

Urban Bulletin

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Incorporating *CITY CRIES*
a joint information resource
on Urban Mission & Ministry

ISSUE 18 2007



URBAN EYE

'All the Children of the World'

The tent, one of many, houses a display promoting the activities of the local Scouts. At one end, under a small canvas canopy giving only partial relief from the blazing sun the Editor of Urban Bulletin, with the help of the Scoutmaster's wife and occasionally assisted by me, is helping an astonishing assortment of eager children, dressed in almost every imaginable style of clothing, to make fridge magnets. These magnets bear the slogan 'DON'T BE A TOSSER.'

The scene is a large downtown public square, filled with a multi-racial crowd of children and parents in a glorious kaleidoscope of national costumes. Here and there are sideshows and amusements, food and drink vendors, and manned displays promoting clubs and activities. A traditional miniature railway train chugs round a small track, whilst several pairs of legs empower the occasional appearances of a Chinese dragon and its entourage. Banners mark the 'Lost Children's Meeting Point', the Bouncy Castle, the Astroslide and other significant landmarks, but far more colourful banners proclaim that the children of the world are living and playing in harmony here at the Bankstown Children's Festival.

In one corner of the square a large stage has been erected, and throughout the day the stage is taken by a wonderful procession of performers including a Vietnamese children's choir, an Indian dance troupe, and an Aboriginal warriors display. Some of the performers are interviewed by the daughter of the local mayor – both mother and daughter dressed in bright saris – and a tiny singer from the Vietnamese choir gives disarmingly simple answers to her interviewers:-

'How long have you been practising for today?'

'I don't know.'

'What a very long and beautiful song you

sang! Was it difficult to learn?'

'No!'

Back at the Scout tent the queue of children wanting to assemble fridge magnets shows no sign of shrinking. Toddlers and teens alike collect the raw materials from the table, borrow a pair of blunt-nosed scissors, and are soon proudly presenting their creations. We praise their efforts and stamp their cards – there's a prize for all the boys and girls who take part in every activity so the stamped card is their proof. Some rush off to show the new fridge magnet to mum or dad; some stay to ask questions about scouting activities and sign a form to register their interest. Oh, and in case you were wondering, 'Don't Be a Tosser' is the Aussie anti-litter slogan!

The Bankstown district has its leafy suburbs, where swamp hens scurry across the lawns and cockatoos perch on the washing lines. But it also has a needy downtown area, a higher-than-average rate of crime and violence, and a wide racial mix. The Children's Festival originated within the Vietnamese community. To their credit the people of Bankstown saw what a great idea it was and adopted it as an annual event for everyone to enjoy.

It was hot work out there in the town square (even though the Aussies were telling us it was still winter!), and Annie and I had to retreat for an afternoon siesta at the home of Mike Weatherly the Scoutmaster (who happens to be Ann's cousin). But we were back in good time to see this wonderful festival run on into the evening. As darkness fell I got conscripted into the security service and so had a front row view (when I was free to turn round and watch it) of the firework display that rounded off the day.

What a brilliant event it was. We couldn't help thinking how much good could be done in British towns and cities

by Children's Festivals like this. And we remembered the joy that Jesus showed when children gathered around him. And we wondered if there might be churches back home that could catch this vision of celebrating the children of the world, and get their local communities together to share the celebration.

Stephen Barton

'Setting People Free' Jesus in the City Congress

This event will be held in Bristol from 14th to 18th June 2007.

'Setting people free' is the theme for the fifth triennial UK Urban Mission Congress Jesus in the City.

The main speakers include Jim Wallis of the Sojourners Community in Washington; Kathy Galloway of the Iona Community; Revd George Koroor, Principal of Trinity College, Bristol and Richard Reddie. It is to be based at Kensington Baptist Church and Easton Family Centre.

BOOK NOW!

Contact: The Crisis Centre
12 City Road, St. Paul's
Bristol BS2 8TP
email: info@jitic.org.uk
www.jitic.org.uk

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[http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/socialpublic/
urbanaffairs.html#UrbanBulletin](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/socialpublic/urbanaffairs.html#UrbanBulletin)

EVENTS

Asylum-Migrant Support Workshop 28th March 2007

The huge effects of globalization are
challenging a growing number of churches
across the UK. Asylum seekers, refugees
and migrant workers are arriving in
significant numbers, often without any local
understanding or consideration of their
basic human needs. A number of churches
and associations are already modelling
good practice or exploring how they might
respond. The core of the day will be
listening to each other and hearing from
those who have been campaigning and
responding to these issues — inspirational
and heart-rending.

Contact: Carole Alder:
email: calder@baptist.org.uk

Building a People of Power

Revd Dr. Robert Linthicum will be
launching his book at seminars at 'Jesus in
the City', Bristol, drawing on his experience
with World Vision and in community
organisations. The book and seminars will
take place in June and July 2007 and are
aimed at 'Equipping Churches to Transform
their Communities'. Contact: **ECUM**

Bristol Centre for Youth Ministry Bristol Baptist College, The Promenade, Clifton Down, Clifton, Bristol BS8 3NJ on Thursday, 15 March 2007 10.00 am – 4.00 pm

Bristol Centre for Youth Ministry is
hosting a day with Pete Rollins. The first
part of the day will explore the themes
from 'How (not) to speak of God'. We
believe Pete to be one the most exciting
new thinkers and writers to emerge in
recent times, so the afternoon will give
space for Pete to share some his current
thinking and plenty of time for
discussion, and questions and answers.
The Cost will be £5 for the day
including Lunch.

Contact Bristol CYM Administrator on
0117 946 9209 or
email: cym@bristol-baptist.ac.uk

Unlock Walk 2007

The 24th Annual Walk will take place
on 21st April 2007 and will retrace the
route of the first walk. This is in
memory of Basil Cracknell who for many
years was Unlock's enthusiastic
treasurer and importantly initiated these
walks. Basil sadly died in 2006. These
walks not only raise funding for the
ongoing work of Unlock but are also an
unrivalled way of seeing first hand the
varied ministries of a number of
congregations in inner city areas.

Contact: **Unlock**

MOVING ON

'Moving On', the new short course for
volunteer youth workers combining
online and face to face training. As well
as briefing tutors on the content of the
course, this day will introduce them to
how the online aspects will work.

Contact: **Frontier Youth Trust**

URBLOG has landed.

Urblog is an informal site we are
developing for comment and resources
on urban theology, life, faith, and action.
We welcome contributions, news and
book reviews. The site carries a rolling
listing of lectures, books, articles and
reviews. Some articles are linked from
other publications; others are
downloadable directly (and occasionally
only) from Urblog.

Urblog can be accessed on
<http://www.urblog.typepad.com>

TRAINING

Master of Theology — Ministry in an Urban World.

The Foundation of this new course and
its details: Contact Dr. David Smith or
Linda Dunnett at the International
Christian College, 110 St. James Road,
Glasgow G4 0PS Tel: 0141 552 4040
Email: college@icc.ac.uk
www.icc.ac.uk

Theology and World Mission

This new course at Diploma, Degree and
Masters level is in cross cultural mission
and has been developed by Oakhill
College. Contact Oakhill College, Chase
Side, Southgate, London N14 4PS;
Tel: 020 8449 0469
Email: claweo@oakhill.ac.uk
www.oakhill.ac.uk

MA/PG Diploma in Consultancy for Mission and Ministry at York St John University

This is a 2 year part-time, part distance-
learning, course in which the focus is the
work context of each student. A
substantial proportion of the three
annual 4 day residentials is given over to
co-consultancies, examining issues
chosen by the students. The main
learning modules of missiology,
organisational studies and consultancy
theory are then integrated into the
student's own experience as a means of
formulating a consultancy model
consistent with personal theological
convictions. The course will be
particularly helpful to those who:

- Work with others formulating and
implementing strategy
- Have oversight of others including
work consultancy
- Help and support church and
community (including project)
development.

Contact: **York Institute for Community
Theology**

MA in Urban Theology at the Urban Theology Centre

- The Bible in the City: Prof. John
Rogerson, Dr. John Vincent, Revd
Christian Jones
- The Urban Context: Revd. Maurice
Stafford, Revd Robert Beard, Revd
Richard Thompson
- Urban Theology: Dr Ian Duffield,
Dr John Vincent.

Contact **The Urban Theology Unit**

MATRIX**Don't forget the the MATRIX full-time youth workers conference is scheduled for 5th-7th March 2007**

Conference for full-time Youth workers — Christians working in any context.

