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Two Years On: The Liverpool Perspective

NEVILLE BLACK

Liverpool was already running across 'the Faith in the City starting line' in December 1985 when the Report was published, mainly because many of us here, from Bishop down, have been engaged in urban mission issues for many years. That the Evangelical Urban Training Project chose Liverpool as its headquarters in 1974, and that there has always been a strong and widely based support group for other evangelical urban mission initiatives like Frontier Youth Trust (FYT), and The Evangelical Coalition for Urban Mission (ECUM), has inevitably created a supportive climate.

In 1980 the diocese of Liverpool set up a Commission to examine the special mission and ministry needs of urban priority areas and especially the Christian communities within them, which led to some pre-1985 initiatives being undertaken: special financial assistance for assistant clergy housing costs in UPA areas; a radical review of the assessment system for determining the amount each parish contributes towards central and diocesan funds; and within the area of local ministry the publication of a joint report with the Manchester diocese 'To Match the Hour'.

Faith in the City provided an additional thrust, which led in 1984 to the formation of a diocesan initiative, my appointment as Bishop's Adviser for Urban Ministry and Leadership, and the calling together of a small group of UPA clergy and lay leaders to set up the Group for Urban Ministry and Leadership (GUML). GUML has the remit to select and train small teams of Christian leaders from UPA parishes, to share in the ministry and mission of the local area with the parish staff.

Immediately before the Report was published, the Bishop set up a steering committee to design the process by which the Report and its findings would be integrated within the Church and community.

The Challenge - Getting it on to the Agenda

Following the first meeting of the steering group, it was agreed that some assistance would be beneficial in following up the various initiatives. By courtesy of the Midland Bank in London, Chris Hallam arrived on the scene to fulfil such a role. He joined the diocese in February 1986.

One of the major initiatives taken by the steering group in the early part of 1986 concerned the promotion of the report to as wide an audience as possible in the diocese. Eight meetings were arranged on a District Council area basis and those invited were drawn from as wide a spectrum as possible. Many local councillors attended these meetings, which took the form of a slide presentation, followed by an address by the Bishop on specific issues raised in the report and a question and answer session. Many new

contacts were made at these meetings and further follow up initiatives identified. Two examples are as follows:

- (i) A Health Audit was arranged in collaboration with the Liverpool Area Health Authority and took the form of a leaflet drop in Liverpool 8 and Liverpool 17. Residents were asked to complete a questionnaire covering such subjects as the area in which they live, health, work, money, schools and worship. This is a good example of the Church working with a specific authority in the area.
- (ii) In January 1987 a meeting took place with Councillors in the Halton District to follow up the *Faith in the City* report. Much interest was aroused at the meeting and further discussion took place in smaller groups on specific items, eg, the subject of housing was high on the agenda.

Each diocese throughout the country has been asked to nominate an ACUPA Link Officer: Liverpool is fortunate in that it has two Link Officers, the Revd Bob Dew and Chris Hallam. In 1987 a series of local area meetings for the Link Officers for Blackburn, Chester, Manchester and Liverpool was held, so that they could work on an area basis rather than a diocesan basis.

Resource Materials

During the past year we have prepared a list of the various materials available which includes the following:

Faith in OUR City, a study booklet in which the Social Policy chapters in Part III of *Faith in the City* (A Challenge to the Nation) are reviewed from a regional and ecumenical perspective (price £1.00).¹

Theological Reflections on Faith in the City, a study booklet containing six papers intended to be read and discussed by small groups of church leaders who wish to debate the underlying theological imperative of *Faith in the City*. Each contribution is followed by questions for discussion (price 75p).¹

Video (VHS). A thirty minute video in three parts – Life in the City, the Role of the Church, What can be done? – filmed locally with teaching notes and questions (hire £1.00 per month).¹

EUTP has produced a whole set of 'do it yourself' workshop materials under the heading *Switching the Style* and designed especially for UPA congregations to undertake their own study in methods which have been specifically designed to fit a UPA style.²

Responding – Taking specific action

The Report's Recommendations were individually drawn to the attention of appropriate Boards and Committees of the diocese.

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- 1 All available from Chris Hallam, Co-ordinator, Urban Priorities, c/o St. Bride's Church, PO Box 83, Liverpool L69 8AN.
 - 2 From EUTP at the address in note 1 above.

The Recommendations:

(i) Organising the Church (1-10)

One of the questions asked regularly is, 'What is an Urban Priority Area?' It was hoped that during the first year, a formula for the designation of UPA parishes would have been agreed on a national basis. This has proved difficult but should be completed soon. The diocese of Liverpool has provisionally identified around 70 of its parishes as being UPA's and it is from this list that GUML (the Group for Urban Ministry and Leadership) is working.

