

WEST HAM CHURCH LIFE SURVEY 1984 W

A report to the Archbishop's Commission on Urban Priority Areas.

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with the assistance of
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- Introduction

This study is a collaboration between David Driscoll and Greg Smith. It has arisen out of a number of shared interests and concerns. David Driscoll is Priest-in-Charge of St John's Stratford in the Deanery of Newham, part of the Diocese of Chelmsford situated in East London. His part of the study arises out of a desire for reflection after ten years in the ordained ministry. This involved a part-time course on Christian theology in urban industrial society organised by the William Temple Foundation, and choosing an area of research study. He chose to study aspects of church life in part of Newham. During his researches he met in 1983 the secretary of the Archbishop's Commission on Urban Priority Areas who expressed an interest in them on behalf of the commission.

Greg Smith is a sociolinguist with experience of living and working in multicultural communities in India and in Britain. He holds a part time post at London University as a Research Officer with the Community Languages and Education Project. For the last nine years he has been involved in community and pastoral work in Newham. He is also increasingly involved in the work of ECUM and is interested in studying church life in the borough in order to discover appropriate methods for church growth and evangelism, in the context of urban mission.

Results of the study are also being offered to the British Church Growth Association and the Evangelical Coalition on Urban Mission, as well as the Archbishop's Commission on Urban Priority Areas and the William Temple Foundation. The Archbishop's Commission have already received a submission from the Deanery of Newham. This is a very representative document from Anglican churches in Newham and one requiring serious attention. Although independent from the Newham Submission it is hoped that this report will be read in conjunction with it. The aim of our research is to produce a more objective assessment of the life of the church in part of the London Borough of Newham, which would confirm, or refute but generally throw more light on the impressions reported in the Deanery submission.

We have decided to concentrate on a particular area of Newham that includes most of Plaistow and Canning Town and to look at the life of the church and Christian para-church agencies in that area. We are saying

relatively little about the social conditions in the borough of Newham. Reports on these are accessible elsewhere. We have not simply concentrated on the Church of England parishes in the area, but have tried as far as possible to cover the whole range of church life.

Understanding an area requires a certain knowledge of its history. In this case it is very much bound up with the history of West Ham, that part of Newham which formed the County Borough of West Ham in the period before the formation of the Greater London Council in 1965. For this we are heavily dependent upon Colin Marchant's Ph.D. Thesis, 'Interaction of Church and Society in an East London Borough (West Ham)'. Along with the history and the survey there will be some concluding reflections and observations on the evidence.

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- 1) A Short History of Church and Society in West Ham -

- Introduction -

West Ham denotes that part of the present London Borough of Newham which made up the former County Borough of West Ham, and incidentally the ancient Parish of West Ham. The area is five miles east of the City of London, bounded by the River Lee to the West, the River Thames to the south, the present London Borough of Waltham Forest and Wanstead Flats to the north, and to the east a line passing along the present road called Green Street and then continuing down to the River Thames.

- Early History -

Although the most significant stage in West Ham's history was the latter half of the nineteenth century when there was such a remarkable increase in population, a phenomenon shared by many other urban areas of Britain, one ought to go back to the eleventh century in order to obtain a full historical perspective. Until the latter part of the twelfth century there seems to have been no attempt to distinguish between East and West Ham. The word 'Ham' means a low-lying pasture and the manor of Ham is recorded in Domesday in 1086 as having a population of 130 which apparently indicated a large village for the times, probably situated where West Ham Parish Church now stands (1). However, about this time there was mention of a place called Stratford where the road out of London crossed the River Lee on the way to Colchester (2).

The original crossing was probably at Old Ford, but early in the twelfth century Queen Maud, wife of Henry I, had the road re-routed a mile further south. She had built two bridges, Bow and Channelsea, where the river divided, and constructed a causeway between them (3). Bow Bridge, three miles north from where the River Lee enters the Thames, was the lowest bridge on

the river for the next seven hundred years. On the west bank was Stratford Bow (or Stratford-le-Bow, or even Stratford-atte Bow as for example in Chaucer's Prologue to the Canterbury Tales in his description of the Prioress) and Stratford Langthorne lay on the eastern side, so called because a 'tall thorn' was apparently a feature of the area (4).

- Stratford Langthorne Abbey -

Stratford Langthorne gave its name to the abbey, founded in 1135 by William de Montfichet, Lord of West Ham Manor and recorded in Domesday in 1086 (5). The abbey acquired land and grew extremely powerful soon controlling the entire area, its social structures, education and economy, a state of affairs which existed right up to until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536 (6). By the early part of the sixteenth century there were probably two main settlements in the area, one around the present West Ham Parish

Church and Church Street (E15) and Plaistow, both settlements probably existing some time. Except for these the area was mostly marshy to the west and south, while in the north there would be extensive woodland and forest areas joining up with the great Forest of Waltham which once covered virtually the whole of Essex (7).

- West Ham Parish Church -

The parish church, dedicated to All Saints, has its origins in Stratford Langthorne Abbey. When William de Montfichet founded the abbey, among the lands with which it was endowed was the land belonging to Ranulph the priest, from which we can deduce the existence of a church (8). There is an explicit reference to the church in 1181 when a charter of Henry II made the confirmation that the church belonged to the Abbey through the gift of Gilbert de Montfichet (9). The church was in fact linked with the Abbey right up until the latter's dissolution in 1536 (10). From then on until the early part of the nineteenth century local government was in the hands of the parish vestry meeting, composed in theory of the ratepayers who lived in the parish of West Ham and, controlling both church and civic affairs (11).

- Growth of West Ham -

From the sixteenth century until early in the nineteenth century West Ham was increasingly favoured as a place of residence and holiday resort by city merchants and professional people (12). Around 1700 there was a spurt in the growth of Stratford, no doubt due to its strategic importance with two new settlements to the north and east (13). By 1744-46 there was a continuous development from Channelsea Bridge to the area covered by the present Stratford Broadway (15). However, Plaistow seems to have been the largest settlement at that time although a study in rateable values later on in the eighteenth century shows the influence of London on the northern settlements in the parish and Plaistow's relative isolation.

