

JUST CHURCH

*Local congregations
transforming their
neighbourhoods*

Angus Ritchie, Caitlin Burbridge & Andy Walton



THE
**CONTEXTUAL
THEOLOGY**
CENTRE



Based in the east end of London, our mission is to equip churches to engage with their communities. We support congregations from a wide range of denominations – helping them to care for their neighbours, to work for social justice and to share their faith. We do this by developing their theological understanding and their capacity to act. We also seek to share good practice, and to give voice to the experience of inner-city churches in wider public debate.

The Centre grows out of the involvement of local churches in broad-based community organising. This practice continues to be an important influence on our work.

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THEOLOGY FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH

This is the first in a series of pamphlets the Centre is producing, helping local churches reflect on their mission, and linking such reflection to practical action.

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INTRODUCTION

This booklet is written to help local churches work with and for their neighbours. The Gospels present Christians with three clear and distinct calls. Jesus calls his followers to works of mercy (Matthew 25) to act for justice (Luke 4) *and* to share their faith (Matthew 28). We often struggle to hold these three together, and it is tempting to emphasise one to the exclusion of the others. Yet the Gospels tell us that each calling is of intrinsic value. All three are needed if lives and communities are to be made whole.

Just Church begins by offering a theological framework for mission, based upon the most distinctive and fundamental doctrines of the Christian churches. It draws out the implications of these doctrines for the practice of the local church.

In the Bible, God speaks to us through stories, and most of all through personal relationship. At its heart is the story of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. That is why *Just Church* ends with four case studies – stories of local congregations, from very different traditions and denominations, which are working for personal and social transformation. The case studies come from some of London's most religiously diverse and economically deprived neighbourhoods. They are written because these congregations are a *gift* to, not a *burden upon*, the wider Body of Christ. It is our hope that their stories will enrich the mission of churches in many different contexts.



1. THEOLOGY

Christian mission must be rooted in the mission of God. We love because God first loved us (1 John 4.19). Our mission flows from our encounter with God, and our experience of His infinite love for the world. Growing out of that encounter and experience, Christian theology makes three unique assertions about God's character and nature. They provide the framework for the understanding of mission developed in this booklet.

1.1 THE TRINITY

Christians worship God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The doctrine of the Trinity says, not only that God *loves*, but that God *is love* (1 John 4.16). As Ken Leech writes:

*That is the meaning of the symbol of the Trinity: that in God there is social life, community, sharing. To share in God is to share in that life.*¹

Christianity begins with a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, but it cannot end there. Because God is Trinity, that personal encounter leads on to deeper communion with neighbour as with maker.

T.S. Eliot asks:

*What is the meaning of this city?
Do you huddle together because you love each other?
What will you answer? "We all dwell together
to make money from each other"? or "This is a
community"?²*

The church is called to embody a counter-cultural answer. We are to model the true *community* which flows from this *communion* at the heart of God.³ Christianity asserts that God has invited us, not merely to imitate His life but also to share it. In Christ, we become "partakers of

the divine nature" (2 Peter 1.4). This is true of the worship and the life of every congregation. In worship, we are incorporated into the Body of Christ, and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8.14-17). In doing so, we join in their offering of love and glory to the Father. Our worship does not address a far-off deity: when we worship, we are caught up in God's life. The same is true of our common life. Our love for each other does not merely imitate God's love: when we love one another, we are sharing in the life of God.

This is only possible when worship and practice are held together. Worship without mutual care is a parody of true communion (Isaiah 58.6-12; 1 Corinthians 11.17-26; James 2.14-17). By the same token, a church which promotes mutual care but neglects worship is doomed to failure. Without receiving from God, we have nothing distinctive to give. If we do not begin by being fed, we will be acting in our own power, not responding to the gift of life and love poured out in Jesus Christ.

1.2 THE INCARNATION

Christianity also asserts that God's Word has become flesh and dwells among us (John 1.14). In the incarnation of Jesus Christ we see the heart of God's mission. In him, the love of God has 'moved into the neighbourhood.'⁴ The incarnation has very practical implications for Christian discipleship.

Firstly, it shows that the 'spiritual' and the 'material' cannot be separated. As God has become flesh, our physical relationships can reveal His life and His love. Our bodies are "temples of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6.19). When the Spirit of Christ fills the church, it transforms all of our physical relationships – from bedroom to boardroom. Jesus underlines the connection between worship and practice on the eve of his Passion, by both instituting the Eucharist and washing the disciples' feet (Mark 14.12-26; John 13.1-17). After Pentecost, we see the same connection between the 'breaking of bread' and the sharing of possessions so the needs of all are met (Acts 2.42-47).

Secondly, the task Jesus sets his disciples is one of working *with* and not just *for* those in greatest need. Sam Wells observes that the first

¹ Kenneth Leech, *True Prayer* (Sheldon Press, 1980), 8

² T S Eliot, *The Rock* (Faber & Faber, 1934)

³ Cf. John Milbank, 'The Church is the site of the true Society,' Church Times, 16 December 2011 and William Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination* (T&T Clark, 2003)

⁴ This is how John 1.14 is translated in Eugene Peterson, *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language* (NavPress, 2005)

thirty years of Jesus' ministry is spent living with the poorest in Israel, the next three working with them, building them up as disciples. It is only in his last days that he ministers alone, working for them on his own. He argues that the church must do likewise, living and work with the poor as well as working for them.⁵ Indeed we must go further: the church is not something that works "with" or "for" an external group called "the poor". Today's church – both globally, and in the case studies offered in this booklet – is in no small part "the poor" (cf. James 2.5-9).

This has implications for the way we practice theology. In theology, as in the rest of life, how things look depends in part on where we stand. Christian theology affords a particular respect for the way things *look* to those who are on the margins of society:

I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. (Matthew 11.25)

No other books of the time are written in such popular, common Greek as the Gospels. None are so focused on the "multitude" (*ochlos*). The Gospels invite all people, rich and poor, to find new life in Jesus Christ. But they are written from a unique social perspective, and tell of a Lord whose ministry was exercised with and for the poorest.

This is a point Pope Francis is making forcefully, as he warns against the "gentrification of the heart" that comes when Christians are detached from the experience of their poorest brothers and sisters. Theology is not something we can "discuss calmly over tea" – rather it must emerge from, and speak into, this context of struggle and injustice. That is why the theology in this booklet is inseparable from the case studies of congregational engagement – stories of discipleship being practiced in East London.

