



# National Estate Churches Network



## Spring Newsletter 2012

**Bishop Laurie says Hello and Welcome to our sixth eNewsletter.**

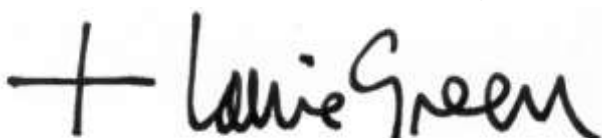
DO NOT read this NECN Newsletter if you think God is not interested in the poor! Only read it if you think the ethics of 'grab it and keep it' have brought us a society which does not do well by Housing Estate people. And only read it if you want to do something about this sorry state of affairs. Unfortunately, the Church in England does not have a good track record of putting into practice it's fine rhetoric about the poor – and yet time and again, as I visit our Housing Estate ministries my heart rejoices! Because you who live and minister in our Housing Estates are the Salt of the Kingdom, and evidence is there to prove it. Sometimes against great odds you are encouraging community, helping locals to find a voice, caring for the needy, worshipping and honouring God, and all this in places that are so often neglected or even shunned by the wider society. Even the Church at large has not properly realised how central the experience of the Housing Estates is to a right understanding of the Gospel in today's society.

But things are looking up! Some brilliant ministerial appointments are being made, and new Church resources are being found to support the work. And the Estates are being listened to a little more now that it's clear that answers which have come from other, more esteemed, parts of society have issued in its own undoing. So Jesus was right after all – blessed are the poor – for they may yet prove to be agents of our salvation.

The Church must listen to the poor!

So do enjoy reading this Newsletter, largely derived from the thinking at our recent National Conference, and thanks too to Jane Winter for pulling all the contributions together for us!

God bless you in your vital Housing Estate ministry!





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The National Estate Churches Network is for you if Christian life and ministry on the social Housing Estates of the UK are your concern. It is a free network for all Christians, ordained or lay, as we seek to support one another in any way we can. Learn more at [www.nationalestatechurches.org](http://www.nationalestatechurches.org) and send an email or phone to join the mailing list so that you can be in touch with others who share your interests. If in doubt, contact and check it out.

Bishop Laurie Green, our Chair, has recently retired from being a Bishop in Essex and so is now able to travel the country visiting Estate Churches, learning what's going on and networking so that we can share our stories and give one another mutual support. This month he will be visiting Oxford, Northampton, Coventry and Leicester on our behalf. This newsletter however majors particularly on our recent successful national conference. We're already planning for a number of regional conferences for 2012 so watch this space.

And one plea.:

Please let your friends know about us so that they too can receive this free newsletter. We all need all the support we can get!



# Framing the debate about Urban Living

## Doreen Massey

I am going to talk about how, over the last thirty years, estates have lost even the voice that they had. It's something that makes me angry, and in order to understand it we have to set it in its wider history and geography.

In the decades after World War 2 we got used to living in a particular kind of 'social settlement'. It was social democratic. It involved a positive role for the state in society (keynesian economics, a strong welfare state), a strong notion of 'the public', strong trade unions, relatively secure jobs... and so on. But from the 1970s that settlement broke down (in part because of the gains that had been made by working people).

The 1980s witnessed a real struggle over what would succeed that social settlement. It was a struggle won by Thatcherism and the financial City, and over time a new social settlement was developed, and we have lived with this for the last three decades. It is 'neoliberal', entailing a belief in markets and a denigration of the public sector, along with the dominance of finance, privatisation, and a prevailing ethos of individualism and competition.

And now that settlement, with the financial crisis, is itself at a moment of potential crisis. This is why I believe that this moment (which could last years) is one of real possibility.

That 30 years of neoliberal social settlement has had some major effects. It has entailed a sharp rise in inequality and the rise of the super-rich. It has entailed the decline of the old working class through the destruction of its economic base and attacks on its institutions. And more than that there has been the naming of, and denigration of, something called 'chav' culture. This too has contributed to a lack of voice for poorer sections of society. And all this has entailed, too, a real change in geography. Thirty years ago (the time of Faith in the City), estates were only just coming onto the agenda as sites of a 'problem'. The main concern was with inner cities. Now, inner cities - though riven with inequality - have become the base-camp of the super-rich, from where they conduct the global economy and flaunt their symbolic power. 'Outer estates', in contrast, have been residualised. It's to them, now, that the elite looks with a mixture of fear and loathing. Now let me draw some points out of this history and geography.