This isolation was relatively short-lived as the Commercial Road Turnpike Trust built a road from London in about 1812. The new road, which later became Barking Road, ran from the East India Docks across Plaistow Marshes to East Ham and Barking with an iron bridge over Bow Creek (16). This road eventually became the main thoroughfare and shopping area for South West Ham. Early into the nineteenth century West Ham had already become a fairly large parish. Until then, although more populous than neighbouring parishes in Essex, West Ham was still largely rural. Its population in 1801 was 6,485 rising to 12,738 in 1841 and 18,187 in 1851 (17). After that date there was an enormous increase in population right up to 1901 (18), and particularly in the last thirty years of the century. For example the population was 62,919 in 1871; and 267,358 in 1901.

One reason for expansion was the growth of the railway network

making London far more accessible. Stratford became a junction of the Eastern Counties Railway in 1839-40 and the main works of the railway were moved from Romford to Stratford in 1847. The railway company started building Hudson (later Stratford New) Town in 1848 (named after George Hudson 'the Railway King'), and this area north of the station was extended in the 1860's eastwards to the present Forest Gate area (19).

South West Ham grew in the 1840's. The North Woolwich Land Company bought and developed much of the Plaistow marshes between Barking Road and the Thames in 1843. Prominent in this company was George P. Bidder (1806-78) a civil engineer who had earlier achieved fame as a child calculating prodigy, and he, as much as anyone, was the maker of modern West Ham. He was projector of the railway line from Stratford to North Woolwich in 1846-7 on behalf of the Eastern Counties and the Thames Junction Railway; it was originally intended to carry coal but later used extensively by the industries developing in the area. Soon after completing the railway Bidder became chief designer of the Victoria Dock which was completed in 1855 (20). New industries and two residential areas were developed alongside the building of the railway and Victoria Dock. These areas were Canning Town and Silver Town named after S.W. Silver and Company who set up a rubber firm near Ham Creek around 1852 (21).

Contemporary records show residential developments all over the parish. After 1870 there was a rapid growth with 30,000 houses built between 1871 and 1901. By that date West Ham had become a great seaport and manufacturing town with its northern fringe and residential area for professional people and clerks working in London (22). However, it ought to be remembered that West Ham's remarkable industrial growth had its roots right at the beginning of the settlement's existence. The Stratford marshes provided ample space for industrial development, and transport was easy because of the River Lee and its navigability. For example the river furnished power for a group of tidal mills already important in 1066 (23). During the next seven centuries mills in the vicinity of the River Lee gave rise to industries as diverse as calico-printing, paper-making, distilling and the manufacture of gunpowder. Until the nineteenth century most of the industries in the parish were in or around the marshes of the River Lee (24). The most notable of the industries prior to 1800 was the porcelain first produced at Bow in 1744 but transferred to Stratford five years later. 'Bow Porcelaine', as it was widely known by, stayed in Stratford only another 27 years, the factory moving to Derby in 1775-6.

Nevertheless the real industrial development only got under way at the beginning of the nineteenth century (25). A chemical firm, the first of many, was set up in West Ham in 1797 (26), and railways came to the parish from 1839 onwards. C.J. Mare and Company built a shipyard in the parish in 1846, while S.W. Silver and company began rubber manufacturing in 1852 (27). The

building of the Victoria Dock in 1855 gave rise to local growth of marine engineering, and the manufacture of marine paints and glues (28). It has been estimated that some 34 permanent firms were established in West Ham in the period 1800-1859. In the next sixty years at least a further 290 permanent firms were established in the parish with a remarkably even pace of development, about 50 new firms being established during each decade of this period (29).

A number of reasons have been given for this extraordinary growth in West Ham. First was the proximity of West Ham to London. Secondly, nineteenth century legislation had forced the more dangerous and unpleasant industries out of London into the suburbs. West Ham, then being part of Essex, was an obvious location for such industries to develop. Thirdly, there was the extensive waterway system of the Thames and the Lee which, with the docks and the railway, provided ideal transport facilities. Fourthly, there was plenty of land, especially the marshy area surrounding the two rivers, upon which the industry could develop, originally selling at very competitive prices. Fifthly, there was an absence of by-law restrictions. The local board of health, established in the middle of the nineteenth century, exercised little control over the new industries coming in. Even when West Ham became a county borough in 1889, the new council showed considerable leniency, partly because of the income received from industry through the rates and partly because there were increasing fears of unemployment towards the end of the nineteenth century. Lastly, West Ham was one of the first places to introduce electricity, and the borough used that fact in their wide advertising campaign to attract industry (30).

It was during this period that there was considerable overseas immigration into the borough from Germany and Eastern Europe as well as Indian, Chinese and West Indian seamen working at the docks (31).

- Creation of new parish churches -

Although it was not until the later half of the nineteenth century that the population grew so rapidly, the seeds for this phenomenal growth were being sown earlier. Even in the 1830's the Church of England realised that West Ham parish Church could not cope all on its own, and so two new churches, St John's Stratford and St Mary's Plaistow, were built, to be followed by a further twenty parish churches by the end of the century (32).

- Health and social Welfare -

Local government was pretty minimal in West Ham up to the middle of the nineteenth century. As has been mentioned above, Stratford Langthorne Abbey was the centre of local and ecclesiastical government up to its dissolution in 1536, and from then on until the early part of the nineteenth century local government was in

the hands of the parish vestry meeting (33). There is evidence that local government lagged behind population growth in West Ham. For example, only twelve members served on the vestry in 1839 although West Ham's population was already over 12,000. The number was increased to twenty the following year when they were given the additional responsibility for the fire service as well as their existing responsibility for the roads (34).

Traditionally the agency for social welfare had been the parish since the Poor Law act of 1601. This responsibility was taken over by the Poor Law Unions who were governed by the 'Guardians of the Poor' (35). After a cholera epidemic there was considerable concern about sewage and a local board of health was set up with responsibilities for sewage disposal and street maintenance, as well as some control over future development (36).

In 1857 Alfred, brother of the novelist Charles Dickens, paid a visit to West Ham as an inspector of health. The rapid rise in population especially in the south of the borough led to appalling conditions of poverty, housing and sanitation. This visit was reported in an article by Henry Morley in a magazine edited by Charles Dickens, 'Household Words' which made West Ham's plight national news and prophetically showed that local government in such a situation could not cope on its own (37).