1.3 THE CROSS

Finally, Christianity places the cross at the centre of our faith, in all its 'scandal' and 'foolishness' (1 Corinthians 1.23). The love of God is revealed in Jesus' violent execution as a common criminal. Christianity proclaims this event as the source of our forgiveness and our freedom from sin and death.

Christian discipleship is a response to this self-giving love. In his teaching, St Paul is concerned to avoid two equally serious distortions

“ THE GOSPEL CALLS US TO REPENTANCE ...IN BOTH OUR PERSONAL AND COMMON LIFE

of the Gospel. The first mistake – which remains a constant temptation for all Christians – is to behave as if salvation is earned by our good deeds. St Paul reminds his readers that their salvation comes "not from yourselves, but as the gift of God" (Ephesians 2.8). The second mistake is to think that if salvation is a gift, we can now do whatever we like. He rejects this equally forcefully (1 Corinthians 6.12f). We too are

called to 'take up our cross' (Matthew 16.24) – not to win our salvation, but in response to God's great love for us.

A church which is shaped by the cross will be a sign of contradiction. The world rejects and crucifies God's love, and if we truly follow Jesus Christ this will involve tension with the wider culture. Christian discipleship should reflect the "scandal" of the cross. It calls for a personal and social transformation which each human being will resist (cf. Romans 7.15), even though it is through that transformation that we grow into "life in all its fullness" (John 10.10).

That is why Christian mission must go beyond works of mercy. There is no doubt that the Gospel calls us to such works: to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and visit those in prison (Matthew 25). But to stop there – offering only Foodbanks and Night Shelters without asking

⁵ Sam Wells, *The Nazareth Manifesto* - lecture at Temple Baptist Church, Durham NC on April 9, 2008.

why they are needed in our society – is to hear only one part of its transforming message. The Gospel calls us to *repentance*; to a change of direction in both our personal and common life.

For this reason, we are also called to share our faith (cf. the Great Commission in Matthew 28) and to challenge injustice (cf. Mary's song in Luke 1 and Jesus' description of his mission in Luke 4). These two activities call our world to personal and corporate conversion. It is tempting for churches to restrict their witness to works of mercy alone, for it is a less contentious ministry. But evangelism and action for justice are not optional extras. If we truly love our broken world, we need to challenge as well as to serve it.

A truly faithful church must therefore learn to live with tension and with conflict. It must be suspicious of collusion with injustice, and heed Jeremiah's warning against proclaiming "peace where there is no peace" (Jeremiah 6.14). It must instead be a sign of that true peace which was won for all people on the cross, and which will be made complete when our hearts and communities have been transformed by his justice and his love.



2. THE SHAPE OF LOCAL MISSION

The doctrines outlined above offer the shape of any authentic renewal of the church. Renewal can only happen when worship, doctrine and practice are held together. This combination – of prayerfulness, faithfulness and courageous action – was evident in the great revivals of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from the ‘social holiness’ of early Methodism to the slum priests of the Oxford Movement and the pioneering ministries of William and Catherine Booth. What does this mean for today’s church, and for the shape of ministry in each local congregation?

This section suggests nine implications of the doctrines discussed above; principles of faithful and effective mission for the local church. It doesn’t set out an “action plan,” a set of new initiatives by which the church can make revival happen. Rather, it identifies a number of characteristics of a faithful and effective congregation. As the case studies later in the booklet show, these characteristics are already evident in many of the churches serving our poorest neighbourhoods, and flow from what they believe about the character and love of God.

NINE PRINCIPLES FOR LOCAL MISSION

If the Church’s life is to reflect the Triune love of God

- 1. our action must be rooted in adoration**
- 2. relationship-building must be at the centre of our life and work**
- 3. these relationships must involve mutual dependency not condescension**

If the church’s life is to reflect its incarnate Lord

- 4. it must be present and engaged in every neighbourhood, and accessible to every social group**

- 5. it must embody God’s love in practical, tangible ways**
- 6. its work must engage with the world as it is, even as it points to the world as it should be**

If the Church’s life is to walk the way of the cross

- 7. it must challenge injustice, not just care for its victims**
 - 8. it must share the good news of Jesus’ death and resurrection**
 - 9. its eternal hope will inspire, and not distract from, engagement here and now**
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2.1 THE TRINITY AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

If the church’s life is to reflect the Triune love of God

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2.1.1 ACTION AND ADORATION

The Catholic and Charismatic traditions both have a strong sense of God’s transcendence. He inspires awe and adoration as well as love and service. Yet both traditions also stress God’s immanence. In Christ, and by his Spirit, he is involved in every aspect of our lives.

Vibrant worship is a hallmark of many of our inner-city churches: worship that *both* relates to daily life *and* conveys (by its language, its music and its use of silence) something of the power and mystery of God. Whatever our context is, outreach will only be effective if it is grounded in such a vibrancy of worship and faithfulness in prayer.

2.1.2 RELATIONSHIP BEFORE ACTION

Because communion is at the heart of God, it must also be at the heart of the church's life. Too often, a multitude of tasks draws us away from nurturing these face-to-face relationships. The practice of community organising (see text box right) prioritises the "one-to-one" – a face-to-face meeting, focused on sharing the stories and the hopes of the both

“ RELATIONSHIP- BUILDING GENERATES THE MOST POWERFUL AND EFFECTIVE ACTION

participants.⁶ “One-to-ones” come before any programme of action. The experience of churches involved in community organising is that relationship-building is not only of intrinsic value, it also generates the most powerful and effective action. It both fosters a culture of mutual care and unearths the gifts and the leadership of every of its members, so that they become the ‘royal priesthood’ God has

called each Christian – lay and ordained – to be (1 Peter 2.9).

This focus on relationships has implications for the ways churches steward their resources. The way our buildings are used outside of worship can bring many of our neighbours into church premises. Careful thought needs to be given to the ways in which this can lead on to meaningful face-to-face encounters. At its best, the church can be much more than a landlord – and our buildings, far from being a burden, can help us develop wider and deeper relationships with our neighbours.

INTRODUCING COMMUNITY ORGANISING:

London Citizens is the capital's community organising movement – part of the national Citizens UK alliance. Community organising involves building an alliance of religious congregations, schools and civic associations to work together on issues of common concern. It seeks to build a 'relational culture': encouraging people to share their stories, and identify the ways in which their areas can be changed for the better. When people are in relationship, with common concerns, they are in a position to challenge those with the power to deliver change (be that environmental improvements, better pay for workers, or improved public services.)