Freedom to flourish. 200 years since the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. How do we express freedom in Christ today? Take time out to think about how today's youth worker can help to continue to make an impact on the lives of young people. The Matrix 2007 will examine through four over-arching themes the role of the youth worker

- as theologian
- as leader
- as missionary
- as prophet

This will enable you to develop as a youth worker, drawing on the theological and sociological perspectives. There will be space for personal reflection, dialogue with other practitioners, relaxation, laughter and focussing on God.

Organised by:

- Churches Together in England
- Baptist Union of Great Britain
- Centre for Youth Ministry
- United Reformed Church
- The Church of England
- Frontier Youth Trust
- Youth for Christ
- Scripture Union
- AMAZE • YWAM • YMCA
- MAYC • CYFA

Contact: Matrix, 48 Southfield Road Hinckley, Leics LE10 1UB.

To download a booking form:

<http://www.amaze.org.uk/matrix>

RESOURCES**CTE has renewed the website and is today launching the CT E-News service**

Please encourage many to receive the news service. Welcome to the first edition of CT E-news 2007

www.churches-together.net/Group

This comes as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity approaches, with links to resources of different kinds. We commend these to you at a time when there are many stresses and strains between and within the Churches, but also many encouraging examples of a growing unity.

CT E-news replaces Pilgrim Post.

Subscribers to CT E-news will receive an e-mail notification of a new edition each month with highlights of its contents: you will be linked to the website page where there is a choice of versions for you to download, depending on your needs and system capability.

If you wish to receive a monthly e-mail notification of a new edition please register through the website.

www.churches-together.net/Group/Group
CT E-news, both current and back editions will always be accessible via the website.

www.churches-together.net/Group

Journeying with Ashram

This describes the inner life behind the Ashram Community Trust formed in 1967 by John Vincent. Ashram has been a sustained enterprise in urban ministry and radical Christian living for 40 years.

Contact: Ashram Press, 178 Abbeyfield Road, Sheffield S4 7AY
Tel: 0114 244 7278 or 0114 243 6688

Outworkings is the Faith in People Bible Studies published by the Urban Theology Unit and written by John Vincent.

This deals with the 'Gospel Practice and Interpretation' and explores how the story of Jesus is lived out in our contemporary urban context. Thought-provoking and encouraging booklet

Contact: The Urban Theology Unit

Living Amongst

This brings together the stories of Bob and Colette Lighton the Flower Estate, and from Ian and Jayne Newton on the Holyrood Estate both based in Southampton.

Contact: Shaftesbury's Development and Regeneration Group, 16 Kingston Road, London SW19 1SZ; Tel: 0845 330 6033

Email
communityinfo@shaftesburysoc.org.uk
www.shaftesburysoc.org

Faithful Representation: Faith representation on Local Public**Partnerships from the Church Urban**

Fund. This summarises the findings of a survey undertaken by CUM with the Centre for Local Economic Development at Coventry University and Faith Based Regeneration Network UK. 25 recommendations have been made.

Contact: CUF, Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3NZ

Ten reasons why justice is essential to the

Gospels. This excellent article by Ross Langmead, Professor of Missiology, Whitley College, Australia appeared in the Autumn edition of CAP's News.

Contact: Church Action on Poverty
www.church-poverty.org.uk

JOSEPH ROWNTREE FOUNDATION**Neighbourhood play and community action.**

The 'Neighbourhood Play Toolkit' was conceived to develop and pilot a practical, comprehensive set of resources for improving public neighbourhood play spaces and services for children and young people. Five local community groups took part in developing and piloting the resources, which sought to bring together 'play development' and 'community development'.

Public Spaces, Social Relations and Well-being in East London

Public spaces are a fundamental feature of where we live, representing sites of sociability and acting as a perceived measure of the quality of urban life. The rejuvenation of public spaces is also a key policy concern. 'Public Spaces, Social Relations and Well-being in East

London' draws on qualitative research in a multi-ethnic area of East London to consider the social value of spaces. As well as green spaces, the study looks at those everyday spaces not usually highlighted in research or policy.

Markets as social spaces

This study, by The Open University, examines the importance of markets as social spaces in towns and cities in England. Fieldwork and observation in eight markets across the country were used to: examine the key factors that make markets work well as social, vibrant public spaces for different groups in the community; identify the main users of markets as social spaces in different contexts; and examine the different kinds of social activity in markets.

Capacity building: lessons from a pilot programme with black and minority ethnic voluntary and community organisations

Significant funding is being injected into capacity building initiatives but there has been little shared learning about concepts and models, practical implementation or effectiveness.

Summaries and reports available on **Joseph Rowntree Foundation website**
www.jrf.org.uk

Network of Urban Evangelicals

The main topic for the eleventh annual gathering of representatives of urban mission agencies and networks was 'Faithful Cities — How does urban mission and ministry make for a good city?'

Dean Pewsey, who was a member of CULF gave a background of the Commission and John Nicholls, General Secretary of the London City Mission, who hosted the occasion, gave an evaluation as did David Shosanya, Regional Minister for Mission of the London Baptist Association. A report of the discussion is available for at £1.50 including p&p

Contact: ECUM

OUT OF THE MOUTHS

"They didn't change positions, they just moved the players around."

Terry Venables

"If Glenn Hoddle said one word to his team at half-time, it was concentration and focus." **Ron Atkinson**

"The problem at Wimbledon seems to be that the club has suffered a loss of complacency." **Joe Kinnear**

"I always used to put my right boot on first, and then obviously my right sock." **Barry Venison**

"Lampard fired straight through the middle of a non-existent wall."

Paul McKenna

"He's carrying his left leg, which, to be honest, is his only leg." **Steve Coppell**

SPIRIT & POWER — New research on pentecostalism

Despite the rapid growth of pentecostalism in the last few decades, relatively little is known about the religious, political and civic views of individuals involved in these groups. To address this shortcoming, the 'Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life' recently conducted surveys in 10 countries with sizeable renewalist populations.

<http://pewforum.org/surveys/pentecostal>

Mute Vol 2: 3: Naked Cities – Struggle in the Global Slums.

A truly global view of cities in the latest edition of Mute, with a number of hard-hitting articles on themes raised by Mike Davis' Planet of Slums. Insights on Thames Gateway, Haiti, Delhi and Bluewater! £5

ISBN 0955066433 www.metamute.org

PUBLICATIONS

Understanding an Urbanising World

Fractured Cities: Urban Violence, State Failure and Social Exclusion by Kees Koonings and Dirk Kruijt. From the paramilitary invasion of Medellin in Colombia, the booming wealth of crack dealers in Managua, Nicaragua and police corruption in Mexico City, to the glimmers of hope in Lima, this book provides a dynamic analysis of urban insecurity. Based on new empirical evidence, interviews with local people and historical contextualization, the authors attempt to shed light on the fault-lines which have appeared in Latin American society.

Published by zed books

ISBN: 1842777319 £17.99

Small Cities — Urban Experience beyond the Metropolis Ed. David Bell & Mark Jayne.

A useful collection addressing urban change away from the higher levels of the urban hierarchy. Published by

Routledge ISBN: 0415366585 £22.99

Urban Visionary Rutgers by Alice Sparberg Alexiou and Jane Jacobs
Alice Sparberg Alexiou tells the remarkable story of a woman who without any formal training in planning became a prominent and effective spokesperson for people-centred urban change.

ISBN: 0813537924 £13.99

Estates: An Intimate History by Lynsey Hanley: A vivid mix of memoir and social history. Published by Granta ISBN: 1862079099 £12.99

Post-Suburban Europe: Planning and Politics at the Margins of Europe's Capital Cities by Nicholas A. Phelps

A collection that looks at new urban forms that emerge away from traditional city cores. Edge, sprawl, californication (wasn't that a Red Hot Chili Peppers track?) or even Croydonisation. Valuable for new insights and vocabulary! Published by Macmillan ISBN: 0230002129 £45

The Safe City — Safety and Urban Development in European Cities by Leo Van Den Berg, Peter M.J. Pol, Giuliano Mingardo and Carolien J.M. Spiller

As numerous local authorities of European cities invest in the attractiveness of their urban areas in the hope of attracting new inhabitants and economic activities, safety had become a topical subject. Perceived safety is a major factor in a city's attractiveness and fear of crime can have a large impact on location decisions, with ensuing economic consequences.

This book examines the role of security in urban development and its local policy implications. Comparing 11 European cities, it analyses how actual and perceived security is evolving, and what the economic, social and spatial consequences are of a changing perceived security. While crime has decreased in 8 of the 11 cities, fear of crime has increased in all of them.