- Nonconformity and Roman Catholicism in West Ham - Free Churches came to West Ham probably in the middle of the seventeenth century. A tablet on the wall of Brickfields United Reformed (formerly Congregational) Church records the fact that the congregation came together in 1662. It is quite likely that the church was founded by an ejected vicar of West Ham (38). Nonconformists originally met in one another's houses (cf church fellowships in Newham 1970 onwards), but 'meeting houses' are listed in 1720. From 1807 onwards Baptists, Congregationalists, Methodists and Presbyterians opened chapels in West Ham to be followed by the Brethren, Friends, Moravians, the Peculiar People, Unitarians and a host of other sects (39).

After the Reformation there are only isolated instances of Roman Catholic activity in West Ham, and it was not until 1770 that a Roman Catholic Parish of Stratford was founded, incidentally the first Roman Catholic parish in Essex (40). Their first actual church building was erected in 1813. From 1859 onwards a careful strategy of church building was adopted, with five churches covering the whole area and schools attached to them. They were soon to have relatively large congregations many of whom were Irish immigrants attracted to the borough because of industrial expansion (41).

Both Nonconformists and Roman Catholics tended to set themselves apart from the community. Church buildings were used for educational and social purposes as well as for worship, church

activities on the whole being very inward looking. This and the fact that often a strong commitment was demanded through shared beliefs and high standards of morality kept them separate in their 'Gathered Communities' (42).

- The 1851 Ecclesiastical Census -
- and the Daily News Survey of 1903 -

West Ham had a population of 18,817 in 1851 and followed rural trends in the percentage of the population attending Sunday worship. Nationally, on the Sunday chosen for the census, 30th March 1851, 7 million attended church in England, 36% of the population. By contrast West Ham's figures were 44%; of these 65% were C.of E. 25% were Nonconformists and 10% Roman Catholic (43%). By the end of the century West Ham's rural environment had changed irrevocably and there was a dramatic change in church attendance patterns; West Ham's population had risen to 267,358 with 44,000 houses packed into an industrial urban environment.

The Daily News Survey (1903), "The Religious Life of London", showed conclusively the direct relation of church attendance to socio-economic class and culture. Only 20% of Londoners attended church regularly, and the survey report commented that the failure to reach the common people was the failure of ALL the churches. West Ham was then slightly above the average with a ratio of 1:4.8, although of 52 outer districts of Greater London only Willesden and Tottenham had worse ratios. Of those attending church in West Ham, 32% were C of E, 56% were Free Church and 12% were RC.(44) Furthermore, a substantial majority of West Ham's churchgoers were from middle class areas (as they then were) of Forest Gate and Upton Park. The report made the forecast that the middle classes would eventually leave West Ham to move further out, and this would inevitably produce a "blight" in churchgoing. The problem of small numbers from the south of the borough attending church was regarded as particularly acute. (45)

- Mission in West Ham -

Even though there had been a dramatic change in the second half of the nineteenth century in both population and church-going habits, a report following the 1851 Ecclesiastical Census showed that well tried approaches to the working classes were not succeeding. It helped church leaders to realise how solid was resistance to their ministry, especially in the large towns (46). As time went on, it began to be realised that the parish church at the centre of the life of the community was for Anglicans a pious hope and the way to respond to the complex problems thrown up by the industrial development and population expansion was to try out a variety of experiments under the title 'mission'. The Plaistow and Victoria Dock Mission was the first, created as a response to the building of the Victoria Docks and riverside industries of Silvertown and Hallsville in the 1850's. Among the people supporting the mission was Charles Dickens in his magazine, 'Household Words'.

A small building was erected near the Dock gates and was used for education, recreation, welfare and for worship (47). Other missions followed including ones sponsored by the Free Churches. In some cases they were mission churches set up in a poor area of a parish (48). Some of these and other kinds of missions were the initiative of university colleges or public schools (49). Sometimes they were called 'settlements' with a not unconsiderable team of residential staff, often made up in part from recent graduates from the particular college supporting the mission. There was a tendency for these institutions to become highly structured, but some of the missions hardly remained much than a tin hut in a back street (50). Some like Mansfield House in Plaistow, had a considerable affinity with the local community, while others like Docklands Settlement No. 1 (later to be transformed into the Mayflower Family Centre under David Sheppard in the 1960's) were built on the lines of a university college with quadrangles, creating an image somewhat alien to the locality. Initially the missions were simple, basic and functional, but later many of them were to become much larger and more diversified in layout and function (51). However, all shared a concern to reach the unchurched and to try new, if at times rather unorthodox, methods.

- Blurring of the Lines -

The traditional churches also tried out various activities to reach those on the outside, for example 'Pleasant Sunday Afternoons', 'Brotherhoods' for men, women's meetings and Sunday Schools (often numbered in thousands!). Together with the missions and settlements they attracted a lot of people through their various organisations and activities, particularly between the wars. (52) Victoria Dock Mission in their 1929 report claimed to have a number of troops of Girl Guides, Brownies and Scouts, a girls' guild, clothing, coal and other clubs with a membership of 700 children, 300 men and 1,800 women (many of whom attended the weekday women's meetings because they were prevented from attending Sunday worship) (53). Another mission, set up by the Baptists, West Ham Central Mission, had a report in the Stratford Express of one of their outings in 1926, when 47 charabancs took 1,500 women to Southend. (54) Many organisations used a modified form of their regular Sunday worship at their meetings which included teaching in prayer and Bible reading (55).

William Pickering has suggested that these approaches, rather than 'making Christians' were merely a 'superficial encounter' with Christianity, giving children a mild inoculation against the 'disease of Christianity', and shielding adults from the deeper claims of the Christian faith and that such activities merely dissipated the energies of the churches. Certainly there is little evidence that people attending the variety of activities organised by the churches and missions joined the Church in any great numbers. Pickering further suggested that this church affiliation, rather than being an indication of Christian commitment, was more a sign of how Christianity was coming to be seen as a leisure pursuit. (56)

Missions were often set up with plenty of evangelistic

enthusiasm, only to lose their initial zeal as they were confronted with all kinds of social problems. As time went on they were sometimes accused of 'blurring the lines'. In an attempt to correct this two new forms of church life arrived in West Ham by the 1880's; the Salvation Army with its two emphases of evangelism and social caring, expressed in local citadels, housing, the evangelistic corps, and hostels for 'down and outs'; and the 1884 Sankey and Moody mission in Stratford, which was followed up by the building of a Conference Hall, for preaching and as a base for Christian agencies. It was not so different from the national network of Central Halls which were later established by the Methodists; in fact the Conference Hall was taken over by the Methodists in 1934 (57). Both laid greater stress on evangelical doctrine, the use of lay people in the total enterprise, and the desire to reach the unchurched in new ways, even if they were at times somewhat unorthodox (58). However, many of their attempts, while meeting with initial success, petered out as time went on. Later efforts to return to evangelical zeal and deeper Christian commitment by the churches and missions were made through the Salvation Army's 'Holiness meetings', Free Church 'Christian Endeavour meetings' and Church of England 'Missions'.