First: this history was not inevitable. Never believe them when they say there is no alternative – there is always an alternative. In particular, moments of crisis and of potential shift between social settlements are open-ended times of struggle – which is why I think the present time is so important for us to engage in. What won in the 1980s, and what we have seen over the last 30 years, is a class offensive. And it is continuing now with the current cuts and the dismantling of the public sector.

Second: we should try to understand our local actions and seemingly small interventions within this bigger picture. This could be so in two ways – in order to lend a wider orientation to those actions and in order to draw wider lessons from them – and to broadcast those lessons as broadly as we can.

Third: since we are today thinking about local places (estates) it would be good to think a bit about what we might mean by ‘belonging’. Over the last three decades belonging has become a focus of concern. It is a concern which seems to have been provoked by the disruption of senses of belonging to place all too often played out around battles over immigration, thereby dividing the working class and setting ‘class’ against ‘multiculturalism’. But maybe we can re-draw these divisions and ask, in relation to our estates and in relation to the country, not so much do we belong to this place but does this place belong to us? This is not a claim for belonging in an exclusivist sense (against newcomers for instance). It is not only in-migrants to whom this place does not belong; it does not belong to long-resident working-class people – of whatever ethnic origin – either. There is a basis for commonality here. It draws the lines of divide differently, in relation to money, and class, and social power. These are the real divides.

This question of belonging is, I feel, one that we need to address full-on (it is far more complex than anything I can say here). Take ‘the rioters’. It was often asked, with an air of wonderment, how the rioters could have attacked their own communities. It is not an unreasonable question, but maybe what was at issue was a longer, deeper, sense of dispossession. Or take the discourse of ‘aspiration’ to which so many politicians turn. Not only is this notion of aspiration deeply individualistic but it implies that the working class, or the estates that you are working in, and that I come from, are things one should strive to get out of.



How then can people nourish a sense of belonging? One might make the same point about proposals to limit council tenure to two years (when it would be reviewed) – how then can a sense of roots and belonging be developed?

What I believe we need to call for is the collective improvement of the lives of all who are in poverty, in contrast to the currently encouraged individualistic competitive aspiration to

leave behind one's local place: where to aspire means precisely to displace yourself.

And this leads directly to my fourth and last point. When I spoke at the start about the shifts in social settlements I referred mainly to the social and economic aspects. But that shift in the 1980s from social democracy to neoliberalism, entailed also a shift in ideology, in ethics and in values. What won in the 1980s was greed, individualism, competitiveness and a kind of acquisitive, trivial, consumption. And we were all enrolled, both materially and in our heads, in our imaginations, into a financial way of thinking. There was a moment at the start of the financial crisis, when those values did come under scrutiny. But the moment passed, and the crisis was blamed, not on the banks, but on public expenditure.

So what I think we have now is an economic crisis (that's clear) but no crisis of the ideology that underlies the economic thinking that underlies that crisis. So perhaps one of the most important tasks that faces us is to provoke a crisis of current values. We need to challenge the values that underlie neoliberalism and to argue for the importance of notions of the public, the social, equality, collectivity and mutuality. One of the saddest things for me about the summer's riots was that they weren't FOR anything. There was a kind of despairing emptiness about it all. It is not my place to make suggestions but I do think that churches could play a crucial role here, not just by doing good works but by drawing the wider lessons and arguments from them. Perhaps by pointing to new forms of social relations and new values being born within the old. And most certainly by condemning, widely and loudly, the currently dominant ethos of greed and individualism, and arguing for a different set of values. My feeling is that there is a widespread deep unease – people know this can't go on. And if that kind of message, that kind of argument, could come from estates of the kind where you work – from a voice that has been effectively silenced under the neoliberal social settlement – that would be a real triumph.

Doreen Massey

We are very grateful to Doreen for producing the text of her conference talk so we could reproduce it here.



## Questions and pointers

arising from Doreen's talk which you might like to consider with people in your own place;

1. We experience apathy, powerlessness, can't be bothered, not interested, a sense of dispossession. How do you get people on the estate to join in again?

People like us need to give voice so people can see that it can be done.

2. Belonging to.... has an element of possession about it. If we change the word to 'with', I belong with..... Whatever happens to me I still have a sense that I belong with... Is this one way in which we can turn the tide?

3. Notion of solidarity has gone in most areas of society so we need to re-invent notions of sociality which might be about place and how we relate to each other in a place when we are often thrown together with people not like us. Place offers the space for talking across difference. There is a real potential for rethinking what we mean by solidarity.

