resilience and spirituality to enable people to thrive despite material deprivation. It can also raise esteem and aspiration for the long battle for justice. I benefit from genuine connection and sense of purpose and belonging in my Bonny Downs community. Every week, I see the compassion of the poor towards the poor. I see people just sitting with others whose distress they know too well themselves, where nothing is to be done except to hold hands over a cup of tea and have a good cry. It is a situation my great-grandmother would recognise in her slum community in this exact same area over 100 years ago, which Charles Dickens put into words:

I think the best side of such people is almost hidden from us. What the poor are to poor is little known, excepting to themselves and God.  
(Charles Dickens, Bleak House)

These kinds of honest connections can be thin places for spiritual encounter. I have come to learn that being in places where the hopes and fears of people get voiced is the best context to hear God's voice too. It is this perspective which shapes the Biblical narrative. It is the enslaved and exiled who write Biblical history. In times of plenty they are most likely to go astray. The prophets keep calling them back to remember who they are and call them back to pursue justice as true worship.

I have responsibility for preaching at Bonny Downs and have instigated a practice of community ‘sermon cooking’. Everyone who preaches must ‘cook’ the sermon in at least one community conversation before they ‘simmer it down’ into a form that can be shared on Sunday. For me, this has involved listening to stories around tables in the Wednesday community for people experiencing food poverty and/or homelessness. I usually ask for help in understanding a biblical story. I retell it in story form, often pausing to see what people think happens next, and invite them to share similar stories, questions, and insights.



**Figure 2.1:** Bonny Downs Foodbank. Image from [Bonny Downs Community Association website](#). Used with permission.

This practice takes time. The outcomes are often messier, humbler, and more provisional than teaching I have heard in churches elsewhere. It is an approach to Scripture which is multi-dimensional, mixing up preparation and proclamation, contextual exegesis and praxis.

I witness the healing power of community at Bonny Downs as we have learnt to do and be with, rather than doing to the poor. We have journeyed deeper into organisation rather than development as a model of community change. There is an increasing co-production of projects and the blurring of service delivery and invitations into community—perhaps most apparent in the social enterprise New Life. At one level, New Life is a social enterprise offering training and employment to people experiencing homelessness. It also operates as a kind of therapeutic community to counter trauma and restore dignity and a sense of belonging.

Staying put and trying to be a disciple of Jesus in East Ham has also taught me that



**Figure 2.2:** Community garden at NewLife Newham social enterprise. Image from [New Way website](#). Used with permission.

advocacy is an important part of community mission and that mercy and justice meet in Christian approaches to poverty. Bonny Downs Community Association runs year-round advocacy projects for elders, families, and those with ‘no recourse to public funds’. We try to do this within community groups which also offer opportunities to contribute, celebrate, and share life in different ways. For example, the Family Hub is both an advocacy project for ‘no recourse’ families but also a cooking club where women share recipes and cook meals together.

Staying put as a minister in a less well-resourced community has other benefits. I have a ‘real job’. Being bi-vocational does not compromise my calling but has rounded my life and protected me from ‘professionalising’ my faith. It is also a pragmatic response to living in a poorer community. Bonny Downs does not have a manse and has income to support just one paid role. This single stipend is shared among four paid bi-vocational ministers in a team. I use the term bi-vocational here to describe life where paid ministry happens alongside other paid occupations. These other roles are experienced as vocations too, not just a way to pay the bills. Some, like [Brad Brisco](#), have refined this term, creating the new word ‘co-vocational’. This term captures the extent to which a minister determines it is best for them to remain committed to a mixture of work, even were funding for ministry to increase. That is



**Figure 2.3:** Support offered by the Bonny Downs Community Association. Image from [Bonny Downs Community Association website](#). Used with permission.

how we feel at Bonny Downs. I believe that this models a ‘flatter’ leadership style which better reflects the principles of the kenarchy of God. And we do not get as bent out of shape as ministers. I predict that these models will spread to other parts of the church in response to financial decline. From my perspective, I would say that this may be a blessing in disguise. There is life beyond the traditional models of full-time, stipendiary ministry which many in the West have inherited as the norm. Some urban mission leaders are ahead of the curve in this and have experience and encouragements to share.

We are journeying on. Our plans to redevelop the old church site express a desire to deepen shared life and communality with the most marginalised. We hope to build an ‘[Urban Abbey](#)’ to replace our existing 1930s mission building. We dream of it as a place where people transitioning from homelessness can share with those called to follow Jesus in the ‘move in, live deep’ vision Greg Smith describes.

## Chapter 3

# Being a Story-rich Community

My life as an academic sociologist and an urban minister collide in my research interests. As an academic, I have co-produced projects and [ethnographic studies](#) to better understand what it takes to successfully transition from street sleeping to settled accommodation and reintegration into mainstream society.

I have chosen methods which seek to amplify the experiences of those with lived experience of homelessness, alongside the insights of volunteers and workers from grassroots charities such as NEWway. Much of my research has been based on collating stories. One key theme to emerge is how narratives confer identity. My most recent [research project](#) involved simply listening to the stories of rough sleepers and vulnerably housed people during the COVID pandemic lockdown.