- Social Action -

Alongside evangelism came social action in the Church's attempts to alleviate the problems caused by unemployment, poverty, housing and population expansion. Traditionally churches had been the agency to provide personal charity; from there they moved through the provision of educational facilities into the social work field and into community involvement through housing programmes, leisure centres, hostel provision and unemployment relief. In fact eventually a whole network of agencies and programmes developed, affecting a considerable proportion of the population (60).

During the Depression in the 1930's the churches came into their own in setting up soup kitchens, labour yards and relief programmes (61), yet they also came in for a considerable amount of criticism. Evangelicals criticised the preoccupation with the 'social gospel', Labour politicians criticised the power, patronage and frequent insensitivity of church agencies. There was the general criticism of fragmentation of effort, the creation of dependency amongst the clients and most of all, of the 'poultice' approach of the churches in attending to the symptoms without going to the root causes (62).

In spite of these weaknesses the catalogue of Christian social action in West Ham is impressive in the provision of educational and health facilities, housing programmes, leisure facilities, unemployment relief, concern for minorities, hostels for inadequate people and in the community activities of the settlements. West Ham was responsible for a number of national firsts; district nurses, legal aid and 'Darby and Joan' clubs.

As well as these initiatives the churches displayed considerable flexibility, the ability to gather resources, and the continual creation of communities of care (63).

- The Church of England and West Ham: -

- an example of external control -

As an episcopal church Anglicans put a large store on the role of the diocese yet within a period of 70 years (1834-1914) West Ham belonged successively to the Dioceses of London, Rochester, St Albans and Chelmsford! It is hardly likely that ordinary people in West Ham had much say over these changes (64). When the new Diocese of Chelmsford was formed in 1914 it included within its borders the Borough of West Ham as it was at that time part of Essex. At the time with a population not far short of 300,000 the borough contained 25% of the population of the Diocese, and naturally there was some speculation whether the Cathedral would be located at West Ham. A committee was appointed and plans were drawn up for a Cathedral on the present site of St John's Stratford and the idea was promoted by the mayor. Rival claims came from Colchester, Woodford, Thaxted, Waltham Abbey and Chelmsford (65), and the latter despite its comparatively small population won the day. As people moved outwards from London into Essex and West Ham's own population declined, Chelmsford's central place in the diocese began to make more sense. Nevertheless, the decision to choose Chelmsford created bad feeling in West Ham. The mayor blamed the 'undue influence' of wealthy subscribers and county families. Interestingly the Roman Catholics made a similar decision in choosing Brentwood as the town in which to build a cathedral for their new diocese also co-terminous with the County of Essex.

Certainly there has been an uneasy relationship between the area and the Diocese of Chelmsford which still exists today as might be inferred from the Newham Submission. In ecclesiastical, as in secular matters, so often decisions directly affecting West Ham were made elsewhere. It has been argued that West Ham might have been better off as part of the Diocese of London. Compromise was made by locating a number of diocesan departments in West Ham including the headquarters for a 'London - over - the - Border' fund, making money available for those parts of Greater London which were within the borders of the diocese, especially inner city areas (66). Appeals were regularly made for funds; the first such appeal was a bazaar held at Stratford Town Hall in 1914. Characteristically the bazaar had no less than fourteen patrons from the upper classes including the Duke of Westminster. It was opened by H.R.H. the Duchess of Albany (67).

- Local Government -

West Ham was incorporated into a municipal borough in 1886 with four wards and served by thirty six councillors and twelve aldermen. Under the local Government Act of 1888 West Ham became a County Borough in the following year (68). At the same time there were the beginnings of a new political movement in Britain with roots in West Ham. The south of the borough was affected by the Great Dock Strike in 1889 which lasted three months and involved forty thousand men. An indication of the growing working class political consciousness was the election of Keir Hardie as a Labour candidate for South West Ham in 1890 and as its Member of Parliament in 1892, the first elected Labour M.P. anywhere in the country (69).

West Ham was also the birthplace of the National Union of Gas Workers and General Labourers (1889) later to become the G.M.W.U. founded by William Thorne at Beckton Gas Works (70). Like Keir Hardie, Will Thorne was very influential in the Labour Movement, taking over his seat in parliament in 1906 and remaining M.P. for South West Ham right up to the Second World War (71).

Local Government in West Ham developed in a similar pattern. Labour won a sensational victory in the municipal elections in 1898 winning control with twenty nine seats, a victory which was the first of its kind for Labour in England (72).

- The Churches and politics in West Ham -

The emergence of socialism towards the end of the nineteenth century showed an interesting variety of responses from the churches. The majority of Anglican clergy supported the Conservative Party while many of the Free Church leaders gave support to the Liberal Party. As the latter began to lose adherents to the new and growing Labour Party, so some of those among the Free Churches, notably Mansfield house in Plaistow, also moved over to socialism. Roman Catholic priests tended to support the Liberal Party though the occasional priest voted Labour in the 1892 General Election (73). Colin Marchant has suggested that the relationship between the churches and the forces of socialism went through a number of distinct phases.

(1) Initial Ambivalence

The churches had been out of touch with the working class thinking and aspirations during the population explosion of West Ham in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Labour Party felt that the churches were on the side of capitalism for the events between 1889-92 hardly suggested to them that the churches were on the side of the working classes (74). First the 1889 Dock Strike was carried through without any understanding or backing from the churches, with the notable exception of Cardinal Manning (75); secondly, only Mansfield House publicly supported the Labour Candidate Keir Hardie in the 1892 General Election. Lastly, the church of England and the

Free Churches made a combined deputation to the local council over a letting at the Town Hall to the Secularist Society (76).