4. We have a constant sense of people going and leaving the estate.

We need aspiration and energy to get things to happen. When people join with churches aspiration grows because socialisation grows. What happens is the media bribes people to an aspiration of market economy. So the minute you grow people's communal aspiration they are likely to be drawn away from the area, or the aspiration itself takes them away. Successful estate churches never grow because people move on. So we need to focus on the aspiration of the community not the individual. It is a serious question about how advancement is not focused on individualism.

5. Why do people at home resist the protest? If we look at what's happened over the past 30 years through the lens of people who live on estates we see peaks of protest like CND, Urban programmes, funding projects, management of protest, management of decline and inequality. Faith groups contributed to some of these as well as stood against them. Church can become part of the management of decline as well as the encourager of solutions. In March 2011 government imposed a management of enforcement: the reduction of benefits against not working, children placed in prison for rioting, withdrawal of tenancy if you default on payment. "I hope this won't be the case for the next 20 years," says Doreen.

6. Belonging to a place is clear, but belonging as church is wider than just place. If you have money, belonging to place doesn't matter to you so much, and Middle class church can foster a sense of belonging utilising non-localised interest groups. Housing Estate people are rather different. Did Jesus belong to..., with..., or just identify with us? Are these the same thing or different?

You might like to take Doreen's ideas further by reading

1. *Landscape, Space and Politics:*

<http://thefutureoflandscape.wordpress.com/landscapespacepolitics-an-essay>

2. *Soundings on economics and ideology in the present moment:*

in the journal "Soundings: a journal of politics and culture", number 48, pp. 29-39

## Not defeated – raising up local ministry.

Joe Hasler and David Lloyd gave a presentation at the conference about how one parish in Bristol had set out to develop indigenous ministry in white working class culture by using apprentice learning styles. This involved the ordination of an ordained local minister and a licensed lay reader, as part of a local ministry team with each member developing ministry roles and learning together. To show how in this culture, actions speak louder than words, the woman who became a licensed reader told the diocesan vocations officer when he asked about her call that, “God never spoke to me, he just pushed.” You can see from this that apprentice training is more appropriate to her calling than books and lectures full of words.



Now that five other neighbouring and predominantly white working class parishes want to do something similar, and do it together, this presents us and the diocese with a challenge. It means trying to convince others that there is a difference between local ministry and indigenous ministry, and that the learning style needs to meet the inclinations of this culture. This is a significant challenge. But the Bishop and his staff think it important enough to offer this opportunity to the ministry division of the Church of England as a pilot.

The presentation was well received, amusing in manner, and the cartoon type slides in the background added further laughs as well as cause for thought. (For more see *Estate Ministry in Lockleaze* on [www.joehasler.co.uk](http://www.joehasler.co.uk) )



## **‘A Passion for the City’.**

Jack Maple Diocese of London

80 clergy and 30 laity from parishes in the Diocese of London that had received grants from the Church Urban Fund over the last 25 years, came together to celebrate and re-dedicate themselves to this challenging urban ministry. Many of these church projects are based on estates, so it was good to see so many practitioners present and still engaged!

Our new Bishop of Stepney, Adrian Newman, spoke to his sabbatical paper on urban ministry – ‘So yesterday’ – asking why urban issues have fallen so far off the agenda of the national church and many dioceses. Tim Bissett, CEO Church Urban Fund introduced three currently funded projects; a winter night shelter run by churches in Islington, a mental health drop in which has run for 23 years in the local church, and youth outreach and church planting on three estates in Haringey, (the location for our London Region NECN day earlier this year). Tim went on to outline CUF’s ongoing partnership with the dioceses; ‘Tackling Poverty Together’

Bishop Richard celebrated a midday eucharist followed by two book launches and optional tours around the estates built by Fr. Basil Jellicoe to replace the slums were offered during lunch. In the afternoon a panel chaired by Fran Beckett looked at where the Coalition is at in its relationship with the churches, and this stimulated a good response from the floor.



We will be holding a follow up event in January to make sure that some of our thinking on these urban issues will influence the next Diocesan mission document:

London Challenge 2012 – 2017.

Photo taken by Marlon Nelson.

What is God’s passion for your place?

How do you realise it?

Talk about it in your congregation, and don’t forget to share your story—it will inspire others.. Email [j.winter@nationalestatechurches.org](mailto:j.winter@nationalestatechurches.org)

## Bishop Laurie came to Blackpool

We were privileged to welcome Bishop Laurie to visit our estate projects in Blackpool at the end of October 2011. His visit meant a great deal to all of us and will never be forgotten. Just to have someone who understands estates from the inside and who takes such an interest in everything and everyone is such an encouragement.