Published by Ashgate ISBN:0754647234

Evaluation in Planning — Evolutions and Prospects Ed by E. R. Alexander

Evaluation is a critical stage in urban and regional planning and development. The full impact of well-intentioned initiatives are rarely anticipated, and evaluation of alternative proposals is essential for informed debate and decision. Evaluation in planning has become even more important with the new paradigm attempting to integrate economic efficiency with equity, sustainability and social responsibility. Published by Ashgate ISBN:0 7546 4586 X

Africa's Development in the Twenty First Century – Pertinent Socio-Economic and Development Issues Ed. Kwadwo Konadu-Agyemang and Kwamina Panford

The twentieth century can best be characterized as a century of lost opportunities for Africa. Having been under colonial rule for the first half of the century, by 1965 all but a handful of countries had regained their independence and were poised to take off into an era of development. Despite being saddled with many inherited problems, there was an optimism that, by combining abundant natural and human resources with development planning and the support of the international community, African nations could work towards and finally attain levels of development akin to those of the 'West'.

Instead, due to both endogenous and exogenous factors, Africa now suffers from the most acute form of underdevelopment, with extreme poverty, high rates of illiteracy, political instability, economic mismanagement, atrophied infrastructure, housing shortages, civil wars, ethnic conflicts, diseases, low life expectancy and high levels of infant mortality. Published by Ashgate ISBN 07546 44782

**BOOK YOUR PLACE AT THE
NEXT 'JESUS IN THE CITY'
CONGRESS
'SETTING PEOPLE FREE'**

PUBLICATIONS

Faith in an Urbanising World

Practical Justice — Living off centre in a self-centred world by Kevin Blue

Many of us have good intentions. However, we get stuck in the rut of the everyday or overwhelmed by the hopelessness of the problems we see around us or confused about how to be helpful but not patronizing. Here's a book with some ideas that can help us live our convictions. Kevin Blue is director of internships with Servant Partners, an organization that sends holistic church planting teams to cities around the world: 'we forego the pursuit of comfort and instead dwell among the outcast. In community we cross class and ethnic boundaries to form partnerships so that together we might be light in dark and difficult places'. Published by Likewise ISBN: 10 0 8306 3368 4

Marginalisation by John Atherton

Can the Urban Church survive? Are churches relevant to public life? These two questions drive Atherton's thoughtful, sometimes searing and ultimately optimistic study. In secular Britain and Western Europe, churches seem increasingly marginalized from the processes of public discussion, decision-making and policy formation. That marginalization mirrors their marginalization in people's lives, which is most acute in parts of the city populated by those excluded from the main streams of a society's common or public life. Atherton brings these two issues together: the marginalization of the church and of particular groups in society. Hence the future of the church and its relevance to public life is to be worked out through active concern and commitment in places where other people and groups are marginalized. Published by SCM Press ISBN: 0 334 02919 8 £14. 99

The Suburban Christian — Finding Spiritual Vitality in the Land of Plenty by Albert Y. Hsu.

Hsu unpacks the spiritual significance of suburbia and explores how suburban culture shapes how we live and practice our faith. With broad historical background and sociological analysis, he offers practical insights for living Christianly in a suburban context. He probes such dynamics as commuting and consuming, he offers Christian alternatives for authentic spirituality, genuine community and relevant ministry. He challenges suburban Christians to look beyond suburbia and marshal their resources toward urban and global justice. Published by IVP Books ISBN: 10 0 8306 3334 X £14. 99

Encounter God in the City — Onramps to personal and Community Transformations by Randy White. God is at work in the city and he invites his people to join him. But the city is not merely a mission field for Christians to target. The city is also the

environment where Christians are disciplined and lives are forged into the image of Jesus. Urban ministry veteran Randy White shows how God transforms us when we answer God's call to the city. Urban life peels away our sin and self-deception and challenges our unexamined assumptions about privilege, race, class and power. Experiential discipleship moves us from abstract theory to hands-on learning and on-the-ground action, revolutionizing our perspectives and making a difference in local neighbourhoods and beyond. Passionate and practical, White's vivid narratives of experiencing God in the city show us how our spiritual health is intertwined with the health of the metropolis. Seek the welfare of the city, and both you and the city will be transformed. **Published by Likewise ISBN: 10 0 8308 3389 7**

Fundamentalism, Terrorism and the Future of Humanity by Leonardo Boff

Comprehending the profound connection between fundamentalism and terrorism is essential for an understanding of the twenty-first century. Islamic extremism has been blamed for the tragic events of September 11th, 2001, when icons of Western capitalist culture and power in New York and Washington, DC, were attacked. But other fundamentalisms exist and are found everywhere: fundamentalist rhetoric is heard in the discourses of George W Bush; fundamentalist thought and behaviour may be present in our culture, and even in some of our individual attitudes.

Boff seeks to understand and explain the phenomenon of fundamentalism, identify its causes and possible solutions. His argument, which has an ethical and political dimension, encompasses Protestant and Roman Catholic fundamentalisms, Islamic, neo-liberal and technical-scientific fundamentalism, the role of religion in world politics, and the new threat: the globalization of the enemy. **Published by SPCK ISBN: 0 281 05797 4**

Worship: Window of the Urban Church Tim Stratford (ed):

People have been getting together to look at worship in an urban context. There are many people responsible for leading worship in urban contexts and few resources for this. In urban situations big questions arise. **Published by SPCK ISBN: 0281057834 £14.99**

Doing Theology in Altab Ali Park by

Kenneth Leech Ken Leech's account of fourteen years of theological experimentation in Whitechapel. Profound, radical and urgent. **Published by DLT ISBN 0232525714 £19.99**

Mark Gospel of Action by John Vincent A stimulating collection of essays on reading Mark in the contexts of societal, community and individual transformation. Contributors include: Ched Myers, Chris Rowland and John Riches. **Published by SPCK ISBN: 0281058318 £14.99**

God's Politics — Why the American Right Gets it Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get it! by Jim Wallis

This is a prophetic book addressed primarily to an American audience but having Gordon Brown writing the preface: 'powerful reading for anyone interested in social change', it may be good for all of us to get a copy!

The book comes in six parts: 'Changing the Wind' deals with how the Christian faith is co-opted by the religious right-wing and dismissed by the secularised left, and how this situation should be both challenged and changed.

'Moving Beyond the Politics of Complaint' makes the case for prophetic politics.

'Spiritual Values and International Relations — when did Jesus become Pro-war?'

'Spiritual Values and Economic Justice — when did Jesus become Pro-rich?'

'Spiritual Values and Social Justice — when did Jesus become a Selective Moralist? **Published by Lion ISBN: 10:0 7459 5224 0. £9.99**

NOTICES

The Graham Levers Memorial Trust together with Philips Fund makes grants enabling individual young people and children at risk to attend Christian residential activities. In 2006 grants totalling £3,490 were made for 65 individuals to benefit from taking part in a variety of residential experiences. **Apply for 2007 by contacting Mrs Linda Peake, 1 Hall Close, Henham, Bishops Cleeve, Herts CM22 6AV Tel: 01279 850372.**

CUM/Salmon Centre

The centenary celebrations were held in October 2006. Bishop Michael Winney presided at this thanksgiving service. Unlock walkers will hopefully get the opportunity to visit this £9 million state of the art youth and sports complex next year. This Bermondsey centre was built with Sport England funding.

Urban Mission Development Advisor

Project Following the unanimous recommendation of the 'Further Steps' Consultation held in June 2006 it is hoped to extend this, at present joint Methodist Church/ECUM initiative, for a further three years. Funding is being sought to enable Erica Dunmow to continue this strategic work. Details of future plans as well as copies of the latest report: **UMDA, Wilson Carlile Campus, 50 Cavendish Street, Sheffield, S3 7RZ Tel: 0845 408 1842.**

Email: urbanmission@tiscali.co.uk or Contact: ECUM

**SUPPORT UNLOCK BY
RAISING FUNDING
FOR THEM BY JOINING
UNLOCK'S LONDON WALK**

YOUTH WORKS

Youthwork and Ministry Course Director African and Caribbean Evangelical Alliance: At the heart of Black Christian faith in Britain; Professional Development Day with Nadia Foster Theme: 'Slavery — The Legacy' on Saturday 3rd February 2007, 10am to 4pm, ACEA Whitefield House 186 Kennington Park Road London SE11 4BT Tel: 020 7735 7373; www.aceauk.org

'Engage' Tutor Training and Induction day Thursday 15th February 2007 at Oxford Centre for Youth Ministries

10:30-3.30 pm (tea and coffee served from 10.00am) facilitated by Jo Pimlott, Assistant Director, Midlands Centre for Youth Ministry cost £25 including lunch and refreshments during the day (concessions available for CYM Regional Centre Tutors)

Contact: Lynda Whitehead, Oxford Centre for Youth Ministry on tel. 01865 204999 or email: oxford@centreforyouthministry.ac.uk

CTE would like to sponsor 5 young people to attend the 31st German Protestant Kirchentag, from 6-10 June in Cologne.