Socialist leaders found many of the churches' concerns peripheral and time wasting, for example the disputes over doctrine and liturgical practice within the Church of England, and the disputes the Church of England had with the Free Churches over the 1902 Education Act. Clergy paternalism and the imported leadership of the Missions and Settlements were resented. There were uneasy feelings about church relief, accusations of inefficiency, the creation of dependency and the preoccupation with the symptoms of poverty rather than with its causes. The Labour Party developed separate structures, including 'Labour Churches', which almost cut themselves off wholly from the religious world (78).

With the growing secularisation the churches began to realize that their political influence was waning. Church programmes became increasingly introverted. Subjects for discussion had a much greater emphasis on the personal rather than the social, while serious political debates that once took place gave way to pure entertainment.

(2) Open Hostility

After Labour's success in the 1898 local council election, one of the controversies in which the council was involved was the 'Freethinker' being available in the local library at Stratford. This actually predated Labour's gaining control, but originally it was kept under the counter and only later openly displayed. The Freethinker issue became the rallying cry of the Municipal Alliance formed in July 1899 to 'break socialism' and bring about 'efficiency and economy'. The alliance received strong support from the churches especially the middle class Free Churches. One alliance candidate published a message from a Wesleyan superintendent mentioning the Freethinker and urging church people to vote against socialism (79).

The 1899 local elections reduced Labour's majority to one, and in the following year the alliance gained control of the council, a position which they held until 1910 when Labour was returned to power. The Freethinker issue was raised again with a deputation from the churches campaigning for its removal, the Council adamant that it should remain, and this was followed by heated correspondence in the press. The 300th anniversary of the Authorised Version in 1911 was celebrated with the giving of bibles to the mayor and the local libraries, and the occasion was used by the Church of England and the Free Churches to make an implicit reference to the anti-religious elements in local politics. Later in the year the churches opposed the opening of cinemas on Sundays (80).

In the November elections the Church of England and Free Churches put up candidates against Labour. While none of the candidates succeeded in unseating their Labour rivals, their interference

provided the alliance the opportunity to prevent an overall Labour majority on the council. This was not easily forgiven or forgotten (81). The Roman Catholics added to the hostility by arranging a meeting to oppose M.P. Will Thorne and Labour's 'atheistic and secularist' attitudes. Previously Will Thorne's speech at a T.U.C. assembly incensed Roman Catholics in West Ham by his scathing comments about them and his arguing for secular education (82).

(3) Uneasy Co-existence

Relationships were difficult for nearly fifty years. The gap was bridged by some individuals (83) and the stresses of two world wars helped to bring them together. The Bishop of Barking, however, could still publicly speak out in 1920 that socialism was detrimental to the Christian faith (84), and it was not until the coming of the Welfare State and post Second World War changes with the new opportunities and pressures this brought before the rift could be healed. From the political side the consequences of long unbroken years of power has calmed initial socialist militancy, and the realities of urban decline have compelled the Labour party in West Ham to move from doctrinaire philosophy to pragmatic policy. From the churches' side the growth of the Welfare State and increasing secularisation has moved the church from a triumphalist stance to a servant Church role. Both the churches and local politicians have suffered from popular apathy, but have been drawn together through a shared experience of urban decline and their underlying desire to face the increasing number of urban problems. The local authority is now happy to grant aid voluntary church agencies while the churches are increasingly ready to allow their premises to be used for a wide variety of community orientated activities (85). It would also be true to say that there is a shared concern about the possibility of any take over of the borough by either extreme left or right although many individual Christians would like to see the Labour establishment of Newham become more truly radical and are as individuals getting involved in local politics.

- Personal Morality -

There had been a preoccupation by all the churches with personal or private morality, and this more than once led to disputes with the Council. Christian commitment was often equated with respectability, dedication to hard work, personal discipline in the use of ability, time and money, the use of Sunday and discipline in sex; for many Free Churches and Evangelical Anglicans teetotalism and opposition to gambling could be added to the list above. This contrasted sharply with East End working class values and the social mores prevailing in West Ham where alcohol was enjoyed and Sunday was regarded as a time (often the only time) for leisure. There was a general interest in 'entertainment' as well as an earthy attitude to sex, and

regular participation in gambling (86). Certainly the churches had much more to say on issues of personal morality such as betting and drinking, and very little to say on contemporary social and political issues.

- Industrial Development in West Ham 1900-1945 -

After 1900 industrial development slowed down. The reason for this was partly economic with a recession taking place in Britain during the opening decade of the twentieth century, but it was mainly due to the practical fact that there was very little space left in the borough for any significant expansion. Thames Ironworks, into which C.J. Mare had developed, closed in 1912. Jute spinning was also short lived. Having come to Stratford in 1865 it had ceased production by 1904 (87). In both cases considerable hardship and unemployment were the result, but to a certain extent this was mitigated by the growth of new industries such as the new factories at Silvertown with large riverside sites to handle bulk sugar. Victoria Dock built in 1855, had been augmented by the Albert Dock in 1880 and the King George V Dock in 1921. Already by 1906 there were nearly 4,000 dockers and stevedores employed at the docks (88).

A pamphlet issued by the borough in 1910 described West Ham as the 'factory centre of the South of England', fringed as it was by industry right up the River Lee to Temple Mills, and eastwards along the Thames from Blackwall to North Woolwich. In the pamphlet West Ham claimed to be the largest county borough (excepting Bristol) south of Birmingham (89). There were 355 firms in West Ham, 228 of which had been established in the borough for over twenty years (90).

West Ham became more settled after the First World War with the Docks and heavy industry to the south and west of the borough and lighter industry and residential areas to the north and east. There was a complex of transport facilities and communications and the borough contained at least four major shopping areas. As time went on further firms were established but a number closed during the thirties depression and a good many more were affected by the heavy bombing of West Ham during the Second World War, especially around Silvertown and the area surrounding the Docks. West Ham's population peaked at just over 300,000 in 1921. Numbers fell during the Depression, but it was the Second World War that led to a drastic reduction in population through evacuation and the bombing. By 1951 the population had fallen to 170,993 (91).

- Poverty and the 'Guardians Controversy' in 1926 -

At this time the professional and business classes were still living in the Northern part of the borough. The Woodgrange Estate in Forest Gate had been built as an estate of large houses

before the turn of the century with middle class people in mind. However poverty, especially in the South of the borough, was often very acute. Employment at the docks was mainly casual and therefore always uncertain. At times of recession dockers were particularly vulnerable to possible unemployment. In 1907, E.G.Howarth, warden of the Trinity College Mission in Stratford directed a survey of West Ham's social and industrial problems. A significant conclusion from this survey was that the roots of urban poverty were less to do with individual responsibility and almost wholly due to prevailing economic forces (92).