Bonny Downs is a community where things happen, stories are told and listened to, and people are invited to step into a new story. Finding a place within the unfolding narrative of the Bonny Downs church and charity offers people the chance to be known, to become a local character, and even to adopt a heroic narrative within its motto: ‘We work together to change lives and transform our community!’. This appears to be incredibly important, especially in helping people transition from chaotic lives, such as complex deprivations associated with long-term homelessness.

My research among those experiencing homelessness teaches me that stories are currency. Over the months of collating stories at park benches and around tables at the Wednesday community meal I have noticed that some stories are told repeatedly, and aspects of them appear rehearsed with the repetition of exact phrases and even pauses. With my sociological hat on, I can situate this within the field of narratology and identity. Many of the stories I collate have two prevalent themes: victimisation

and heroism. There are many stories of battling ‘the system’. Encounters with statutory systems frame many of the life stories I listen to. There are also stories of being a hero, of helping others through tough times. Some of these stories seem almost mythical in their re-telling.

These stories can be understood in consideration of Paul Ricoeur’s work on self-authoring narratives (1984). When someone tells a story about themselves, they have the power to actively interpret and shape the narrative. When they repeat stories, they are casting them as important and framing events in their lives, and they could be recast in ways which help them to understand themselves. I see Ricoeur’s idea of ‘emplotment’ at work whenever I sit around a table at the foodbank or chat to someone at a park bench. People draw together disparate events and create meaning and identity from them—as people who took on systems, who won against the odds, who helped each other. These narrations may not be wildly accurate, but that is not the point. Instead, as Ricoeur identifies, the narratives imply autonomous acts of moral responsibility, which cast the individual with the opportunity and potential for an ‘inchoate narrativity’—if they were heroes or overcomers once, they might well be that again. This is Ricoeur’s ‘semantics of action’, whereby actions and their consequences are woven into stories which are rich with meaning and provide worldviews which help situate us. However, as embellished as these tales may be, they are used to provide a sense of subjectivity and agency. The ability stories have for ‘emplotment’ can shift the subject’s actions in the future. This was something I had seen for myself in previous walking interviews. ‘Dean’ told me about his five-year journey of moving from street sleeping to settled accommodation and integration into wider society through becoming a ‘tea angel’ at NewDay, a day centre to support people transitioning from street homelessness. He was able to recast his identity into the larger heroic story of NewDay—not as a recipient of help, but as an important volunteer and contributor. This gave him purpose, belonging and the pull of a new identity.

Healthy Christian communities in urban contexts can provide a story-rich life for hundreds of people at once. As they take Biblical stories out to midweek activities in meaningful ways, the stories of their community become woven into the Biblical story of God. We find ourselves in these stories. Urban mission is wonderful at producing story-rich communities in economically poor neighbourhoods. We can invite those from survival mindsets in street cultures to shift into a story where they can be a heroic overcomer and contributor to building an alternative society.

Jon Kuhrt, a Governmental advisor on homelessness within the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, commented on one of my articles and similarly identified the role of urban missional communities to provide alternative stories for people to find themselves anew:

You hit on something really interesting about how the mayhem of surviving on the street provides a narrative which is fundamentally exciting, full of jeopardy and challenge. The phrase ‘stories which oscillate between victimisation and heroism’ particularly resonated with my experiences [...] The step I think is vitally needed is for rough sleepers to see their recovery journey as \*more\* exciting than this life—and more legitimately heroic than the daily battles created by the trauma and chaos of street life.

Inviting people into the activity and purpose of community life can offer a different story and opportunity for ‘enplotment’. And of course, surrounding each individual missional community is the greater story of God’s *missio dei*—a story all Christians find themselves in.

# Chapter 4

## Placemaking and Pirating

In providing an alternative story for people to find themselves in, a strong missional community can transform physical places in both real and symbolic ways. They do this by providing a ‘story-rich’ life in a given place. And sometimes they ‘turn pirate’ to achieve this. For those interested, there is a great [TED Talk](#) arguing that social enterprises can learn something from the purpose, power, and mischief of the troublesome history of the Golden Age pirates.

In many ways, it is hard to ‘out-local’ the healthy urban missional community. The placemaking that flows from shared lives transforms the ways many people experience that environment. I believe that, at best, we make ‘thin places’ of divine encounter right in the middle of the messiness and bustle of urban life. The places where urban mission happens can take on new meanings, or in the language of John Inge’s [theology of places](#), ‘spaces become places’ through meaningful encounters.

Walter Brueggemann’s earlier consideration *The Land: Place as Gift, Promise, and Challenge in Biblical Faith* (Fortress Press, 1977) gave a much fuller argument that ‘land’ is a, or the, central theme of Biblical faith; that God gives people to land and not land to people. This has been a remarkably challenging insight to live out. It challenges many of our cultural assumptions about land as capital. Seeing land as somehow part of God’s sacred promise confronts the extent to which capitalism has ingrained our thinking about possessing the land, about having a marketable transaction with the places we live. Something as simple, as earthy, as spending time in a community garden, with neighbours, growing and harvesting food together can restore this sense of the gift and mystery of land.