The young people need to be between the ages of 18-25. All costs will be covered; however, for commitment purposes we are asking for a £100 refundable deposit to be made. If there are any young people you can think of who would benefit from attending **Contact: Carole Golden, Project Administrator for the Opps for Vols Grant Scheme Churches Together in England 27 Tavistock Sq, London WC1H 9HH Tel:+44 (0)20 7529 8133 Fax: +44 (0)20 7529 8134**

ACTION REQUIRED NOW! Green Paper on Employment Law! — We need to respond to the EU

As many of you will know the European Commission has published a Green Paper on Employment Law. This paper invites responses from all 'stakeholders' by the end of March this year. The Commission will publish its Communication on Employment Law in June or July of this year.

This is a critical issue about the protection and improvement of working conditions! The website shows that the Green Paper has met with negative reactions from some quarters, notably employer's organizations. It is therefore important that networks respond about situation of the most disadvantaged when labour conditions are reduced.

National and local members of ECG, may be making a response but it is important to make a response on behalf of international ECG.

We need to represent the special interests of our constituencies. **Contact: European Contact Group (ECG)**

CREATIVE ACCOUNTING

— A Personal Reflection by Alastair Cameron

I am known — I can't claim loved — in my family circle for my ranting tendencies. There are few subjects on which I find myself unqualified to offer vehement opinions, usually identifying the malign influence of consumer capitalism on the topic in question.

One such rant was on the subject of art students. Of my parents' 10 grandchildren, no fewer than five study, or plan to study, art — including two of my own three children. What, I demanded petulantly, did the world need so many art students for? Doesn't a Scotland on its way to becoming smarter and more successful, the best wee country in a big bad world, need plumbers and engineers rather than airy-fairy sculptors and canvas-daubers? (Given art students' notorious inability to make money, I was having trouble weaving the evils of consumerism into this one...)

Fortunately, I have friends who don't let me get away with much. Helen, a working artist herself, gave as good as I was handing out — and with a good deal more substance. She had after all thought about the subject, which gives her a bit of an unfair advantage.

It's a good all-round education, she said. They don't just learn how to slap the paint on; they find out about different media — photography, tapestry, jewellery. Some of these are quite productive in their own right — look at what Ortak in Orkney and Colin Baxter in Grantown do for the economy.

They learn about design — and what would the plumbers and engineers have to work with if no-one had taken the trouble to design their tools and provide them with plans. And above all, they learn how to work creatively. They're not going to be tied to targets and performance indicators, skillsets and strategy outcomes; they are going to add a dimension of creativity to Scottish life. Which it could well do with.

So now I'm converted. After all, another of my standard rants is about how the world of targets and skillsets and strategy outcomes is getting in the way of the real business of actually getting things done to improve the lot of the average Scot. The Executive and the Parliament are capable of coming up with creative approaches, but there is a danger of getting bogged down in the detail of implementation.

Take the field in which I work: homelessness. It took imagination to set a target that by 2012, there would effectively be an end to homelessness in Scotland. It has taken political courage (by no less than five successive Communities Ministers since 1999) to achieve that position, and to hold to it. It has demanded conviction in challenging the culture of blame and prejudice faced by people becoming homeless — not just among the general public, but among councillors, landlords and others whose decisions make a real impact on homeless people.

The devolution settlement has without doubt delivered a creative response to a problem that Scotland had for too long swept under its carpet of respectability. But now we're well into the implementation

phase of this ambitious project, I'm wondering whether the spirit that gives the objective its life might be in danger of getting swamped by the letter of the strategy designed to bring it about. There are 32 individual homelessness strategies — one for each local authority. Each has its action plans, and then there are the joint health and homelessness strategies with the health authorities; and the employability programmes; and the drug and alcohol protocols.

It becomes increasingly hard for hard-pressed strategists to remember that behind all the paperwork are real, suffering lives. The homeless people on whose behalf they are working come at the end of a long chain of documents, project evaluations, funding proposals and local outcome agreements. Working in front of computer screens, some of us see no more of homeless people than our counterparts in finance offices or insurance companies.

For a strategic approach to be effective, of course, objectives have to be shared — and how do you share them other than on paper? Each new area of work requires a new set of contacts — and how better to communicate than by setting up another liaison committee? So the strategy paraphernalia are necessary, but are they enough? Constant report-writing drains the soul, and we need to be in touch with our creative side to recharge the batteries.

In Glasgow, a group of people living in hostels has established 'Unheard Voices', a drama venture bringing stories of life on the streets to those who would not otherwise hear them. They are supported by 'Glasgow Homelessness Network' and '7:84 Theatre Company', and have performed, among other places, in the Scottish Parliament itself. In Perth, the literacy project of 'Church Action for the Homeless' has produced a book of writing by homeless people. In Edinburgh, young people at the 'Rock Trust' put on an impressive exhibition of photos giving an alternative view of life in the capital.

What all these activities have in common, besides their demonstration of creativity, is that they are on the margins of homelessness strategy. They are funded from the left-overs (and it looks as if 7:84 itself will not be with us for much longer).

The strategies are about roofs over heads, support systems, routes into jobs, bums on seats. When it comes to involvement of homeless people they are much less specific, and on releasing the creativity of homeless people, they are silent.

Creative Scotland — it has a ring to it. Let's make sure it isn't just the name of a new quango. Let's encourage Parliament in all aspects of its activities to seek out and foster the creative and the imaginative. And then I'll start my next campaign — to get ranting recognised as an art form.

Alastair Cameron works for the Scottish Churches Housing Action (This article first appeared in the Scottish Churches Social Inclusion Network Bulletin April 06, and is reproduced with permission).

Urban Mission Development Advisor

It is two and a bit years since I was appointed as Urban Mission Development Advisor co-sponsored by ECUM and the Methodist Church on behalf of an ad hoc consortium of a further 23 Christian agencies and denominational bodies with an interest in urban mission. A regular report to the Project sponsors is made and annually to a wider group. Here's a chance to find out what I've been doing.

My main tasks are to:

- Encourage joined-up working, both within our towns and cities and across the UK
- Improve the flow of information (especially funding and government policy) to local urban mission practitioners
- Broadening education and training for lay and ordained people in required skills

Much of my time has been spent supporting the development of networks in the Yorkshire & Humber Region and Wales, whilst also regularly travelling to Scotland to keep in touch.

The 'Faithful Cities' Report has much useful information on the contribution that people of all faiths make in our towns, making a powerful call for the churches to maintain their urban presence, work on more joined-up funding developing richer training programmes, and posing challenges to the wider world about young people's spirituality, combating poverty and injustice, particularly in the asylum system. I've been working to encourage people to use the Report (www.culf.org.uk). I convened a symposium of a wide range of training providers for lay people in Nov 06. The event's report will help to raise the profile of the availability of imaginative independent and college-based courses.

There's work to be done to the Report's understanding of Christian mission, and in particular, evangelism. This is all done against a background of regular conversation with national Christian social action, community development and urban mission agencies, as well as the denominational urban staff (See page 11: A Bishop for Urban Life and Faith).

One of the great encouragements seen over the last 5-10 years is a greater commitment to joined-up working, from all parts of the Christian community: 'Wired Up', the Churches Regional Commissions, local 'Together in Mission' initiatives, Gweini, 'Hope 2008', 'Just Church' and the new 'Joint Public Issues Group' of the Baptist, Methodist and United Reformed Churches are all different outworkings of this, as well as local pieces of shared 'Kingdom' practice. A job that seemed huge when I started has become as much about uncovering and joining up what the Spirit is already inspiring. There is still more to be done to build bridges between some parts of some traditions and to continue the work of reconciliation and generous partnership, but I continue to be encouraged by the tenacious heart that many have to follow in Jesus' pattern of commitment to both meeting the practical and spiritual needs of the people and challenging the systems that oppress.