The problem of poor relief came to a climax in West Ham over the 'Guardians Controversy' in 1926. The West Ham Poor Law Union had replaced West Ham Parish Vestry Meeting in 1836 as the responsible body for poor relief and this function was still theirs until the 1920's. The actual responsibility was in the hands of the 'Guardians of the Poor' who in West Ham's case had responsibility for neighbouring districts as well. Early in the twentieth century the Union had become notorious for extravagance and corruption, leading in 1906-7 to the imprisonment of five guardians! During the 1920's the guardians were again accused of extravagance (but not of corruption). Local resources had proved inadequate in attempting to deal with the widespread poverty caused by massive unemployment, much of which was long term. The guardians overspent and were compelled to borrow money. If however, money was to be borrowed from the government, the minister concerned had to be consulted, and he could withhold consent and prevent the guardians from being able to continue in office. To meet such a contingency Neville Chamberlain introduced in 1926 the Board of Guardians (Default) Act which empowered him to replace guardians with his own nominees. West Ham and two other areas received this drastic treatment. The government's intervention together with cuts in poor relief created much local bitterness (93). The churches did what they could to help, in trying to provide food and clothing as well as to create jobs, but the realisation grew that local resources alone were inadequate to meet local needs, thus paving the way to the Welfare State and the National Health Service.

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- West Ham Post War -

The Blitz in 1940 created considerable changes to West Ham as it did to many other parts of Britain. There had been large scale evacuation, and the borough, especially in the South, experienced heavy bombing. Over a quarter of the houses were destroyed as well as many of the factories. However, this did make possible extensive replanning and slum clearance. Housing was all but completely replaced in many neighbourhoods, terraced housing giving way to high rise flats and maisonettes, which in the 1950's and 1960's were seen to be the panacea to London's housing shortage. Many other families were also relocated in the

new estates in the outer suburbs and in the New Towns which were built in the S.E. region. What had not been foreseen was the break up of the community with its corporate sense of working class solidarity and the extended family.

- The Churches Post War -

A great number of West Ham's church buildings were damaged during the war. Many of those completely destroyed were never rebuilt, and those that were, were often smaller buildings replacing more than one church. Post war pressures and population decline forced closure and merger for many Anglican and Free Churches. Although there was a large gap between the churches and local people there was a felt need for a folk religion where the church buildings could be used for 'christenings', weddings and funerals. When a church building had to be closed this had a profound emotional effect on the locality. It was felt by many as if the church was withdrawing from the area, even as if they were bereaved (94). The process of secularisation was one with which the churches found it difficult to cope as schools, hospitals, social welfare and the probation service passed from the voluntary church agencies to the statutory services as well as from local to central control. The Church's control and influence was waning and its social role had diminished (95).

- Post War Evangelism -

The mood of the churches often reflects the prevailing mood of contemporary society. Certainly this was true during the 1950's with the Festival of Britain in 1951 and the Coronation in 1953 when there was a surge of optimism and an increasing interest in evangelism. Anglican and Free Churches gathered their resources for a concerted programme of evangelism and expansion. This included the Billy Graham Crusade in 1954, Radio Mission for East London, street processions, student missions and a variety of other evangelistic experiments (96). Working class converts were made but they in time tended to adopt the churches' middle class values and life style. Many of them, as well as the younger and abler Christians began to move out into the suburbs or further into Essex so that West Ham could rightly claim to be an exporter of Christians. However, this was not very encouraging for the Christians left behind. Not only had they to cope with the loss but also with the long entrenched resistance to evangelism by the majority of people who lived in West Ham. The decline in population led to further church buildings closing or being demolished and the feeling of desertion by the church this produced (97).

- Population Decline -

The 1951 Census gave the population of West ham as 170,993, less than 57% of the peak figure of 300,860 in 1921. The population fell even further to 157,367 in 1961. Unfortunately it is not possible to obtain separate figures for West Ham after 1965, but if the assumption is made that decline for the whole of the London Borough of Newham is fairly uniform then the population has continued to fall at a rate of just under 1% a year. In 1961 East and West Ham combined had a total population of 263,049, in 1971 Newham had 237,400 residents and in 1981 209,500 (98). Younger people and the more mobile have moved further out, although more recently the Council, (and pressures in the housing market) have been encouraging young married couples to stay by offering very good terms for first home buyers. It is still too early to assess the effect on population from recent developments in docklands, and from changes in demographic structure resulting from the presence of ethnic minorities.

Another factor has been industrial decline. For example a social audit in 1977 made the claim that 24,498 jobs were lost in the Canning Town / North Woolwich area over the previous decade while only 2,824 jobs had been gained. Further it was claimed that international companies, having made a profit out of the area, were now moving a lot of their concerns to more profitable areas, often to places overseas. The major decline has been the Royal Docks, once the largest rail / water transport link in the country. First the railway lines to the docks were run down. Secondly, the 1970's saw the move over to containerisation and the consequent loss of jobs for dockers. Thirdly a deep water dock at Tilbury contributed to the running down of the docks, and a sharp decline in jobs for lightermen. There were only 11 wharves along the Thames from Tower Bridge to Beckton in 1975 compared to 204 a decade earlier (99). Since the publication of the Social Audit that decline has continued. The Royal Docks today have virtually closed. Despite the formation of the London Docklands Development Corporation, numerous plans and reports, and the possibility of a national STOLport where the Docks now stand, the future of docklands is far from certain.

- Multicultural Newham -

The overall decline in population has not been the only demographic change that Newham has experienced since 1945. Many people have moved into the borough, both from other parts of the UK and from overseas. Immigration is nothing new for the area since even the oldest established families can only trace their roots to the urbanisation of the 1850's. Nor are ethnic minorities a new phenomenon. There were anti Irish riots in Plaistow as early as the 18th Century (31), and in the period up to the first world war significant numbers of people of German and East European origin, many of them Jewish were to be found in West Ham. There was local agitation against foreign labour and during the 1914-1918 war against 'enemy aliens'. There was also

an Italian presence in the area in the earlier part of the century.