While the campaigns are on specific, winnable issues, the wider aim is to build a local and national alliance with an ongoing set of relationships of trust and commitment - where each successful campaign not only brings a tangible result (such as improved social housing, or higher wages) but develops grassroots leadership and the power of people in Britain's poorest neighbourhoods to work together for the common good.

The Contextual Theology Centre grew out of the ministry of local congregations involved in the alliance, and their desire to reflect more deeply on this practice. Not all of the churches it now works with are involved in community organising – but it features in all four of the case studies in this booklet, because these and many other of our partner churches have found it helpful in working with and for their neighbours.

⁶ See Neil Jameson and Mike Gecan, *Effective Organising for Congregational Development* (online at theology-centre.org/sharing/courses-and-resources)

2.1.3 MUTUALITY, NOT CONDESCENSION

If our relationships are to reflect the Triune life of God, there must be mutual dependency, not simply one direction of ministry and service. Within the church, this implies a commitment to discern and release the gifts of every member. A good example of this is the relationship between different age groups. The Bible is clear that there is a process of mutual learning and blessing in the relationship between adults and children. Adults must help children grow into maturity, both

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physically and spiritually (Luke 2.52; 1 Corinthians 14.20). Children have a distinctive insight into the Kingdom of God, which adults need to be humble enough to receive (Matthew 11.25; Luke 18.16). Thus, children are taught by adults and yet are also our teachers.

This mutuality also needs to shape the church's outreach. We need the generosity to bless our neighbours, and the humility to be blessed by them. Again,

this reflects the practice of Jesus, who is willing to be challenged by the Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7.24-31) and who tells his fellow Jews the story of a Good *Samaritan* (Luke 10.25-37). Community organising offers some very practical examples of such mutuality: of churches acting *with* as well as for those around them - working for a Living Wage, setting up Community Land Trusts and 'City Safe Havens' (to protect those in danger of street violence). The testimony of those working in multi-faith areas is that the example of their neighbours can teach them how to be more faithful Christians.

In Tower Hamlets, the immediate context of the Contextual Theology Centre, the primary engagement is with Islam. Our Muslim neighbours' faithfulness – their discipline in prayer, their strong sense of the *Ummah*, the seriousness with which they take Qu'ranic

teaching on economics – invites us to examine our practice as Christians: How disciplined am I in my life of prayer? How faithful is my sense of the unity of the 'Body of Christ' to the words of the Gospels and of St Paul? How often do I explain away and 'spiritualise' the teaching of the Bible on possessions and in particular on lending and borrowing?

This common action does not imply the elimination of theological disagreements, nor does it require me to dilute my commitment to the distinctive truths of the Gospel. Rather, as we work together, we also come to see where understandings diverge. For example, we share with our Muslim friends the conviction that God is 'compassionate and merciful', but our engagement with them makes us even more aware of the distinctiveness of the Christian belief that God's love is *vulnerable* as well as *powerful*. As we come to know another faith more deeply, we are made more aware of how extraordinary the claims of Christianity really are: the combination of 'meekness and majesty' which we confess in the incarnation and passion of Christ, and the way our faith seeks to hold together an understanding of God as "Wholly Other" with the belief that we are called to be "partakers of the divine nature."

2.2 THE INCARNATION AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

If the church's life is to reflect its incarnate Lord

- it must be present and engaged in every neighbourhood, and accessible to every social group
- it must embody God's love in practical, tangible ways
- its' work must engage with the world as it is, even as it points to the world as it should be

2.2.1 BEING PRESENT AND ENGAGED

In Christ, God ‘moved into the neighbourhood,’ and spent most of his years simply living among his people. The commitment to *abide* – not simply to come in and serve people as clients, but to dwell among them and share their lives – is at the heart of Christian mission.⁷

The Church of England’s parish system embodies a costly commitment to such ‘abiding’ – to maintaining a worshipping presence in every neighbourhood, which seeks to serve its neighbours, and share with them in word and deed the love of Jesus Christ. But we must recognise a gap between theory and practice. Congregations do not always reflect their context, and their worship and common life is not always accessible to the people who live there. Anglican parishes are learning from the work of the Salvation Army and Urban Expression in Tower Hamlets, as well as from Roman Catholic and Pentecostal neighbours, as they seek to become churches that are ‘of’ as well as ‘with’ the poor. Whatever its denomination, each congregation needs to ask itself honestly how accessible its worship and its life are to the different cultures, classes and generations which it seeks to serve – and how appropriate its outreach (in mercy, justice and evangelism) is to that context.

2.2.2 EMBODYING GOD’S LOVE

A truly Christian spirituality must show forth God’s love in physical, tangible ways. As disciples of the “Word made flesh” our bodies should show forth God’s faithfulness and compassion, and our use of possessions should show forth his generosity and justice. There needs to be a unity between the values we express in Sunday worship and the way we behave throughout the week.

At a time when increasing numbers of British people live in poverty, our treatment of food outside the Eucharist must mirror the way it is blessed and shared within the liturgy. Many churches now have Foodbanks, where members can donate food which is distributed to people in need. This is to be welcomed, but it can only ever be the first

step in a much longer journey. A number of inner-city churches are now holding regular community lunches after the service – where all share what they are able to bring, and those who lack food can take away the surplus. Here, food is not donated but shared, and face-to-face relationships are built. What has been celebrated at the altar is mirrored at the trestle tables which are set up as the service ends.

2.2.3 LIVING IN THE WORLD AS IT IS

Jesus did not merely proclaim a set of laudable ideals. He called his disciples to be pragmatists as well as to have vision and integrity. He commands them to be ‘wise as serpents’ as well as ‘gentle as doves’ (Matthew 10.16 – cf. also the parable of the ‘shrewd manager’ in Luke 16). Christian mission must relate to the world as it actually is, and accept that transformation of hearts and communities is often a slow and incremental process. For families on low incomes, it is better to win a Living Wage of £8.55 per hour than to call for a wage of £17 per hour and gain nothing at all. If our outreach is motivated by genuine love for those in greatest need, rather than our desire to feel righteous, we will place even modest achievements above grand but ineffective gestures.