Erica Dunmow

Made in the image of God

— A story from the streets

There has been much debate over prostitution in recent weeks after the horrific recent events in Ipswich and people are keen to come up with an easy solution. The reality however is much more complex and we need to remember we are talking about vulnerable individuals and not a distant concept or political stance.

Some people have gone to great lengths to suggest there is a huge difference between trafficking and prostitution but the reality for the majority of people involved in street-based prostitution does not reflect this. As we reflect on recent events, we must ask ourselves whether prostitution is really a victimless crime.

Violence, verbal abuse and rape are all too common and despite what the proponents for legalising prostitution would like us to believe, we must look further than a simple change to the laws. One of the women who worked in Ipswich was quoted as saying, "Everyone has the same past. I can't name one girl who likes the job."

The truth behind the apparent quick fix pill of legalisation shows individuals often desperate for support.

The National Christian Alliance on Prostitution (NCAP) works with over 40 different projects who work with people involved in prostitution across the

UK. These projects engage with over 4,000 individuals involved in street prostitution and the stories commonly heard on the streets are those of limited choice and exploitation.

As we take time to reflect, we must conclude that action needs to be taken to protect some of the most vulnerable in our midst. Instead of campaigning for legalisation, there is a need to actively develop more prevention programmes such as those that have been run by affiliated projects in Walsall and Norwich.

The recent Government consultation on prostitution concluded that effective routes out were needed and that the work of outreach and support services were vital. Although no extra funding has been released, hundreds of church volunteers go out each week to offer non-judgmental support and provide an essential message of hope to those in need. This was something that was picked up in a recent article in *The Times* and the Church was commended for 'the gentle affirmation of the human value of the lowest and most desperate lives.'

Perhaps an area of justice with which we can all engage is to ensure we give dignity to both those who have died and all who are involved in prostitution. It has been interesting to see the debate that has

occurred around the labelling of the victims as 'prostitutes' and it is one that must go on. The women we know are not 'prostitutes', they are people and the Bible tells us each one is precious and made in the image of God. There is a huge amount of stigma associated with prostitution and this is an area the Church can take a lead in. Each woman created an individual – a daughter, sister, sometimes also a wife and a mother.

A key element of NCAP's work is to speak out for those exploited by prostitution and to champion opportunities for those affected.

To seek justice, we cannot be silent and need to ensure we tackle this issue together.

NCAP have recently produced materials for Churches to reflect on how they can engage and to ensure there is more understanding of this complex issue. If this is an issue that affects your congregation or locality please contact us on ncap@ncapuk.org.

Mark Wakeling

Mark is Director of the National Christian Alliance on Prostitution.
NCAP is a Registered Charity, No.1099006

Story from the edge

HOPE — Stories from the road

Tim Evans (Worth Unlimited) and Dave Wiles (Frontier Youth Trust)

Tim and Dave spent the week on the road together, with only £10.00 in their pocket; with no plans, no hotels, no transport and some would say no sense. They did this in order to collect stories of hope from young people on the street as a sponsored activity to establish the youth led 'Talent — Young People in Action Trust Fund'

'For five days we travelled between Bristol, Cardiff, Birmingham and Liverpool with no resources or arrangements other than contact with several local youth work projects, radio stations and £10! We see this as an alternative model for Christian leaders to promote their ideas – a substitute for large scale Christian PR campaigns!

We walked from the railway station praying that God would be in our journey and that we would be able to make a small contribution to challenging what we perceive to be a 'dominant narrative' about young people that is rooted in suspicion, fear, generalisations and stereotypes.

Neither of us are naive about young people's potential to behave 'badly'. However bad behaviour is not the full story and we wanted to make a contribution to sharing something of the more positive side of young people by listening to their stories

and sharing them with a wider audience. We very nearly missed our first opportunity to listen to young people as we passed a large group enjoying their cigarette break. However, we crossed the road to explain our journey and to ask for their help in collecting our first story....

The group we spoke with were cautious to begin with — two middle aged guys approaching them out of the blue! However, the initial caution turned into very real supportive interest in our journey. We chatted about their training: here was a group of young people engaging in the government's agenda for education and employment. They were warm, welcoming and communicative despite the fact that some of them may have been labelled as 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEET) by government definitions. Their thoughts about hope were interesting and each of them spoke about the way they and their friends looked after each other, especially when alcohol was involved. On the one hand it is important to express concern about binge drinking and the associated short and long term risks it presents young people, on the other hand it is also important to remember that this is not the whole story, these young people had all been involved with supporting and looking after their friends when they had used too much alcohol. They had patted the backs of their friends whilst they vomited in toilets and sinks and even cleaned up when the target was missed!

The young people wished us well on our

journey and waved us goodbye... After 15 minutes of conversation we left the young people and it occurred to us that these youngsters may well have been seen as a gang of threatening youth by us and others at times — yet here they were providing us with a positive, respectful and sincere response. We also reflected that whilst often reading about binge drinking in the press we had not noticed any articles about young people looking after each other when they were drunk.

We moved on to St. Paul's, a district of Bristol with a notorious image, famous for the riots in the 1980's. Here we visited the One25 project which works with women involved in street prostitution, supporting them to make positive choices about their lives, often helping some of the most vulnerable young women in our society escape from abuse and addiction.

We heard several stories of young women sending cards of thanks, describing lives now involving stable, loving relationships. To show how even lives that seem positive from the outside can so easily be destroyed was the story of a young woman who, whilst completing her 'A' levels, became addicted to heroin. In order to feed her habit she began to work the streets but now thanks to the project she has turned her life back on course.

Anne was a young woman who had a baby at 15. Unfortunately her

relationship with her family broke down resulting in her leaving home without her child. As with so many, a drug habit saw her dragged into the world of prostitution to pay for it and a couple of spells at Her Majesty's pleasure followed. Eventually she met outreach workers from One25 on the street.

Through a process of relationship building, being encouraged and challenged about her life she gradually came to see that things could be different. Not long ago the team were invited to a family party to celebrate her being reunited with her daughter and reconciled to her wider family as well as being in a stable relationship and generally putting her life back together. At the party she remarked to the workers that Psalm 23 (which they had given to her), was the thing that she held onto whilst in prison.

We asked the workers at One25 how they felt about their work. "It is our privilege to reach out to women trapped in their lifestyles and addictions, outworking our mission by offering friendship, practical support and help. Transformed lives may not be commonplace but we see genuine change occurring in the face of failure, heartache and trauma that encourages us to keep going." One of the volunteers voiced the feelings of many. "Working with the women and volunteers of One25 is uplifting, enlightening, frustrating, uncomfortable – but most of all it is a real privilege to share life with these vulnerable women."

Please read about the rest of our journey in "HOPE: Stories from the road".

Meanwhile, you might like to consider a couple of questions: how does your youth work respond to the most vulnerable young people in your area? How do you ensure you stay in touch with those who are on the edge?

Tim Evans and Dave Wiles

This is an extract from their write up of the event, a full copy is available from Frontier Youth Trust (www.fyt.org.uk).

A neighbour conversion

As part of a cricket-mad household I am always thrilled to see the joyful figure of Monty Panesar whenever he has beaten one of the Aussies at the crease. His dancing feet and bright eyes gives me a lift every time I see him. What a contrast with some of the people I have met in the past 20 years or so whose eyes seem emptied of joy by devastating events in their lives.

I have long believed that being alongside people who have been through the most appalling experiences is the only way to be Jesus to those on the edge of society and life. I believe that it is right and good to develop a prayerful communion with God that will keep me in peace and wisdom when, in all my own failings, I attempt to walk alongside desperate and damaged people and enter their hell with them. I learned so much from reading Ken Leech's

book 'The Eye of the Storm' especially when he recalls his ministry in Soho where, 'confronted by so many people and such desperate needs, and increasingly conscious of my own impotence, the descent into hell began to make sense'. But not all church folk value this kind of commitment to care; some see it as a pressure they can well do without.

"What we need in this Church are more normal people", someone said to me.

"Well, don't look at me; I am far from normal", I replied.

"What I mean to say is, we need more members who don't have **problems**", was the response.

"You're talking to the wrong person then; I am full of 'em! I have more in common with the folk in the problem stakes than with problem-free people."

"Well, what I mean is, we need more people in the church who don't have **so many** problems . . ."

I can understand these feelings; some folk become worn out with caring for others. But as long as this attitude persists people will continue to be alone and lost. I believe the major frustration lies in the way carers perceive others. The impatience of not seeing speedy remedies: quick prayer and all pain gone! We live in a world of quick-fixes, but God's way is not always instant solutions to life-long heartaches and damage. We need to stop seeing people as 'problems' and instead see them as God's individual creations to be valued, loved, and treasured. Being alongside vulnerable people is a God-given privilege.