At the end of the war large numbers of servicemen and seamen from the colonies found themselves stranded without work in Britain. Dockland areas such as Liverpool, Cardiff and Canning Town acquired growing communities of 'coloured' seamen from Africa, Asia and the West Indies. There were a number of streets in Victoria Dock, Canning Town in the 1920's which were recognised as mainly 'coloured' areas, and it is possible today to find black people in their 60s who were born in Canning Town. The small community suffered much prejudice and discrimination and occasionally violence, and undoubtedly many of the harsh racist attitudes and stereotypes which are deeply embedded in the culture of white 'natives' of South West Ham originated in this period. The churches viewed the coloured seamen as a mission field; there was a very active Mission to Coloured Seamen which for a number of years employed a black pastor, who originated in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) (31).

However it was in the period from 1950 to 1975 that substantial numbers of people from the New Commonwealth came to the UK and to Newham to live and work. In 1961 3.4% of West Ham's population was born overseas, in 1981 20.5% of the population of Newham was born overseas and 26.5% lived in homes where the head of the household was born in the New Commonwealth or Pakistan. Of course this last figure is only of interest because of the racist political and media perception that all people with dark skin pigmentation have something in common, that they are alien to Britain and intrinsically a 'problem'. And because such unthinking racism is widely accepted and embedded in almost every majority institution, they do in fact have something in common, and suffer special forms of deprivation and injustice in addition to those of all poor and inner city people. Only black people suffer from the immigration and nationality acts, only black people are targeted by the National Front for violent attack and only black people are likely to receive worse treatment by employers, public officials and the police simply because of the colour of their skin.

It is however, very important to recognize the wide variety of cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds represented by these people. Newham residents include large numbers of people with family origins in Jamaica and the smaller Caribbean islands, from Ghana and Nigeria and from some other African countries. South Asia is the place of origin of the majority of ethnic minority families in Newham. Several communities are present, Panjabi speaking Sikhs from India, Panjabi and Urdu speaking Muslims from Pakistan, Gujarati speaking Hindus from India and East Africa, Tamil and Malayalam speaking Hindus and Christians from Singapore and a few Sylheti speaking Muslims from Bangladesh. Most of the ethnic minorities, particularly South Asians live in the northern half of the borough, although the

concentration of council housing in the south means that increasing numbers of Afro-Caribbean people (who unlike the Asians are now represented in substantial numbers in the public sector) are to be found in South West Ham.

The change in the makeup of the population has presented an important challenge for the churches. White christian leaders have in recent years usually rejected the prevailing overt racism and often stress the positive and enriching nature of a multicultural society. Some have particularly welcomed the arrival of Christians from an overseas background and the renewal that might be introduced via the faith of third world churches. The churches have had to rethink their relationship with people of other faiths and to grapple with the political and educational questions of living in a pluralistic multifaith society. There has been some direct evangelistic work amongst people of other faiths and also moves towards dialogue and co-operation, most notably through the Newham Association of Faiths. However it would be misleading to say that the church as a whole has made an adequate response to the multifaith issue, for the average white person in the pew in South West Ham has very little understanding of the issues and in many cases is infected by a deeply engrained, but usually unrecognised racism.

The most difficult challenge for the churches has been to build and recognize the people of God where we can all be 'one in Christ Jesus'. The racism of churches which rejected the early black immigrants, although they were committed Christians in good standing, led inevitably to the development of 'Black led' churches. By the time white Christian leaders recognised what was happening (about 1970) they were forced to realise that they had to treat Black churches seriously; ideally on equal terms. Gradually relationships are being repaired and built up but there is still a long way to go. Meanwhile other fellowships are emerging, some of which worship in minority languages, thus presenting a further problem. It is also significant that in some parts of the borough there are Christian fellowships now which are consciously trying, and to some extent succeeding in becoming multiracial churches.

The fundamental question raised by church life in such a plural community is about Christ and culture. No thinking Christian in Newham can remain unmoved in the traditional assumptions of white middle class Christendom. Yet with a plurality of church and community life around us can we maintain the image of a universal yet particular Christ, who is not constructed after the variety of our own human images?

- 1968 Collapse of Ronan Point -

Colin Marchant has suggested that the collapse of the Canning Town high rise block, Ronan Point in 1968 following a gas

explosion, symbolically marked the end of post war hope and the beginning of urban disintegration. Nationally this disaster hit the headlines and provoked a debate about high rise flats and the living conditions in them, but locally it triggered the realisation that urban structures were beginning to crumble. The problems were reflected not only in housing but in increasing industrial decline and unemployment, in population mobility, in educational unrest, in weaknesses in the health and social services and by the emergence of new extremist political groups of right and left. (100) Although Newham was hardly affected by the wave of 'riots' in the summer of 1981 it would have surprised few people if such disturbances had occurred.

- Church responses to the urban Crisis. -

Churches in Newham have not been unaware of the national concerns with mission and ministry in the inner city, and in many ways have taken a lead. Newham Christians have learnt from and contributed to such initiatives as the Urban Ministry Project, the Urban Theology Unit, the Urban Church Project and the groups which have recently formed the Evangelical Coalition for Urban Mission. They have used their influence with the denominational authorities and both critically and co-operatively with the institutions of national and local government.

Later sections of the report show how many Christian Projects, Community Centres, para church agencies and networks as well as the established and newly planted churches have responded to the changing local situation. If measured by attendance at worship it is unlikely that more than 5% of the borough's population practice their religion (and a fifth of these follow Asian religions, three fifths Roman Catholicism). Probably half of the Protestant worshippers are associated with 'black led churches' and the mainline denominations continue to struggle. Not only do they have to cope with the seemingly intractable resistance to evangelism, but in the context of urban decline have to minister to huge pastoral and social needs, often with minimal human and financial resources while weighed down with the burden of inappropriate buildings and structures. Nevertheless there are signs of hope as many Christians have struggled on and survived, as many have recommitted themselves with a new earnestness to the work of the Kingdom in East London and as new forms of urban mission and church life have started to emerge.

Before going on to talk about the survey of church life in South West Ham in 1984 we present a series of questions which have been posed by perceptive Christians in Newham

1) The churches have apparently 'failed' in industrial and inner city areas. Why? How do we judge success? Does failure matter?

2) The diminishing influence of the churches: does this give them freedom to explore new forms of mission and service (which

perhaps are truer to the gospel)?

3) Is secularisation the enemy or the fruit of the Gospel? Can Christians in the inner city ever expect to be a church (in the sociological sense) rather than a sect?