2.3 THE CROSS AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

If the Church’s life is to walk the way of the cross

- it must challenge injustice, and not just care for its victims
- it must share the good news of Jesus’ death and resurrection
- its eternal hope will inspire, not distract from, engagement here and now

2.3.1 CHALLENGING INJUSTICE

In a society which has more than enough to feed every citizen, the church must do more than set up Foodbanks and hold community lunches. It must challenge the economic systems which allow people to go hungry, by calling for a Living Wage and challenging welfare

⁷ Cf. Ben Quash, *Abiding: The Archbishop of Canterbury’s Lent Book 2013* (Bloomsbury Continuum, 2012) and *Presence and Engagement: The churches’ task in a multi Faith society* (Report to the General Synod of the Church of England, 2005)

cuts when they leave people in penury. Likewise, support of local mutual banking (such as Credit Unions) must go alongside action to outlaw predatory lending. This is an issue on which The Archbishop of Canterbury has taken a lead in Parliament, and on which the Church Urban Fund and the Contextual Theology Centre are now helping local congregations to take action.⁸

Challenging injustice leads to conflict and resistance. The love shown on the cross is courageous and provocative, but it embraces even those who perpetrate injustice. The purpose of provocation is always to lead to true reconciliation. Jesus does not “preach peace where there is no peace” but peace remains the ultimate goal of all his action – the peace that flows from a restored relationship with God. Our practice needs to be both provocative and loving, which is yet another reason why it must have deep roots in our life of prayer.

2.3.2 SHARING THE GOOD NEWS OF CHRIST’S DEATH AND RESURRECTION

However much we seek to embody Christ’s love in our deeds, they can never fully measure up to the love which he has shown. We need, therefore, to speak about that love. To truly love our neighbours must involve a willingness to tell them who Jesus is, and to invite them to discover him for themselves.

Christians do not help those in immediate need or work for social justice in order to convert their neighbours. Our evangelism, our works of mercy and our action for justice each have intrinsic value – for each is an expression of the unconditional love which flows from the heart of God. Moreover, the way we share our faith must be generous and humble, not predatory or arrogant. Each new member changes and enriches the church. Evangelism is always a call to much more than ‘joining our club’ and ‘becoming like us.’ It must be an invitation to be changed together, and to be changed by one another, as we journey deeper into the life and love of God.

⁸ David Barclay and Tim Bissett, “Building a fairer money system,” *Church Times*, 7 December 2012.

2.3.3 ETERNAL HOPE – AND ENGAGEMENT HERE AND NOW

Christians believe that ‘eternal life’ begins here and now. It is not simply a hope for a life beyond the grave – but our faith that one day Christ will be ‘all in all’ inspires us to work patiently and hopefully for the Kingdom here and now.

The church can only truly reflect the eternal hope of Easter because it walks the way of the cross. The cross ensures that our hope is not simply naive optimism. Easter hope does not evade the suffering of so many human lives. Rather, it allows that pain to be acknowledged and expressed. It knows both the depth of human alienation and the transforming power of our crucified and risen Lord.

The most compelling witness to that hope is seen in churches which are truly “with” and “of” the poor. The promise of eternal life is not a distraction from their work for transformation here on earth. Rather, that promise gives shape and direction to these ministries. It enables Christians in the most challenging of contexts to “sing Alleluia and keep on walking” (St Augustine). In our patient struggle here and now, we experience and share something of the hope that will be fulfilled in our eternal home:

The Father wills that in all [people] we recognize Christ our brother and love him effectively, in word and in deed. By thus giving witness to the truth, we will share with others the mystery of the heavenly Father’s love. As a consequence, men [and women] throughout the world will be aroused to a lively hope—the gift of the Holy Spirit—that some day at last they will be caught up in peace and utter happiness in that fatherland radiant with the glory of the Lord.⁹

⁹ *Gaudium et Spes: The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, Second Vatican Council



3. STORIES

Theology emerges from our lived experience. This is why the Bible is full of names, often hard for the English tongue to pronounce: it speaks of God at work in particular people and places. A great many of the books of the Bible are stories – and a central task of theology is to help us tell our stories, and to lay them alongside that foundational narrative of faith.

That is why this booklet now moves from *frameworks and principles* (themselves distilled from Scripture, tradition and experience) into a series of *case studies* – stories of churches in East London with whom the Contextual Theology Centre has a particular link, and whose experience puts flesh on the ideas of the earlier sections. These churches offer us a cross-section of experience, of different denominations and of different neighbourhoods in east London – just a tiny sample of the extraordinary amount of personal and social transformation which God is bringing about through churches in England's most deprived and diverse neighbourhoods.



3.1 THE CATHOLIC PARISH OF MANOR PARK

'In the past it didn't matter which church you went to, as long as you attended mass somewhere. Now the culture is that we go to this church, in this particular place, with these people.' – Fr Sean Connolly

When Fr Sean Connolly arrived in Manor Park, he was just one priest serving a congregation of around 800 people. It was hard to see how he would have a meaningful relationship with them all. However, through a long, patient process of one-to-one conversations, a relational culture is evolving. It has been a very gradual process, and initially the most important aim was to simply build the internal community of the church by bringing people together. Now, having listened to the stories and needs of the congregation the church has begun to join up with other institutions in London Citizens to start to bring about real change on local issues of shared concern. In particular, there is a large group of highly motivated young people who are eager to engage actively in their local context, and be part of building a stronger sense of community in Manor Park.

THE CONTEXT¹⁰

Manor Park is an extremely diverse neighbourhood in the East London borough of Newham. The average age is 29 and migrants make up 12.95% of the population. The religious diversity is considerable, the largest single group being Muslim, followed by Christians, with significant Hindu and Sikh populations. Ethnic diversity is even more pronounced, with 36.8% Asian or Asian British, 29.3% White, and 23.9% Black or Black British. The area is also marked by severe poverty. Life expectancy for men and women is significantly lower than the average for the capital. The benefits claimant rate is at its highest amongst 16-24 year olds.

¹⁰ Statistics for all four case studies are drawn from *Community Leaders and Engagement* (2010) and the 2011 Census

THE CONGREGATION

On average, 800 people attend Sunday Mass in the parish, with around 1200 people attending at least once a month. The congregation reflects the diversity of the area – including people of Sri Lankan, South Indian, African and Afro-Caribbean heritage, as well as white Britons and Eastern Europeans.