We will learn nothing if we ignore what is going on in the big wide world. One sniff at some of the research going the rounds at present will probably cause a sharp intake of breath. It reveals not only the devastation in people's lives but also the injustice that not only damages but can destroy people's well-being and wholeness.

A recent piece of research estimated that one in every four women in the U.S. had known some form of abuse as a child. If you're wondering why the research says little about men, it is because men do not readily disclose their horrors, but they suffer them just the same. Just think about the impact this must have on communities and on society as a whole. Horrified? I certainly was. "Well of course it's not like that here in Britain." Isn't it?

Many women in Britain no longer publicly 'disclose' because of the fallout that disclosure among their family and friends. They dread being labelled and patronised by a person with a lofty attitude. They may also fear that they may be identified as probable abusers themselves. Again, it is much harder to gather statistics for men due to their silence. Sometimes the pain and stress that exists in men who have been abused presents itself with stress-related illnesses.

At a recent conference a worker with adult survivors observed that abuse is no respecter of class. The fact that people do survive and are still breathing air is a miracle in itself, but sadly there are many who cannot live with the horror of what they have endured.

Children who 'disclose' risk either not

being believed or having their fragile lives turned still further upside down.

According to Frank Puttnam's research, it is far better for children to be 'found out' than for them to tell their story because of the inevitable aftermath. Children turn to 'Childline' in their thousands as the major talking space because they feel safe and comfortable where there is no direct threat to themselves or their families.

The incidence of young people having suffered as children being treated for mental health conditions and drug abuse is now growing at an alarming rate. Support workers told me that they are often unsure if the drugs are causing mental health difficulties or whether young people are taking drugs to alleviate mental suffering. Whatever the underlying cause the picture is truly heartbreaking.

There are now more African-Caribbean men in our prisons suffering from mental illness than white counterparts. What is this statistic actually saying? I recently had the privilege of meeting a psychologist working in a youth offenders establishment. He maintains there is an ever-increasing number of offenders who should never have been put in prison. They are there because their culture has been misunderstood by those assessing them; their noisy, outgoing attitude mistaken for psychological instability. Many have suffered childhood abuse. They have consequently been wrongly identified as a 'danger to society'.

Drug taking among our young people is rapidly rising. A recent DoH survey recorded that 28% of our young people are known to be taking drugs daily. These figures also show rising numbers of young people, especially teenage boys, committing suicide and a growing number of girls who are self-harming. The pain and despair of so many of our young people should never be ignored.

I am always left asking two basic questions: 'What is at the heart of these problems?' and 'How do we begin to help?' These questions have continued to direct my ministry since the first damaged person stepped over my council house threshold over twenty years ago, to unburden themselves.

As someone who for many years had a home that was more like a 'drop-in' centre for so-called 'problem people' or as seems to be the buzz word these days, people with 'issues', as: (boy, how I hate that term!) — I found so many treasures; wonderful, talented, creative people who had been all but destroyed by what life had thrown at them and often by what well-meaning people had flung at them! They were physically, emotionally and spiritually on their knees, needing someone to listen to them so they could get their grief out of their heads. Since marrying Stephen I share this ministry with him. We have a joint conviction that people are very special creations of our Lord of whom it is written 'A bruised reed he will not break, and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out (Isaiah 42:3). We make ourselves available to all-comers, problem-ridden or issue-ridden! We offer

long-term listening and caring in addition to going the extra mile when necessary. That has led us into some murky waters, taking on officials within Social Services, CAFCAS, the Home Office and various other archaic institutions along the way!

Being afraid and looking the other way or casting judgement is meaningless. Even if you cannot go down this road of longterm caring you could support others who work in this ministry by building partnerships, praying for support workers and helping to fund their work. Find people in your church and neighbourhoods who have that grace and desire to walk alongside people at the sharp end, and alongside them! There are some amazing people and agencies such as Frontier Youth Trust who need our support so they can support others. Don't make excuses. Get involved!

Gustavo Gutierrez, generally regarded as the founder of Liberation Theology, spoke beautifully of God's commitment not only to rescue the poor, but to 'convert us' to them, so that we, like God, stand alongside them. I long to be ever more 'converted to my neighbour' and to identify myself with humankind not so much by caring just for the ones I meet as I go through life, but rather for the ones I seek out. The neighbour who most mediates the presence of God, as Gutierrez says, is 'not the one I find in my path, but rather the one in whose path I place myself'.

Ann Weatherly-Barton

'The Eye of the Storm' by Ken Leech published by Darton Longman Todd
'Towards the Recovery of a Lost Bequest' by Roger Dowley' ECUM
'The Messiah Papers' by Jim Punton ECUM
'Essential Writings' by Gustavo Gutierrez SCM

What makes a book prophetic?

Provocative, thoughtful, even prophetic' (Lauren F. Winner). 'A prophetic new voice that will stir your soul' (Dr. John Perkins). I'm shuffling a little stack of books that I promised the Editor I would read and review in double quick time. I'm glancing at the promotional soundbites on the covers, and before I even open one of them I'm thinking 'What really makes a book prophetic?'

Take Albert Y. Hsu's 'The Suburban Christian', for instance. Dare I even mention in 'Urban Bulletin' a book subtitled 'Finding Spiritual Vitality in the Land of Plenty'?! And yet Hsu points out with disturbing insight how urban renewal and gentrification in growing cities are increasingly dislocating poor urban communities and urban blight is becoming suburban blight. Likewise immigrant families with multi-generational households are buying suburban homes and challenging isolationist Western models of family life. So whilst much of this book deals, as you would expect, with issues of radical discipleship in a consumer driven society, Hsu sets this in

the context of a prophetic understanding of how cities will develop, and a call for suburban Christians to be committed to the whole city, and to fight for justice, compassion and systemic change.

Kevin Blue's 'Practical Justice' is most certainly rooted in the city. The author has spent his adult life ministering in the heart of Los Angeles, and now leads a multi-ethnic church and undertakes urban training. His book is unpretentious; chapter topics are predictable (4 – Giving a man a fish; 5 – Teaching a man to fish; 6 – Fixing the pond); some will probably think he says nothing new. But what I like about Kevin Blue is the simple way he allows his life, experience, and Godly common sense to speak as loudly as his words. 'It is far more personal to give a piece of clothing that is yours than to write a cheque to an organization whose staff you have never met to serve a person you will never meet'. It is a book about practical discipleship by a man whose life is prophetic.

Randy White is a better writer than Kevin Blue, but equally committed to answering God's call to the city. 'His neighbours are his teachers', says Ray Bakke in a thoughtful introduction to White's 'Encounter God in the City', 'and this book models what we might call mission in reverse. The community is teacher; he is the learner' Randy White tells of the impact made by a meeting in England with two New Zealand missionaries who were working in appalling conditions in a squatter settlement in Manila. 'You must be amazing people', he remarked, when they showed him pictures of their work. 'Nah Randy', they replied, 'we just found where Jesus lived and moved in with him'. But Randy White has clearly moved in with Jesus too, and hears his voice in a kaleidoscope of people and situations – Kundara, the little Cambodian girl sitting at his piano; Napoleon, the pony-tailed gangster who loved to discuss history and politics; Raymond, the drink-ravaged tramp who dressed as Zorro and had loud arguments with a tree; Luma, the Indian girl who lived in a bleak Calcutta slum but whose 'bright eyes and wide smile radiated the image of God'. The author reflects on how the many faces and voices of the city have stirred and changed him. Don't read this book if you don't like to be moved, and don't want to be changed.

Leonardo Boff is a Brazilian who has done much to call attention to the plight of the poor at home and abroad. An early advocate of Liberation Theology he has dared to challenge his Roman Catholic hierarchy, and has been investigated by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith ('the ancient Inquisition', he dryly observes). Look at the end of his book 'Fundamentalism, Terrorism and the Future of Humanity' and you may be disappointed by a rather anaemic future hope which perhaps owes more to a mix of Darwinism with Teilhard de Chardin than to biblical foundations. But the heart of the book is a searing analysis of Protestant, Catholic, Islamic and even scientific fundamentalism. In a series of short,

explosive chapters Boff also draws startling parallels between the political fundamentalism of Bush and Bin Laden. He warns that the obsessive commitment to fighting terror with terror could eventually lead to attempts to discredit those who would counter terrorism by liberating and giving a voice to the poor and the oppressed. 'We already know the consequences of such branding: surveillance, kidnapping, torture and assassination...a lair of snakes has been created, and these snakes grow, multiply and can now give a deadly bite on a global level.' He startlingly but persuasively cites St. Francis of Assisi as 'the patron saint of dialogue with Muslims', and proposes the Franciscan path to dialogue as the only real hope of progress. If you would speak, or preach, or pray effectively in the context of global terrorism I would urge you to read this radical analysis.