In social geography, the movement to consider places as best described by the way we

experience them is called the phenomenology of place. It was first codified by [Edward Relph](#) in 1976. Relph states that spaces should be explored in terms of how people experience them. The processes of memory and repeated encounter build a social form of place identity—the identity of groups with places. Placemaking, providing positive activities which encourage connections and encounters to a physical place, help to build identity. Welcome and participation can build a sense of ‘existential insideness’, in Relph’s terms, where a person feels unselfconscious and at home. Cities can be places of ‘existential outsideness’—spaces full of strangeness and alienation. The work of healthy urban missional communities is to sacramentalise spaces so that spaces become places. This sounds esoteric, but it looks a lot like inviting people to grow food in community gardens together, to cook meals and share stories around tables, to meet and share life in places which can be returned to again and again and take on homely attributes. It is the bread and butter of urban mission.



**Figure 4.1:** The Wellstead Road Community Centre in 1997, and The Well today. Images from David Mann. Used with permission.



**Figure 4.2:** Disused bars at The Wellstead Road Community Centre, and community facilities at The Well today. Images from David Mann. Used with permission.

Writing from a social geography perspective, [Elena Liotta](#) writes: ‘A place takes on meaning as a result of the sensations and emotions elicited and the consequent



**Figure 4.3:** Flanders playing fields in 1999 before Bonny Downs Community Association took over management of the facility, and the same fields afterwards. Images from David Mann. Used with permission.



**Figure 4.4:** The community garden, the site of a former pavilion which had burned down, and transformed today. Images from David Mann. Used with permission.

attachments formed [...] External space becomes interior space, a subjective space and time of experience, memory and emotions.’ (p. 6). In ‘doing mission’ healthy urban ministry makes places out of indistinct or even threatening spaces.

We have seen more than our fair share of place transformation over the years at [Bonny Downs](#) as we have innovated and explored our way through faith-led community organisation: the transformation of a dilapidated community centre into the hub of community life at The Well; and an overgrown field into a fully functioning sports venue and community garden. These projects began as we went ‘pirate’ and started to stake claims in facilities which were being left to rot (not through intentional neglect, but often as a result of the impact of national austerity measures on local governments). We began by noticing what could be reclaimed for common good and

missional purpose. We organised and acted in partnership to stake claims to the possible use of these places. We pirated them.

These pictures look like magic. But these are not the stuff of TV makeovers. They are witness to, and the result of, transformational, structural, physical, social and spiritual changes brought about through decades of faith-based organisation and placemaking.

There are also small-scale, but no less important, transformations of place too. Much of my ministry (it sounds ridiculous to label it in this way) involves sitting on my front bench for some time most days, just to be neighbourly. I chat to dozens of people. I could call this ‘being a faithful presence’ or ‘becoming a known character’, or any other on-point missiological phrase. But perhaps it is just in my DNA to sit on front doorsteps and chat.



**Figure 4.5:** My front bench. And sharing communion on a park bench with homeless people and NewWay workers. Images from David Mann. Used with permission.

In fact, benches feature highly in my week. Above is an image of a time I shared communion on a park bench with homeless people and NewWay workers. It involved me giving a persistent staffie communion bread. Another story.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> After 25 years of mission in East London we wrote our memoirs in a series of stories *Looking for Lydia: Encounters that shape the church*. This is available from [Amazon](#) or for the cost of postage from us.

# Conclusion

Urban Mission is never a blueprint or programme that can be pulled into any place. It always comes from the ground up, and in very particular forms. It ferments. It is always ahead of the people looking to live in it and always around them as they live it out. I have found its best fruit comes from seasoned, mature, patient faithfulness. In John 1:46 Nathaniel asks, ‘Can anything good come from Nazareth?’. The Church has often echoed this jaded rhetoric. If not always in its official line on inner city mission, then certainly in the ministry decisions of most of its trained leaders. The gravitational pull is to the ‘Sepphoris’ communities which offer greater comfort, are already better resourced, and might present an opening at the tables of the powerful. Nazareth is more about sitting on benches.

I am pleased to share my remainder reflections and welcome anyone wanting to pop over for a visit. When Nathaniel asks his question ‘Can anything good come from Nazareth?’, the answer is ‘Come and See!’. How Gospel is that.

# Questions for further consideration

- Sally says that both she and her church have journeyed through staying put. What makes this possible both in terms of their context and their mindset? Do you have similar opportunities to explore mission through staying put?
- Sally is convinced about the importance of Christian communities as ‘story-rich’—places which listen to, tell, and make new stories. What potential is there to increase the richness of stories in your community? Why might this be key in seeing transformation?
- Bonny Downs admits it ‘pirates’ disused community resources. Their story is one of partnerships for the common good. What can be learnt from their adventures in pirating for other communities?

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Thank you for reading.

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