The process of building a more relational church community has transformed the congregational experience of the Mass. Fr Sean observes that ‘In a sense, it didn’t matter which church you went to before, you just had to attend mass somewhere. Now the culture is that



BUILDING A MORE RELATIONAL CHURCH COMMUNITY HAS TRANSFORMED THE CONGREGATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF THE MASS

we go to *this* church, in *this* particular place, with *these* people.’

In Catholic theology, Jesus Christ is understood to be present in the bread and wine of the Eucharist. The “Real Presence” speaks of a God who continues to become flesh – encountering his people in a concrete and tangible way in every celebration of the Mass.

In the liturgy, this is a communal as well as individual experience. Community organising is helping the congregation experience this reality of Holy Communion leading on to a deeper common life – and to live out this Eucharistic vision all seven days of the week.

THE PROCESS

Fr Sean began by identifying the core of very active and animated individuals who bore much of the responsibility for the day-to-day running of the church. They helped him to understand some of the existing patterns and dynamics of parish life. As his ‘one-to-ones’ went beyond this core group, into the wider congregation, it became increasingly clear that many of them faced significant social and economic challenges.

The fruit of this process was that many of the congregation became much more engaged in the church’s common life. Two meetings were held to identify some issues on which the congregation might have both an appetite and capacity for action. To Fr Sean’s surprise, over 120 people attended. Two core issues emerged at the meetings: developing young people and supporting the elderly.

‘We want to develop our young people’

Many members of the congregation were keen to find ways to bring together and develop the young people in the church. Since 2010, around 80 young people have been confirmed at St Stephen’s. The wider congregation felt that there was a great deal of unharnessed potential amongst this group. With the help of some Jellicoe interns (young church-based community organisers on placement from the Contextual Theology Centre) the church has begun to engage with the ideas the young people have about how to transform the local area, as well as encouraging them to take a lead in making this change happen. Young people have been drawn together to think about how they might improve the quality of life for people of all ages in their area. Their suggestions ranged from small-scale community fun days, to finding ways to stop pay-day lenders from exploiting individuals – and they are now acting on both ideas.

‘WE WANT TO PROVIDE BETTER SUPPORT FOR THE ELDERLY’

The church also has an excellent history of providing support to the elderly in the parish. Through the process of listening it became clear that some staff and residents in the two local care homes were not being treated appropriately. Members of the congregation developed a parish team to undertake some research about the challenges faced by those in care homes, as well as the policies existing around care homes. Individuals are now trying to find ways to have more formal conversations with the local care homes in order to encourage better working and living conditions for both staff and residents. Being a member of the wider alliance of London Citizens has given individuals the opportunity to share knowledge and be part of a substantial campaign with a serious chance of success. With Parliament considering new legislation regarding the care

for the elderly later this year, members of this community in Manor Park may be part of broader, lasting changes.

CHALLENGES

Because it takes so much time to build relationships within a congregation of 800, less work has been done to build face-to-face relationships with neighbours outside the church. So far, two small but significant steps have been taken. Each has involved both theological reflection and practical encounter. In 2009, members of the parish took part in a course on *Living with Other Faiths*, which offered a theological framework for engagement with neighbours of other faiths, and included a visit to their nearby Hindu temple. Two years later, the church held a joint Lent course with members of ARC – a Pentecostal church in neighbouring Forest Gate. The course, called *People of Power*, included Bible study and the sharing of personal testimony, both on issues of personal faith, and on the ways in which members of the churches wanted to change their area for the better. Building on these initial steps is a key priority for the parish in the year ahead.



3.2 ST PETER'S, BETHNAL GREEN

*“We want to hear and see children in our church again.”
– Anonymous congregation member, 2010*

The average age of the congregation at St Peter's had been creeping up for many years. Several years without a Vicar meant the priority had been keeping the church going - and in consequence, very few children were coming through its doors.

In 2010, a group of 20 people from St Paul's Shadwell (a church plant from Holy Trinity Brompton) came to join the existing (older, more Anglo-Catholic) congregation, again around 20 in number, to create a renewed “cross tradition” church. The existing congregation made clear that increasing the number of children and young people in the church was a top priority.

THE CONTEXT

Bethnal Green is an area of contradictions. *The Sunday Times* described it as the coolest place to live in the UK! Columbia Road flower market sits in the heart of the parish and is one of the ‘must-see’ experiences in London on a Sunday. The area has many new businesses in the creative arts and new technologies. And yet the Borough of Tower Hamlets is the most economically deprived in London – and the fourth poorest in the country. 13.9% of adults are long-term unemployed and 29.7% of people live in overcrowded households. According to the Church Urban Fund, the parish is in the top one per cent in terms of the prevalence of child poverty. Just over half of the population of the parish is white, with the second largest group being Asian and Asian British (33%), the vast majority of whom are of Bengali heritage. In religious terms, Christians are the third largest group in the 2011 census (25%), after Muslims (31%) and people of no religion (27%).

LISTENING TO GOD AND TO ONE ANOTHER

When Adam and Heather Atkinson led the group from St Paul's Shadwell into the congregation of St Peter's, their first task was to listen. Adam explains: "This was our way of expressing the centrality of face-to-face relationships, and the building of genuine mutuality. The idea was that we wanted to really *know* what the concerns of the local community were, rather than simply presuming – and to work with the community to achieve real and lasting change."

The process of listening to congregation members and to the wider parish was itself understood as an attempt to discern what God was already doing in Bethnal Green, and what he had laid on its people's hearts. As a "cross-tradition" church, a range of other activities have helped to deepen St Peter's life of corporate prayer and discernment – both setting up "Life Groups" (cell groups with Bible study and sharing of experience at their heart) and holding events in which the riches of both the catholic and charismatic traditions could be shared across the church. These events have included prayer walks around the parish, evenings of charismatic worship, and afternoons of Eucharistic adoration with talks on subjects such as *Aspects of the Eucharist* and *Mary: Prayer and Action*.

FROM LISTENING TO ACTING

Two very practical issues emerged from this process of listening and discernment. Firstly, that many members of the congregation and the wider community felt unsafe on certain streets. While older members reported this feeling most vocally, young people also said they felt uncomfortable. The second concern was about drug dealing which occurred virtually on the steps of the church.

In the meantime, the church had joined London Citizens. This put St Peter's in contact with other institutions in the area, including schools and colleges. When it became clear that school pupils in the area also had fears about safety, St Peter's worked with London Citizens on a wider listening campaign, with help from Andy Walton (a church-based community organiser from the Contextual Theology Centre).