So what does make a book prophetic? Maybe to write a definitive answer to that question would be to confine and quench the Spirit of God. Maybe it is better to read books like these with an open heart and just be prepared for God to speak.

Reviewer: Stephen Weatherly-Barton

The Suburban Christian by Albert Y. Hsu.
Published by IVP
Encounter God in the City by Randy White.
Published by IVP
Fundamentalism, Terrorism and the Future of Humanity by Leonardo Boff
Published by SPCK
Practical Justice by Kevin Blue
Published by Likewise

Global warming hits the poor NAIROBI (Reuters)

The world's poor, who are the least responsible for global warming, will suffer the most from climate change, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told environment ministers from around the world on Monday.

'The degradation of the global environment continues unabated ... and the effects of climate change are being felt across the globe...But it is the poor, in Africa and developing small island states and elsewhere, who will suffer the most, even though they are the least responsible for global warming.'

Experts say Africa is the lowest emitter of the greenhouse gases blamed for rising temperatures, but due to its poverty, under-development and geography, has the most to lose under dire predictions of wrenching change in weather patterns.

Desertification round the Sahara and the shrinking of Mount Kilimanjaro's snow-cap have become potent symbols in Africa of the global environment crisis. U.N. environment agencies have been lobbying Ban to play a leading role in the hunt for a successor to the Kyoto Protocol on cutting greenhouse gases, which expires in 2012.

'Our spiritual pilgrimage is not within an artificial religious world, but within the real world in which coal is mined and lemon meringue pie is made, the world in which companies are taken over and homeless people die on the streets, the world in which wars are declared and millions long for peace and for justice'
— Ken Leech

'The Eye of the Storm' by Ken Leech
published by Darton Longman Todd

REVIEWS

Faithful Cities — the report of the commission on urban life and faith

It is just over 20 years since the publication of Faith in the City and much has changed, economically, socially, politically and technologically. A report I produced as a submission to the 1985 Commission filled 24 plain text files and two floppy disks on my first home computer (an old BBC model B). The new report with lots of full colour pictures is downloadable as a pdf file on a broadband internet connection in less than a minute. (A 1985 reader would not even have recognised most of those words). The political climate has changed so that the government does not brief against the church for producing "naive Marxist" documents though the epithet "mildly socialist" as one newspaper dubbed Faithful Cities is just as caustic, and likely to locate it at the margins in (post-) Blairite Britain.

My own generation of urban mission practitioners who were the vanguard in 1985 are now the establishment. Those in our networks who were young inner city vicars, community workers, aspiring local councillors or housing academics in 1985 are now bishops, professors and members of the Commission, and in at least one case a cabinet minister. Meanwhile the striking miners of the 1980s, if they have not already died of industrial diseases are more likely to be shelf stackers, van drivers or call centre workers about to be replaced by cheaper Indian competitors. And who would have predicted 10 years of a "Labour" government, full employment and prosperity or the emergence of the mythical Polish plumber.

Much in the new report is good, even excellent, and minor flaws in proof reading and the mis-attribution of quotations, though they irritated me as someone with some insider knowledge of the sources, would not be noticed by the general reader, and do not detract from the overall thrust.

The social analysis, appears well founded and it is clear that among the Commissioners were people who had studied the evidence and appreciated the significance of recent social change, locally and globally. The theological underpinning expressed in accessible language rooted in the Biblical texts is much stronger than in FITC which seemed

to rely on one verse from Paul's letter to the Galatians, "remember the poor". As a result the critique of mainstream policy and culture is more transparently Christian (or faith based) rather than implicit nostalgic support for the post war welfare state which weakened the 1985 report.

The analysis of urban regeneration and the issues of partnership between faith and state is high on the agenda and the key issues are thoroughly discussed. Nothing is very surprising here to me as a practitioner and researcher in the area, but it must be helpful for the arguments to be articulated to new audiences with the authority of a major church commission behind them. I am however rather sceptical that they will succeed in shifting anything much to the benefit of grass roots organisations and inner city communities given the institutional and political inertia that prevents the freeing up of systems and thinking out of the box, other than by way of small pilot projects, from which we have suffered enough. "Died of a surfeit of projects" would be a sad epitaph for the urban church.

The commission is forthright and radical in its analysis of issues of poverty and exclusion while on issues of asylum and race, it comes close to being prophetic. It confronts the xenophobic hysteria of the mass media and popular culture, on the basis of experience of faithful groups who have personal experience of working for and with asylum seekers, refugees and new migrants. The commission has more courage here than the government, who have constantly been swayed to the right for fear of losing votes, or in Frank Field's view to silence over an issue of genuine popular concern which could increase support for neo nazi parties.

Where then do I see weakness in the report, which like most committees designed by a faithful camel is bound to be a curate's egg! The first is a question of social theory, the second of theology and mission.

The concept Faithful Capital has been introduced in this report as an extension of the conceptual framework of social capital which is so popular today with policy makers and draws heavily on the work of American social scientist Robert Putnam. Clearly the authors of Faithful Cities are familiar with the academic debates, the distinctions that have been made between bonding, bridging and linking forms of social capital, and to the alternative less functionalist formulation of the social capital concept by Bourdieu. For Bourdieu social capital is one of many forms of capital (economic, cultural, human, religious etc) which can be deployed by individuals and groups in the arena of social conflict and political struggle, rather than the magic glue which holds society together as suggested by Putnam and his communitarian followers.

A recent report from the William Temple Foundation appears to be a stepping stone towards the notion of Faithful Capital in that Chris Baker and Hannah Skinner distinguish between spiritual capital (the motivations and spiritualities which drive individuals and groups towards collective

worship and social action) and religious capital which consists of the social norms, rituals, relationships and institutional structures which equip faith communities for social involvement and political relevance.

Here I think they are following Bourdieu's approach and legitimately extending his idea of different forms of capital into another social field (another of Bourdieu's key concepts).

'Faithful Capital' on the other hand, while good for a sound byte, and for connecting a policy report into a government policy agenda seems to be introducing a normative moral adjective to the idea of capital, presenting it alongside Putnam's social capital as a self evidently 'good thing' for the peaceful and cohesive management of society. While Christians can accept that work towards community cohesion resonates with our prayers for the shalom of our cities, one fears that too great an emphasis in this direction could lead into captivity to the rulers of a Babylon who are only interested in co-opting the good guys and their prayers to their own populist political agendas. There is a danger that in time of crisis we could become the prophets who cry "peace, peace when there is no peace". To be fair to the commissioners they do explore some of these issues and on some policy points are not swayed by the majoritarian consensus. However, I think the point remains that the concept of faithful capital is a rather shaky foundation. It is (puns intended) a bridge too far, in danger of leaving us in bondage, chained by iron links forged by those in power.

The second big problem of Faithful Cities, which may be crucial for its impact in the urban church is the almost complete silence about evangelism and congregational life. While one understands CULF could not cover everything the decision not to deal with this area, which was implicit in the terms of reference for the Commission is in my view a strategic mistake. I discern three important consequences:

1. Many clergy and more believers in congregations will dismiss the report without opening it, as they see the whole point of faith as souls in heaven and bums on pews. Those with a more rounded view of holistic mission will be greatly disappointed that a key area of mission has been virtually ignored and may feel that the social and spiritual seem to have been put asunder.
2. While the emphasis on public theology is excellent there remains a serious theological question about what is the gospel and who is it for, in the midst of increasingly diverse urban life. Especially how is the gospel of Christ life-transforming, in a personal way today for the poor and marginalised, as well as for the comfortably off. Christian discipleship must be more than a pseudo ethnic affiliation or a mere consumer choice in the hypermarket of spiritualities and religious cultures on offer.
3. There is a serious institutional question, ultimately about the survival of the CofE,

and indeed of every form of institutional church, unless congregational life can thrive and flourish in urban priority areas. The short term numerical boost begotten of migration from the South (of the world) may not last. In any case it is doing little to stem the decline and ageing of the main denominations, especially in the more mono-cultural housing estates and town centres of the North (of England), or even in the affluent suburbs. There are a few bright spots in thriving and growing UPA parishes and some hope of new life and new expressions of the church in the charismatic and independent streams, with examples of urban engagement as with the Eden project in Manchester. 'Faithful Cities' would have been a more complete report if it had showcased more such case studies, analysed their achievements and drawn lessons from evident success.