On the Saturday, Laurie led a retreat for our volunteers which was tailor-made for our group. He had taken on board all the information given to him in advance, for example the wide mix of people and stages of faith. It was practical, involving and fun.

In the evening, we put on an open event entitled 'The Singing Bishop'. Laurie is a skilled entertainer with his guitar and his songs. In his youth, he actually sang on Broadway, so you can't get better than that. There was also an opportunity for people to ask him any questions – which they did! It was a very wet and windy evening so there wasn't a great turnout, but for those who made the effort it was a laughter-filled evening with the occasional tear for the sad songs. *Why does the winkle always turn to the right?* You may never know unless you invite Laurie for a visit. Just don't ask about the process of preparing jellied eels, that's all.



The local vicar on one of the Blackpool estates welcomed the Bishop to preach at the Sunday morning service and on the Monday morning Laurie came to our breakfast drop-in to see a glimpse of our bread-and-butter work (literally).

Working on estates can feel quite isolating at times, so to know the support of the wider Network is extremely helpful and beneficial. A visit from Bishop Laurie really does provide a sense of belonging to something bigger than our own little world. Highly recommended!

Judith Wray November 2011

## Bishop Laurie visits.....

Where next? If you would like Bishop Laurie to visit your patch then please be in touch with us.

While we are on the topic of visits, why not visit a neighbouring church during Lent or invite them to come to you and share one another's joys, and frustrations—that way we build up the Kingdom of God, and you will be surprised at what you discover in the process.



## **Give me anger any day.** **The Secondary Trauma of UPA Ministers?**

Having served the church for 40 years in Outer Estate Ministry, firstly as a community development worker, then as a parish priest, I wonder what we expect will happen to ministers who are appointed to such ministries. I seldom give too much attention to psychology, since most of my reflections live on the boundaries of theology and social anthropology. But I am moved to consider what we think will happen to people who are placed in urban situations to

pastor  
care for  
and love

those who are exposed to the extremes of disadvantage, powerlessness and sometimes poverty. I want to examine what the possible psychological responses may be.

The reason I think this is necessary is because the Senior staff at district, diocesan and circuit levels can build up myths about UPA ministers based on fragmentary and occasional behaviours. Particularly if they, or their staff, are subject to occasional outbursts of anger.

But first we need to clear two misunderstandings out of the way.

All ministries expose the pastor to people who have the extremes of unfortunate conditions to face. The people who minister in urban priority areas do not always face a greater degree of disadvantage, but rather a more persistent bombardment from its effects.

The second misunderstanding is that ministers differ in their psychological robustness. It is easy to confuse the notions of *robust* and *effective*. For example, being robust might be to retreat into insensitivity. Being vulnerable may well be the greatest aid to being effective.

When I ask, "What do we expect to happen to people appointed to areas with more than their fair share of disadvantaged people?" it is not a question aimed at filtering out the less robust, or pretending this is the only arena where ministry is psychologically challenging. It is a question of how the deploying authority can be supportive, given that what I suggest may well be in the face of the natural reactions of most support structures.

I will follow Josephine Klein's negative affective expressions in the full knowledge that in life we react in a mixture of these ways and not purely one or another. These are consistent with Bion's description of fight/flight patterns.

The first reaction I would note is that of anxiety or fear. As a minister said the other day, "*..outside my house the bus driver was stabbed. This happened not only once but on three occasions. And I asked if I really wanted me and my family to live here.*" One natural psychological response to fear is to flee.

Diocesan authorities, or other deploying authorities, become aware of these issues when the minister is constantly ringing up to find ways of improving security, have the fences reinforced and ask them to work with them in maintaining a siege mentality. When this gets expensive pastoral support is given. The result is a personalisation of a problem which is, in large part, systemic. What is not recognised so quickly is the reduced confidence with which the pastor is able to engage with parishioners and how this can evoke reactions that perpetuate a cycle of fearfulness.

Sometimes the fear is not so physical and leads to a psychological withdrawal. This can be done through that great desire 'to be more contemplative.' Of course, a true journey into the contemplative life carries with it a genuine bearing of the suffering of Christ and God's people. But for some it is a socially acceptable guise for psychological withdrawal from the reality of social care, and the sharing in people's anguish. Besides a desire for contemplation, many things such as academic study, keeping fit, doing management, can be more than hobbies and become pre-occupations that allow one to disengage.