Andy explains: "Young people were asked to pinpoint areas where they felt especially threatened on a map. The results showed that they

were particularly worried about crossing over one of the main roads in the area – Hackney Road. It emerged that some pupils would take several buses to avoid walking across the road, which was a gang boundary." For a short period, one of the local schools worked with local police, and the shift pattern of officers was changed. This led to a reduction in crime of a staggering 84%.

A key part of Andy's work has been establishing a City Safe zone. An initiative of Citizens UK, City Safe is a simple scheme in which members of churches, Mosques, schools and colleges ask their local shopkeepers to sign up as City Safe havens, to offer a place of refuge to a young person in trouble and to call the police for assistance. Pupils from the schools visited the shops, after which a team from St Peter's followed up and made the link between congregation and the business. Fifteen businesses are currently signed up, and the church's ongoing contact with the havens confirms that they have been used by young people in danger.

The CitySafe Campaign built relationships, and it also built confidence. This led St Peter's to engage in a second listening exercise: to identify further issues on which to act. Four concerns came up again and again: Jobs, Housing, Money and Food. The church is now taking action on all four issues.

JOBS: St Peter's church hall housed one social enterprise (in which vulnerable women found employment and fellowship making chutney) until it became so successful it had to move into a larger space. There are plans for the hall to become a wider 'social enterprise hub'. Through their involvement in London Citizens, the church has also supported a scheme for young people (called Tech City Stars) which offers apprenticeships in some of the tech-savvy businesses based just down the road in Old Street (the so called "Silicon Roundabout").

HOUSING: Despite the deprivation in the area, Bethnal Green is now one of London's most sought-after neighbourhoods. As a consequence, much of the social housing is cramped, and much of the private housing is unaffordable. Recognising London Citizens' achievement in securing the capital's first Community Land Trust in another neighbourhood of Tower Hamlets, more work is planned on making housing affordable for all parts of the community.

MONEY: As the essay above reminds us, the Christian approach to poverty needs to be both immediate and strategic. St Peter's has tried to

follow that principle – combining works of mercy with action for justice – in helping parishioners in debt.

Firstly, the church is piloting a money mentoring and debt advice course, open to people from the whole community. Its second response has been to help launch one of Citizens UK's newest campaigns. Called "Just Money," its purpose is to make financial institutions work for local communities. One of its main concerns is the proliferation of betting and payday loan shops in places like Bethnal Green.

FOOD: Through the listening exercise, it also became clear that there are families and young people in the parish who don't have enough to eat during an average week. St Peter's has again tried to tackle this in two different ways – on the one hand, supporting local Foodbanks, and on the other setting up a community meal, once per month. The congregation are asked to bring enough food with them to share. The intention is to provide too much for one sitting so there is plenty left over for people to box up and use during the week.

Adam explains "It's by no means the answer to every food-related problem, but it's a start at making things easier. This has also been a great way of integrating new members into the church, getting younger and older people to interact over some food and conversation. We think Foodbanks are valuable but we want to do more than simply make a one-way donation. We want to build relationships, and see what we can do together."

MERCY, JUSTICE AND EVANGELISM

For the reasons given in the first part of this booklet, St Peter's is committed to a holistic vision of Christian mission. Adam explains that practical care and action to tackle injustice – the kinds of activities listed above – "help people to experience something of the Kingdom of God. But we also want people to know the King for themselves." It is not that social action occurs in order to convert people. Rather, social action and sharing the faith are each practical expressions of the church's faith and love. The church runs regular Alpha courses, and has been helped by a week-long mission from students at the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics (OCCA).

Three years in, the evidence is that this approach is bearing fruit. The

Sunday congregation has more than doubled, with growth across ages, races and social classes – and many more people (of all faiths and none) working in partnership with the church.

CHILDREN AND THE CHURCH

Engaging children and young people has been a key part of the church's social engagement, and of its numerical growth. According to Adam, one of St Peter's most important decisions was to appoint a youth and children's work leader (with the help of a grant from the Church and Communities Fund). Bob Barstow has led the church's outreach with and to young people; helping them to feel part of the congregation, helping those on the margins feel they have a home in the church and visiting those who aren't comfortable in church at all. As Adam observes, "Working with children and young people in Bethnal Green means we'll never be wholly based in the church, and if we're doing youth work authentically, there'll always be a need to be involved with young people whose lives are more complex and precarious than those outside the maelstrom of the inner-city."

Bob is also helping St Peter's to audit every bit of its life, inside and outside the church's walls – its worship and governance, pastoral care and community engagement – so that more and more of what we do reflects the fact that children and young people are a vital part of *today's* church. Adam reflects: "This has taken us in some surprising directions, and challenged some stereotypes. For example, we want to create an environment where children can express themselves, but also one in which they can be still and prayerful before God."

CHALLENGES

Much has been accomplished at St Peter's, and the church has worked hard at ensuring its practice is both orthodox and inclusive – a "cross tradition" church that is keen to avoid a "lowest common denominator" theology and spirituality. One of the challenges for a church addressing such a range of social and spiritual needs is to invest in developing people, and not to become over-reliant on a professional staff team. In the year ahead, there will be a renewed focus on using "one-to-ones" not only to identify *issues* on which to act effectively, but new local leaders to take the action forward.



3.3 STEPNEY SALVATION ARMY

'We like to think of ourselves as the corner shop church, not the supermarket...we have an essential function, but we're not glamorous. We can be with people where they are' – Capt Kerry Coke

The Salvation Army planted a church in Stepney in 2003. The church has developed its mission by building a strong relational culture throughout the community, and has not relied on a physical building. Bearing witness to the distinctive truths and values of the Christian Gospel, it seeks to create space to include people from every faith, culture and socio-economic background in Stepney.

THE CONTEXT

Stepney is a vibrant and diverse ward in the East End borough of Tower Hamlets. Stepney has a higher proportion of 0-14 year olds than Tower Hamlets as a whole. Life expectancy at birth is significantly lower in Stepney than in London as a whole at 72.3 for men and 78.1 for women. According to the 2011 census, the religious composition of Stepney Green and St Dunstan's is 48.7% Muslim, 23.8% Christian, and 11.8% no religion, 58.5% of the population were born in England, and 21.8% were born in Bangladesh. More people on average claim Job Seekers Allowance in Stepney than in the borough as a whole. There are few vehicles through which the different communities might interact, and the levels of social deprivation are increasing.

