

A strategy for mission and ministry in the urban priority areas of Leeds

Introduction

Leeds is commonly known as a two-speed city. There is the buzzing Leeds of business, sport, higher education, leisure and tourism which is succeeding in making its mark on the national and international stages of the economy, culture and politics.

Alongside are the areas of deprivation still found in the city where 150,000 people (20% of the population) live in neighbourhoods that are among the 10% most deprived in the country as marked by health, education and poverty.

Anglican mission and ministry take place across the whole city through engagement in a variety of ways, but here we are looking at the specific engagement of the Diocese in those areas where poverty, poor health and poor educational opportunity are at their worst. They are referred to as Urban Priority Areas (UPAs*) and are listed at Appendix 1.

Context

A number of factors need to be taken into account in planning a strategy for mission and ministry in UPAs.

The social context

Poverty and deprivation as outlined above are the base line of the social context. Two further strands that are common to the whole diocese but focussed in UPA are racial issues and interfaith relationships.

Within the city there is going to be a change in demography as the number of people from a minority ethnic background grows. Recent government policy around the dispersal of asylum seekers has led to a significant increase in the number of asylum seekers housed in the poorer areas of the city.

The increased fear of terrorist activity nationally and the implications of the London bombers coming from the Leeds area also need to be taken into account in developing relationships with people from differing ethnic backgrounds.

The political context

The current government is very concerned about the state of our cities and commissions regular reports. Social cohesion is high on the agenda; faith groups are seen as a vehicle to address the issue.

Within Leeds, there is a recently published Regeneration Plan. This offers both opportunities and challenges to all faith communities within the city. Issues of the capacity of faith communities to respond and how to ensure appropriate representation run alongside the invitation for faith groups to be partners alongside others with concern for the well being of the city.

* starred terms are explained in the glossary

The faith context

The resources of both the Churches Regional Commission* and the Regional Faiths Forum (Yorkshire and Humber) are based in Leeds. There is also Leeds Faith Forum.

Ecumenical working is visible in different ways: through a number of local Churches Together groups, Leeds Churches Together in Mission*, and the Leeds Christian Community Trust* offer significant support for Christians working together in mission. The Anglican Methodist Covenant is a further strand of ecumenical working.

Within the Anglican context, we will have to take into account the decline in the number of stipendiary posts available and the apparently conflicting needs of small and large congregations.

Exploring new ways of relating to the local community through worship and service have been part of the UPA way of working for sometime (football in Osmondthorpe, pantomime in Gipton, asylum seekers in Armley) but whilst some worshipping communities are flourishing, others may not exist in five years time

Mission, ministry and theology

1. We are working with God in mission to reveal God's kingdom on earth.

"The mission of God in his world (the missio dei) is at its heart a partnership between the Father who sends and receives, the Son who goes and comes, and the Spirit who is sent and received. (...)

Into this Trinitarian partnership in mission God invites first the prophets, then the apostles and now every Christian, through baptism - the sacrament of mission. God chooses to reach out to the whole of creation in partnership with us, not because he needs us but because we need him, and because we need to be participants in this divine outreach if we are to discover our true image as children of God.

Our primary call to partnership is, of course, with God himself - with the Father who sustains, the Son who guides and the Spirit who empowers - but we are also called into human partnerships with our church, our friends, family and others."(Mark Oxbrow¹)

2. The signs of this Kingdom are eradication of injustice leading to peace and well being for all.

The vision is held in Zechariah 8. The prophet presents a picture of what the Lord wants for Jerusalem. The true city of God is a place which is safe for those people who are vulnerable, is inclusive of all and provides the necessary sustenance for body, mind and spirit of each individual who lives there. The prophet acknowledges that this may seem impossible for human beings, but it is not impossible for God.

3. The role of the church is to be an agent of transformation and healing in society. The authority for this comes from the ministry of Jesus proclaimed in Luke 4:17-21:

¹ Fully Resourced Mission Partners

Strategy for mission and ministry in urban priority areas: approved by Diocesan Synod March 06

Jesus stood up to read and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to ^proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (NRSV)

"Theology is a task to be undertaken in solidarity with those who suffer from the refusal of the powerful to change their policies" (Harvey²)

4. Ministry from within the UPA's is often fragile and vulnerable. It is also determined and frequently sacrificial. It is one part of the whole ministry of the church, which both offers and requires support and encouragement within the Body of Christ. In financial and numerical terms it may appear weak, in commitment to local mission and faithfulness in prayer and worship, it is strong.

The Church of England has an abiding commitment to people in the local situation including urban priority areas. Supporting parish-focussed ministry is one way of demonstrating this commitment. However each local situation may well engender other forms of complementary ministry to respond to the changing circumstances of the world in which we live and work.

Church schools are another significant contribution to the Christian mission and ministry in urban priority areas (see appendix 2) and the opening of the David Young Community Academy will be a significant landmark in education in the city.

Objectives

The objectives act as a framework for the direction of work in urban priority areas. They enable parishes, diocesan officers, task groups and others concerned to move in a common direction whilst remaining open to the activity of the Holy Spirit in a particular context. They will be reviewed in 2 years.

1. Mutuality across the diocese in order to resource mission and ministry in the deprived areas (c.f. Challenges and Choices).

Measures

- UPA areas do not take a greater cut in stipendiary staffing than other places.
- Development of real links between UPA parishes and other parts of the diocese.