The report suggests that each UPA should do a Local Parish Audit. Steps have been taken during 1986 to widen the interpretation of this, so that it will be used not only by UPA's but also by the non-UPA parishes, and where possible in an ecumenical context. In section 1 of this report, it was mentioned that a booklet had been published by the BMU entitled *An Audit for the Local Church* which takes Appendix A from *Faith in the City* as its main theme, and this is an ideal base from which to work. The Roman Catholic Archdiocese has produced its own booklet, which has been recommended to all their parishes. The Board for Mission and Unity is co-ordinating the development of Mission Audit in the Liverpool Diocese.

During 1986 the General Synod considered the recommendation for a Commission on Black Anglican Concerns, and in November it was approved. The BSR has a small working group considering how the spirit of that recommendation can be embodied in the diocese. MARCEA (The Merseyside and Region Churches' Ecumenical Assembly) currently has a working party developing plans for an ecumenical initiative.

(ii) Developing the People of God (11-20)

By the end of 1985 GUMML was well on the way to taking steps to set up a training scheme for lay people in Urban Priority Areas; by December 1987 nine local ministry teams had been selected and are currently being trained.

(iii) Supporting a Participating Church (21-25)

Following the diocesan Urban Priorities report in 1981, it was agreed at a later meeting of the Diocesan Synod to address the question of 'Quota by Potential'. This is now into the third of the four years it would take to be fully introduced and the less well off churches are benefiting considerably from this scheme.

The Lead Board Principle

Faith in the City has raised big questions for the life and mission of the Church and for relationships within it. Trying to see that these questions are taken into the work of the diocese and acted on we found ourselves coining the idea of the 'Lead Board'. The idea is concerned with good stewardship of our time and energy. It recognises, first, the fact that some tasks (eg promoting the use of a Parish Audit, or developing dialogue about

the Report's Challenge to the Nation) might form part of the work of several diocesan boards or committees and, secondly, that it can be helpful to allocate a particular responsibility for seeing that a task is looked at as a whole and followed through. So, quite simply, in relation to certain key tasks one board is asked to take that leading role.

This is not intended to define a 'territory' in any exclusive way, but to call out new energy to follow through things that might otherwise get lost in the gaps between board responsibilities. An important part of the lead role must be the responsibility for seeing that necessary cross-board links and co-operation are built. Similarly, the role must be understood in the context of consultation with the relevant Departments of the Merseyside and Region Churches' Ecumenical Assembly and partnership with other denominational groups.

It is a simple idea. To work it needs a measure of trust within the Body – a recognition that organisations are never perfect, important work can cut across the distinctions between Boards – and that where this is so sometimes the hand, sometimes the eye, or sometimes the foot may be asked to take a lead and be duly acknowledged.

Resolutions moved at the Diocesan Synod – 7th March, 1987

- (i) ASKS the Board of Ministry, as Lead Board, to encourage all parishes to work for the development of 'local, outward-looking and participating churches', affirms the training initiatives being undertaken by GUML and asks the Board of Ministry to respond to the ministerial needs in the non-UPA parishes.
- (ii) ASKS the Board of Mission and Unity, as Lead Board, to encourage every congregation to undertake a Local Audit as a means of strengthening its life and mission, and to do this in collaboration with ecumenical partners where possible.
- (iii) ASKS the Pastoral Committee, as Lead Board, in collaboration with the Regional Sponsoring Body of the Ecumenical Assembly, to explore fresh initiatives to enable the development of new styles of Christian presence in specific areas.
- (iv) ASKS the Board of Social Responsibility, as Lead Board, and in partnership with the Department of Social Responsibility of the Ecumenical Assembly, to encourage dialogue with secular institutions, provide opportunity for persons with public responsibilities to reflect on the challenge of the Report and promote the examination of social policy issues in the parishes.
- (v) ASKS the Board of Education, as Lead Board, to promote the development of educational provision appropriate to the needs of Urban Priority Areas, and through its Youth Committee, to help parishes examine their contact with and service to young people, in consultation with neighbouring churches and other agencies.
- (vi) ASKS the Board of Mission and Unity, as Lead Board, to identify and recommend practical ways in which the Diocese may share resources

with our ecumenical partners in responding to *Faith in the City*, and guidelines for implementing them.

Conclusion

I trust that this article gives you some idea of how Liverpool has attempted to get *Faith in the City* into its bloodstream. It is largely based on reports produced by the Revd Bob Dew and Mr Chris Hallam. I am very grateful to them and would wish to express my thanks for their permission to use the material.

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