Reviewer: Greg Smith

Robert Beckford. Jesus Dub: Theology, Music and Social Change Published by Routledge ISBN 0415310199 £17.99

Robert Beckford has become a familiar commentator on black religion and culture in Britain. His television programmes and his books display a determination to present a radical re-reading of black religious experience that draws on post-colonial and critical theory, alongside his personal experience of Pentecostal church life from a second generation perspective. In *Jesus Dub*, Beckford begins by exploring the two spaces of music in Caribbean culture – the church and the dance hall. For many these represent two incompatible spaces but Beckford identifies a constant crossing of boundaries in their use and development of sound systems, the grounding of many black musicians in the gospel tradition, the spontaneous deconstruction and reconstruction of word and music, as well as the roles and dialogical approach of DJ and preacher. Both settings represent countercultural possibilities where new identities are forged, and the prospect of individual and community transformation is offered.

'Dub' happens when a DJ manipulates a musical track. It is in dub that the creativity of the DJ is tested, as music is deconstructed to an instrumental or overlaid with additional vocals, poetry or chat. There are echoes of the clever trickster of the Anancy stories ready with a riddle or up for an argument. The audience as interlocutors are always part of the act of production. To dub is to recreate what is heard, what is understood and what is practised. Dub poets – such as Linton Kwesi Johnston manipulate words with a playfulness that create new possibilities of meaning, for example 'diaspora' becomes 'die-as poor-ya'.

Beckford brings dub into the word-sound-power world of the black church and finds a new possibility of praxis rooted in worship that is not afraid of the political consequences of faith. Beckford wants the theology and worship of black churches to dub with the social and cultural challenges

he sees facing the African Caribbean community in Britain. 'When "Jesus dubs", those on the margins are enabled to tear down the walls that exclude and rebuild and fashion things so that all people are free from the ravages of oppression.' Beckford offers a dub hermeneutic with examples of Jesus encounters with women in John's gospel. To the accusers in John 8, Jesus 'offers a dub version of the law and reworks it so that its core elements are reconstructed'.

Using the notion of 'dub tongues' Beckford moves from glossolalia to heteroglossia, a socio-political pneumatology that enables people of faith to bring the liberating power and word of the Spirit into their real life experience. Beckford tests this approach as he dubs the prosperity theology, prevalent in African Caribbean churches, with a radical emancipation ethic which takes seriously global economic disparities and the crisis experienced by the third-generation African Caribbean youth.

While the response of the community from which Beckford writes is not always clear there are, as with Beckford's other writings, clear challenges for those who minister within predominantly black congregations to extend their awareness of popular expressive culture as a vehicle of transformation for all communities.

Reviewer: Andrew Davey

(This review originally appeared in Church Times and is reproduced with permission)

Mark Gospel of Action — personal and community responses
Ed: John J Vincent Published by SPCK
ISBN 0281058318 £14.99

There is a good reason not to read *Mark, Gospel of Action — personal and community responses* (SPCK 2006) for the writers of this pithy and engaging book themselves admit that the outcome of their method of bible study can create very uncomfortable challenges. Here, a group of committed scholars and practitioners approach Mark's gospel and seek to develop a new method of bible study — which John Vincent, the book's editor, calls 'practice interpretation' — and you start down that path at a cost.

We're told that Mark is not written to impart information but to call hearers to action — to actualise the text. So this Bible method is not one which tells us how to use Mark's gospel so much as how to find ways of letting it use us.

After a brief introduction to this approach the group take turns to offer essays, both from personal and political points of view, of how Mark has challenged them.

An outstanding essay from Mary Cotes on women in Mark ends by reminding us that culture will make us so conform to stereotypes of ourselves that we may fail to fulfil our true vocation. Christine Joynes makes reception criticism remind us of the limitations of any single reading and Ched Myers offers Mark 13 as a very timely theology for times of 'war fever'. Chris

Burdon challenges even our most radical thoughts about leadership in the Jesus community while Andrew Parker conjures with a Jesus who refuses to be the initiating controller of destinies but who uses parables to expose from the bottom what is going on at the top. And around each essay is the sense of a writer struggling to be honest about our culture, Mark's story of Jesus action, and our actions in consequence.

The Gospel of Mark has been 'appropriated' by the scribes of today but must be given back to people of committed action. When we finish reading this book we come away knowing it's up to us to write the next chapter. Uncomfortable — but essential.

Reviewer: Laurie Green

(This review originally appeared on the URBLOG website and is reproduced with permission.)

A Bishop for Urban Life and Faith

Stephen Lowe, Bishop of Hulme, has been appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York to be Bishop for Urban Life and Faith. In this new role Stephen will be responsible for following up many of the threads of the Faithful Cities report, as well as promoting the training and profile of urban mission. He has experience of a number of urban contexts as a parish priest, archdeacon and bishop in Birmingham, East London, Sheffield and Manchester.

Bishop Stephen will work with the Church of England's national adviser on urban affairs, the Rev Dr Andrew Davey, as well as advisers to the Archbishops and staff of the National Church Institutions, to develop a national strategy for urban mission. He will remain as chair of the Urban Bishops Panel of the House of Bishops.

Bishop Stephen says: "I am delighted to take up this challenge. I have spent all my ministry in urban areas and know how important it is for congregations and clergy to feel that the joys and problems they face are understood by the wider church and nation.

"Faithful Cities provides an agenda for nation and church about creating 'the good city'. I hope that my appointment will give some additional energy to the mission of the Church in urban areas in partnership with dioceses, parishes, other Christian denominations and other faiths. I also hope that we can engage government, local, regional and national, about the values that should be found in urban regeneration."

STOP PRESS

Making Poverty History at Home

In a new pamphlet, published by the Christian Socialist Movement, David Lammy poses the question: In terms of raising awareness and mobilising support Make Poverty History was one of the most successful campaigns ever. But can the passion and commitment it harnessed be channelled into action to tackle poverty and injustice in the UK?

The Minister uses the findings of the recent Faithful Cities report in his call for the mobilisation of churches to change public opinion and government policy. "faith groups have a voice which should always be used to hold government to account. But it is also their connection with individuals, families and communities...that will be so important if there is to be a shared understanding of what it is really like to live in poverty."

To receive a copy of the pamphlet please email Christian Socialist Movement info@thescsm.org.uk Tel: 020 7233 3736

The State of the English Cities Report was published on 7th March.

The report considers the impact of economic and social policies since 1997 on the performance of cities in relation to each other as well as in the European and global arenas. The report, written primarily by academics outside the ODPM builds a picture of what is happening to our towns and cities and the significant developments we find in the principal drivers of the urban economy, as well as the population changes we find particularly in the city cores. There are brief attempts to look at the connections between policy themes and demographic changes since 1997.

Executive summary is available from:
http://www.odpm.gov.uk/pub/938/StateoftheEnglishCitiesUrbanResearchSummaryNo21PDF581Kb_id1163938.pdf

The full report is just under 500 pages and is also available on the ODPM website or from all good stationers £60.

Faith And Politics After Christendom: The Church As A Movement for Anarchy

Jonathan Bartley Bartley claims that the era of 'post-Christendom' sets new challenges for the church as it engages with politics and civil society. Bartley charts the disillusionment with party politics, changes in government approaches to faith groups and the politicization of the interests of faith groups. A rather prescriptive approach for a book that has anarchy in its title, with a number of sweeping assumptions about social and religious change.

**Published by Paternoster Press
ISBN: 1842273485 £9.99**

Worship in Context: Liturgical Theology, Children and the City by Stephen Burns

A fascinating fusion of liturgical theology, pastoral experience and urban studies.

**Published by Epworth
ISBN: 0716206021 £16.99**

GRAHAM LEVERS MEMORIAL TRUST

This was set up in 1978 following the death of Graham Levers of Frontier Youth Trust. The Trust provides grants for individual young people experiencing deprivation and social exclusion to attend Christian residential activities. Grants are available for children and young people.

Contact: Mrs Linda Peake, 1 Hall Close, Bishop's Stortford, Herts CM22 6PU

The BNP and the 2006 Local Elections.

A useful collection addressing urban change away from the higher levels of the urban hierarchy. **Published by Routledge ISBN: 0415366585 £22.99**

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