Resource implications

- Consideration of appropriate staffing that is not dependent on ability to pay or size of congregation.

² Theology in the City

Strategy for mission and ministry in urban priority areas: approved by Diocesan Synod March 06

2. Support and training for congregations with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds as they relate to the religious and social diversity of the communities in which they live and worship.

Measure

- Provision and take up of training appropriate to the local context of UPA parishes.

Resource implications

- Training strategy to take these considerations into account.
- Potential for the Diocesan Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns Group* and the Interfaith task group to contribute through identifying and providing training.

3. Support for UPA churches as they minister alongside people affected by rapid social change while engaging positively with the new contexts which such changes bring. (e. g asylum seekers).

Measures

- Congregations and groups identifying and engaging with such issues.
- A significant contribution to the relaunched CUF appeal.

Resource implication

- CUF Annual Delivery Plan must keep abreast of changing social needs.

4. Encouragement and support for Anglicans to work positively and creatively with Christians of other traditions in the local faith context.

• *Measure*

- Further initiatives like The Church in Leeds 11, 3 Churches project in Stainbeck, Cross Roads (Middleton Youth project) , X:site and Create (ecumenical children's work)

Resource implication

- Ability to think outside the box by individuals and the churches.

5. Development of the local church's understanding of itself as a witness to the kingdom in order to be an engaged presence as a minority among people of other faiths and no faith.

Measure

- Growth in confidence of UPA congregations.
- Provision and take up of opportunities for theological reflection in the local context.

Resource implication

- Training strategy to take these considerations into account.

Appendix 1

UPA Parishes

Parish	population	IMD* 04score
BEESTON HILL: CHURCH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT	4,525	69.46
HOLBECK: ST LUKE THE EVANGELIST	7,523	60.86
LEEDS CITY TEAM	2,591	59.77
HUNSLET MOOR: ST PETER AND ST CUTHBERT	4,267	59.47
CROSS GREEN: ST. HILDA	2,322	57.81
RICHMOND HILL: ST. SAVIOUR	1,310	56.41
HAREHILLS: ST CYPRIAN AND ST JAMES	5,446	55.84
POTTERNEWTON: ST MARTIN	9,372	55.46
BURMANTOFTS: ST STEPHEN AND ST AGNES	6,983	55.21
HAREHILLS: ST WILFRID	7,669	54.20
GIPTON: CHURCH OF THE EPIPHANY	9,494	52.44
ARMLEY: ST BARTHOLOMEW WITH NEW WORTLEY	8,212	52.00
RICHMOND HILL: ALL SAINTS	2,945	49.35
OSMONDTHORPE: ST PHILIP	6,852	49.00
MIDDLETON: ST CROSS	7,405	48.46
LITTLE LONDON: ALL SOULS	5,259	47.92
HAREHILLS: ST AIDAN	12,981	46.90
SEACROFT TEAM	31,870	46.86
BELLE ISLE: ST JOHN AND ST BARNABAS	10,749	46.31
HUNSLET: ST MARY THE VIRGIN	6,949	45.48
MIDDLETON: ST MARY THE VIRGIN	6,862	42.86
HALTON: ST WILFRID	7,851	41.70

Parishes with SOAs* in the worst 3% in the country

Bramley Team, Leeds City Team, Middleton St. Cross, Belle Isle St John and St Barnabas, Seacroft Team, Gipton Epiphany, Holbeck St Luke's, Beeston Holy Spirit, Little London All Souls, Harehills St Aidan's, PotterNewton St Martin's, Burmantofts St Agnes, Halton St Wilfrid's, Harehills St Wilfrid's, Cross Green St Hilda's, Osmondthorpe St Philip's.

Appendix 2

Church Schools in UPAs

David Young Community Academy	Middleton St Mary CE Primary School
Holbeck St. Luke's CE Primary School	Richmond Hill All Saints CE Primary School
Hunslet CE Primary School	Seacroft St. Paul's Whinmoor CE Primary School
Leeds City St Peter's CE Primary School	

Strategy for mission and ministry in urban priority areas: approved by Diocesan Synod March 06

Glossary of terms:

Urban Priority Area (UPA): Parishes which have a very level of deprivation.

Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber (CRC) is a Christian organisation that is proactive with public bodies and faith partners in promoting regeneration in the region.

Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD): these are government figures drawn from statistical information on health, education, income and crime rates, which give levels of deprivation in particular areas. There is a figure for every parish in the diocese.

Super Output Areas (SOA): small geographical areas of about 1,500 people that can be used for measuring pockets of deprivation and affluence.

Leeds Churches Together in Mission: the umbrella organisation drawing together Churches Together groups and other city wide Christian organisations.

Leeds Christian Community Trust; a charitable trust stimulating Christian mission and unity in Leeds.

Diocesan Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns Group: set up in 2004 following the Racial Justice Review of 2003.

Bibliography:

"Theology in the City" Anthony Harvey SPCK (1989)

"Fully Resourced Mission Partners: Missiological Principles" Mark Oxbrow CMS (2005)

Challenges and Choices: Report of Strategy and Priorities Group to Diocesan Synod (2002)

Changing Patterns of Ministry: Report of Ministry Advisory Group to Diocesan Synod (2004)

Presence and Engagement: the Churches' task in a multi faith society GS 1577 (2005)

Leeds Regeneration Plan 2005-2008 (2005)

Vision for Leeds 11 2003-2018 (2003)