BEGINNING BY LISTENING

When Nick and Kerry Coke were posted to start a Salvation Army church in Stepney, they had no idea what to expect. They knew little about East London and had no experience of working in a

predominantly Muslim community. Nick and Kerry decided to spend the whole of their first year in the community just finding out what it meant to live there. They attended as many local groups and activities as they could, and they talked with people and listened to their experiences. Nick and Kerry had a son by this point so attending parent groups was a great way to get to know others in the community. They were keen to work out how God might want to use them there.

Nick and Kerry felt it would be important to blur the boundaries between church and community, asking themselves how could people belong without naming themselves a Christian, and yet ensuring that they keep Jesus at the centre of all the community does.

BUILDING A CHURCH ON RELATIONSHIPS

Salvation Army Stepney is characterised by strong relationships with people throughout the community. The group who attend church on a Sunday are diverse in ethnicity and socio-economic background. The Sunday gathering is relatively small (and growing), but the number of people they connect with on a weekly basis is nearer 200. ‘We like to think of ourselves as the corner shop church, not the supermarket... we have an essential function, but we’re not glamorous. We can be with people where they are’. All activities that the church is involved with have grown out of connections with individuals and this is reflected in the ability of the church to grow its impact despite not having a building. ‘People show up because we’ve met them, not because they want to see what we do’.

BELONGING

One of the things which really struck Kerry about the neighbourhood was the lack of integration between different sections of its diverse community. Each parent and toddler group would gather people from a specific ethnic or socio-economic bracket of the community. Kerry decided to set up a low-key parent toddler group where people from different communities in the area could bring their children together. Before they knew it there were 50-60 parents (mainly mothers) bringing their toddlers together each week. Out of this group has grown “Babysong” – a form of musical therapy to help parents and children

bond – which has helped the group to grow even further. Tom Daggett, an intern from the Contextual Theology Centre, helped Kerry to develop this musical programme – and it is now being replicated by churches in other parts of east London.

Intent on bringing together men as well as women of different backgrounds, the church also began a football group. The football

sessions are open to the community and bring together unemployed young people, those who are homeless, and those with high paid jobs in the city. All those involved love playing together, and through that process they have begun to form friendships and find out about each other’s lives. It’s a very simple process, and has been highly effective. For many members of this

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community, football is the only thing that provides a structure to their otherwise empty week.

SERVICE

Every act of ‘service’ has grown from a small pilot project that has built upon existing relationships. In particular, there has been an emphasis on seeing human flourishing throughout the community through creative means. One way this has taken place is through establishing a youth club and musical theatre group for young people. The “Smarties” youth club has evolved through connections Nick and Kerry’s own children have with their friends at the local school. The success of the pilot has led to the establishment of another pilot creative arts workshop. This time the church approached local schools and twenty-two young people from different backgrounds attended.

JUSTICE

Having developed deep friendships with many in the community, the church was keen to address the root causes as well as the symptoms of the challenges they faced – low incomes, long-term unemployment and inadequate housing provision. Therefore, in 2007, the church joined London Citizens. A significant proportion of the church's members are now actively involved in community organising.

Through the same processes of listening described at St Stephen's (but with far more of the "one-to-ones" being conducted with people outside the congregation) Stepney Salvation Army have taken action on a series of issues. These include affordable housing, street safety and the "Living Wage." To take just one example, the congregation were at the heart of a campaign to get a local housing association to pay their cleaning staff a Living Wage (not least because one of its own members was a low-paid worker there). After a year of action, they secured a meeting with the association's Chief Executive and he agreed not only to pay all their cleaning staff a Living Wage (on both business and moral grounds), he also backdated this increased by a whole year.

CHALLENGES

One of the key challenges for Stepney Salvation Army will always be sustainability. For a small congregation, it is doing a remarkable amount – and if this is to continue into the future, Nick and Kerry know it is important that more people share leadership and responsibility within the church. Community organising provides the church with some important tools for such leadership development, and the modest but steady growth in numbers at Sunday worship is another sign that sustainability and capacity are being built.



3.4 ARC PENTECOSTAL CHURCH

‘ARC is not an independent church, we are interdependent’ – Pastor Peter Nembhard

‘A Radical Church’ (ARC) is a large Pentecostal church in the heart of Forest Gate in the borough of Newham. The church was born out of a desire to create a space for individuals to be welcomed into a church which is inspiring, surprising and profoundly inclusive. The Sunday services display vibrant expressions of worship, enigmatic storytelling, and an emphasis on the importance of preaching. Since the beginning, the church has grown in numbers, developing ministries which are both evangelistic and deeply committed to the growth of individuals. In particular, ARC is known for its work with young people to address the issue of gang culture. Reaching out to those from complex backgrounds, ARC is now a unique church because it is a place young people want to be a part of, a place of great potential.

CONTEXT

Forest Gate is in the London Borough of Newham and shares many characteristics with the other wards in the borough. The average age of the population is 28, and there is a 7% unemployment rate which is concentrated among 16-24 year olds. 12.86% of the population are migrants, and the levels of religious and ethnic diversity are pronounced. In Forest Gate no single ethnic group constitutes a majority. With respect to faith, 45.5% say they are Christian, and 23.4% Muslim. Not unlike other wards in the borough, 34.2% of the ward’s population are white, 28.3% Asian or Asian British, and 25.3% Black or Black British.

In socio-economic terms, Forest Gate is poor. 24.38% of benefits claims occur within the 16-24 year old age bracket, and life expectancy at birth can be up to 5 years lower than the London average.

ARC has evolved to prioritise being inclusive, relational and active. The case study outlines ways in which the church embodies these three values.

INCLUSIVE

When Pastor Peter Nembhard first felt called to plant a church in Forest Gate, east London, he was committed to the idea that his church would not look like people's stereotypes. He wanted to create a church which was open to people of all backgrounds and walks of life. A great deal of time and emphasis is placed on making the Sunday services reflect this.

Sunday services at ARC include high quality, high intensity music; lengthy and powerful times of prayer; space for story-telling – where individuals share challenging and inspiring experiences; well-prepared and accessible preaching, and they end with an extended time of fellowship, where people meet and eat together.