These reactions can be observed by the deploying authority in different ways. But sometimes they serve to wrongly confirm that

the minister is not robust

that they make mountains out of molehills

or it is after all a difficult area in which not much can be expected.

There is a danger of institutional collusion with disengagement because there is not a lot of trouble caused for the deploying authority.

The second reaction that the deployed minister might express is to fight rather than flee. Sharing in people's lives, and the injustice, inhumanity and the sheer lack of generosity of the better placed, can only provoke in the minister a sense of anger. Often the sheer lack of generosity that disadvantaged people encounter is mediated through government and intermediate institutions. And this anger is empathetically felt by the pastor as they feel the complaints of the people. By and large this anger is not misdirected. However when such ministers find echoes of this injustice within the ways and means of the deploying authority, they are likely to express their anger. *'After all, the church ought to know better, otherwise who do they think they are. They deployed me to be here. Why aren't they with me at least in spirit.'*

Anger is part and parcel of social engagement with disadvantaged folk. The anger expressed is intended to be directed at the institution as it behaves in ways that echoes behaviours in other places. The cost to the institution is that occasionally it might be misdirected at particular people within it.

On balance I would prefer anger because it reflects engagement. It means the job is being done. Withdrawal is wasteful in every sense. Give me some anger instead, even if it lands on the wrong desk sometimes.

The problem in some dioceses, as it seems to me, is that there is no advocate for ministers in areas of high concentrations of disadvantaged people. If we are to deploy people in UPA's who are engaged and effective, then there will be a cost, not only to the deployed ministers but to the authority that deploys them. The need is, primarily, not to have someone who can fix the deployed, but who can raise sensitivity among the deploying authority and their agents. Perhaps there should be a U.P.A. Advisor. Maybe there should be a Dean of Disadvantaged Ministry. At the very least there seems to be the need for an effective feedback loop to the Bishop's staff or the equivalent body.

Joe Hasler

Klien, J. (1961): *Working with Groups*. (Hutchinson & Co. London)

Bion, W.R. (1961): *Experiences in Groups*. (Tavistock Publications London)

## Paradise Road: The latest CURBS Kit....Road Tested!

Children in URBan Situations (CURBS) is a small Christian charity set up in response to the need for resources and training for church-linked children's workers in inner cities and on outer urban estates. CURBS advocates strongly for an approach to children which starts in their urban world, values their spirituality and recognises their developmental needs. To order our resources (CURBS Kits) please visit [www.curbsproject.org.uk](http://www.curbsproject.org.uk) – there is a great selection to choose from!

### **A Review of the 'Paradise Road' Kit for working with 5-11s**

*From Cathie Smith, one of CURBS Trustees who works with children and youth at St Michael's London Fields. Hackney.*

We are in contact with many children and their families in this urban area of London. In term time we get an average of 8 children at Junior Church but it can peak at 19!! in the holidays especially. They come all through the morning service and often there are different children each week so it can be a challenge to know just what is most helpful to do with them. The Paradise Road CURBS pack proved a real hit. They loved learning about people living in streets very much like their own and made big posters of all the characters as the story of their lives unfolded week by week. The children who were there at the start loved giving an update to all the latecomers!!

The lives of the Paradise Road children are linked very closely to the life of Jacob covering issues and topics such as forgiveness, temptation and guilt, marriage, bullying, building self esteem. Both accounts end on cliff hangers with the children saying "Don't stop".

As we only have 40 minutes or less, usually I had to pick and choose from the fantastic array of activities such as creative prayer time, 'just for fun', bible family link etc. The pack would be good for a Holiday club or special day event. They loved getting to know Bert Brownlow, Crystal, Tyrone, Ngozi and Olu, Granny Myrtle, Mr Patel and all the others. They also discovered that Bill and Eve from the Garden cafe are real people in a real cafe and want to go and visit them one day!

It is a fabulous resource as are all the CURBS Kits linking the needs of children and their world to appropriate Biblical material so well.

## CHRISTIANITY AND THE NEW SOCIAL ORDER

A manifesto for a fairer future

*Atherton, Baker and Reader*

*Published: SPCK £12.99 ISBN 978 0 281 06360 4*

The main debate after the great crash of 2008 has been about how to mend the existing financial system. This book goes deeper, to ask how and whether our capitalist model can **deliver the good society. It is a valuable contribution.**

*Robert Peston, Business Editor, BBC News*