The (Black-majority) congregation now numbers more than 250 with young people making up at least a fifth of the congregation. Many come to church independently of their parents. A significant number of church members come from deprived and challenging backgrounds: some have been involved in prostitution, drug addiction and gang violence, and others have experienced domestic violence. Considerable thought and prayer is given to ensuring these individuals feel welcomed into the church family. Pastor Peter's own time in prison (when he was involved, as a young man, in street violence) has led to acute awareness of the need to target and welcome this group of individuals.

RELATIONAL

Although Sunday worship is the main focus of planning and attention, ARC works with a range of institutions during the week. As Pastor Peter explains, 'We recognise that although we have a vision, a lot of other great organisations do also have good visions. We can learn from being involved with them. We also recognise that every connection that we have is two-way. We can give and also benefit from partnering with other organisations. ARC is not an independent church, we are interdependent'.

ARC is involved in partnerships with the following para-church

organisations:

YWAM (YOUTH WITH A MISSION): ARC have hosted YWAM teams for weekends throughout the year to build relationships and encourage their young people, and to take part in Sunday services.

YFC NEWHAM (YOUTH FOR CHRIST) Pastor Peter sits on the trustee board and ARC partners and serves with this exciting organisation to impact youth.

OM (OPERATION MOBILISATION) Arc partners with OM to carry out its vision for missions and has led teams to India and helps to train missionaries for the mission fields.

CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY CENTRE (CTC): Through the Near Neighbours programme (a small grants giving programme to support initiatives which draw people of different faiths and ethnicities together) ARC has built relationships with other faith institutions in the area, including the local Mosque and Hindu Temple, around the shared desire for safer streets. CTC is also helping ARC build deeper relationships with St Stephen's Catholic Church in neighbouring Manor Park. Members of the two churches held a joint Lent Course, during which Fr Sean gave a sermon at ARC and Pastor Peter spoke during a Mass at St Stephen's.

TRANSFORM NEWHAM: ARC is involved in Transform Newham's "Redeeming Our Communities" initiative to tackle the personal, social and spiritual causes of gang violence.

LONDON CITIZENS: Young people at ARC have also worked with London Citizens on securing a Living Wage for all those employed in the nearby Westfield Shopping Centre (next to the Olympic Park) – and establishing a "CitySafe Haven" (where shops commit to offer sanctuary young people in immediate fear of violence).

ACTIVE

ARC is committed to helping those who have had experience of gang culture. The daughter of one of ARC's pastors lost her life through gang violence, in a tragic case of mistaken identity. This motivated the church community to think about the nature of violence and why so many young people in east London end up in gangs. The day after the

murder, hundreds of young people flocked into the church. Although the congregation members were themselves grieving, they knew they needed to support this wider group.

With support from the girl's mother and funding from Transform Newham, young people at ARC developed the Stop Da Violence campaign. This seeks to educate and inform young people about the serious dangers of gang culture, as well as encouraging them to find positive ways to use their energy and gifts.

The programme began with an annual event which brought together young people to share their message against violence through rap, dance, spoken word, drama and other talents. Over 500 young people

have attended each year, and now a recording studio is owned and used in partnership with other local organisations as a place where mentoring is provided for young people.

Members of Stop Da Violence offer workshops and motivational talks in schools, and support and advice to the parents of gang members. Stop Da Violence has also developed a strong partnership with the local police, and with other organisations such and

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‘Redeeming Our Communities’.

London Citizens’ CitySafe campaign seeks to build a partnership between young people and local shop-keepers and business owners in order to ensure that if a young person is in need of protection, the shop will lock the doors and call the police for help. Young people involved through ARC have been clear that at the heart of the campaign is their belief that they are not the problem, but the solution.

CHALLENGES

Much of the energy and vision at ARC is inevitably provided by its founder and Senior Pastor, Peter Nembhard. Sharing leadership and responsibility is a key priority for the years ahead – but it is not easy when, for many of the congregation, life is chaotic and insecure. Another priority identified by Pastor Peter is deepening ARC’s dialogue with, and understanding of, churches in very different traditions. In particular, he is keen to build on the relationship with the Catholic Parish of Manor Park. This offers both churches an exciting opportunity for mutual learning, and for shared witness, but is inevitably a slow process, when so much is already going on in each congregation and community.

CONCLUSION

In one sense, the churches described here could hardly be more different. In terms of their theological traditions, their styles of worship and the size of their congregation, they represent a broad spectrum of Christian ministry. Yet there are remarkable commonalities – commonalities which illuminate and reinforce the message of the

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first part of this booklet. For all four churches, prayer and worship is absolutely central. For all, relationships come before action: there is a strong commitment to mutual responsibility, to the development of the gifts and talents of each church member, and to working with as well as ministering to those outside the church's walls. For all, the material and the spiritual are not competing priorities, but spirituality is expressed in practical, tangible care as well

as in the sharing of the Christian faith. And for all, there is a willingness to live with the tension at the heart of the Gospel, and not to collude with injustice.

Each case study ended with a section on “challenges.” This has a twofold motivation. The first is to highlight what these different churches can learn from one another. For example, in meeting the challenge identified by Fr Sean for the Catholic Parish of Manor Park – that of journeying out beyond the church community – there is much that can be learnt from the example of Stepney Salvation Army. Likewise, in meeting the challenge identified by Adam for St Peter's – that of more focused development of new leaders – much can be learnt from the Catholic Parish of Manor Park. Because of the mission they share, these different parts of the Body of Christ experience one another as mutual gifts, not as competitors. Deepening the bonds of love and mutual support between the churches is part of their witness to the world.

There is a second motivation for ending each case study with a section on “challenges”. These stories are told to inform practice, not to present an unattainable ideal. They need to be realistic – to name the struggles of these churches as well as their successes.

Theology emerges from practice; from the experience of God's people as they journey with their crucified and risen Lord. The theology and the stories we have offered are written with a practical intent. It is our hope that they will be of use to readers in many different contexts – so that the practice of wider church can be enriched by the witness of Christians in the most deprived and diverse neighbourhoods.

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CONTENDING MODERNITIES

This booklet draws on research which was conducted as part of the Contending Modernities initiative. Based at the University of Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, Contending Modernities is a global research and education initiative focused on collaboration among secular and religious universities, institutions and leaders. There is more information on this initiative

at **contendingmodernities.nd.edu**

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Contending Modernities



THE
**CONTEXTUAL
THEOLOGY**
CENTRE

*Equipping churches to engage
with their communities*