4) How do we cope with the move from the assumptions of 'christendom' to the assumptions appropriate for the plural society which we actually live in? In particular can the 'parish' neighbourhood structures reflect the plural networks that form local communities and ethnic 'villages'?

5) Will inner city congregations find themselves increasingly out of touch, and at odds, with their parent denominations and suburban congregations?

6) Have the mainline denominations a built in self destruction mechanism in their structures for the inner city which hastens their demise? Can the structures be adapted or do we need totally 'new wineskins' to carry the Gospel? Cell groups, new independent congregations, ethnic churches or Basic Communities on the Latin American model?

7) How do we achieve confident leadership that reflects the nature of the inner city community? If leadership and clergy do have to come from outside how can they unlearn all they need to forget, and learn the cultures and skills needed for effective mission?

8) How do we resolve the conflict between working class (and ethnic minority) corporate consciousness and the middle class individualism which characterises so much of church life?

9) How do we avoid the pitfalls of professionalism, which put the church on the wrong side of the 'them / us' divide? This is a particular problem for para church agencies undertaking specialised forms of urban mission e.g. housing, social welfare and even community development work.

10) Social determinism: do social forces finally shape human groupings and institutions, even those claiming to live by different insights and having access to spiritual power? Is God really at work in the inner city? And if so, how and where?

11) What can we learn from the developing theologies and experience of the Two Thirds world? Can liberation theologies be developed in the context of the inner city, and more importantly can true liberation be experienced in individuals, church and society?

12) How do we retain the 'intrinsic and fundamental' while remaining 'contemporary and relevant'? How can the eternal truths of the Gospel and the Scriptures be 'contextualised' in an appropriate way to meet the needs of people living in a

particular social and historical setting?

13) If it is agreed that Christians should not be content with the alleviation of the symptoms of social problems but should face up to their causes what form of political involvement should they adopt? Reformist or revolutionary or 'detached but prophetic'? In the present political context must we stand alongside the left wingers in a quest for justice, or against them because of suspicion of their 'godless' motivation and tactics?

- 2) LOCAL BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY OF THE SURVEY -

- Census Information on our Area -

The area selected for our survey was a loosely defined geographical area of Newham including most of Plaistow and Canning Town. It comprises the South Western quarter of the borough bounded in the North by the District line and in the East by Green Street / Boundary Road / Newham Way / Freemasons Road (see map in Appendix 1). Our area roughly corresponds with the six electoral wards of Beckton, Ordnance, Canning Town & Grange, Plaistow, Bemersyde and Hudsons. Comparison with census data is based on these six wards.

The resident population of the area at the 1981 census was 45889 which was 22% of the total population of the LBN. The sex and age distribution of the population in the six wards matched that of the borough as a whole with 4507 (9%) retired people and 10570 children aged from 0-15 (23%). 4112 households (8%) consisted of just one person. However, on other indicators South West Ham differs from the rest of the borough in a way which suggests greater level of deprivations.

In the census 2858 people were described as seeking work (6% of total population and higher than LBN as a whole). Indeed in Beckton and Ordnance wards the rate of male unemployment (those over 16 described as seeking work) was as high as 25%.

Only 26% of households were in owner occupation while 56% were in Council property. For the borough as a whole the two types of tenure are almost equally balanced. In the wards south of the A13 there are in fact only a handful of homes not owned by the Council. Only half the residents (51%) have access to a car: significantly less than for the whole of the borough in an area where public transport is relatively poor (and much less than the national average of more than 60%). There are 1124 people (2%) living in households where the head of the household is a female lone parent (higher than LBN) with higher concentrations in Beckton and Ordnance wards. The population is slightly more settled than in the LBN as a whole with 4101 people (8%) reporting they had changed address in the previous 12 months.

On the other hand ethnic minorities are relatively sparsely represented in S. West Ham. 6630 people (14%) were said to be living in a household where the head of the household had been born in the New Commonwealth or Pakistan, compared with a figure of 26% for the LBN as a whole. 1298 were born in the Caribbean, 367 in E. Africa, 391 in the rest of Africa, 848 in India, 526 in Pakistan and 301 in the Commonwealth Far East. Within our area the settlement of ethnic minorities was unevenly spread with hardly any such people (especially South Asians) resident in the Council estates south of the A13 (Beckton & Ordnance wards).

Social class data was not readily available at the time of writing but it is a fair assumption that Social Classes IV and V are overrepresented, particularly in the Council Estates.

- Survey Methodology -

Because our resources were limited we could not hope to conduct a large scale survey involving hundreds of respondents which would have given a truly representative picture. Our strategy therefore was to seek an interview from every christian fellowship (23 in all) and all the major para-church agencies (6) active in our area. These were listed on the basis of our local knowledge; we believe the list to be comprehensive and we attempted to arrange an interview with every group on the list, with the exception of two Anglican Parishes which were geographically marginal, two black Pentecostal Church which were hard to contact, and a small gospel hall which we overlooked. Wherever possible we tried to obtain at least two and preferably three from each group, in order to cross check facts and interpretations as described by leaders, lay leaders and ordinary members.

The interviews were conducted by a team of six volunteers (including the writers) who were all involved locally in Christian mission and who met from time to time for planning and to review progress. Overall we had very good co-operation from all the groups which we approached. We have had no outright refusals to be interviewed. Our failure to achieve the ideal response rate of 3 interviews for each group approached, results entirely from our lack of time and resources and the weakness of the flesh in terms of perserverance on the part of the interviewing team as the holiday season approached. Although we failed to obtain any interviews from five of the local churches we do have some information about most of them since, in addition to the interviews, Greg Smith visited most of the places of worship for the regular Sunday morning worship in order to observe what was going on. Most of the fieldwork took place in May, June and July 1984.

We aimed to design a questionnaire which would give a profile in both qualitative and quantative terms of the life of each church. The questions (see Appendix 2) covered the social and demographic make up of the congregation, the style of worship and leadership, the understanding of mission and relationship to the wider community and practical and financial situation of the church. As a this was a preliminary (almost pilot) survey it was not advisable to proceed in terms of formal hypotheses about relationships between variables. Rather because of our heavy local involvement we could profit from our own implicit network information (and information network) while trying to maintain an appropriate reflective distance for the sake of objectivity.

The data gathered by the interviews was not really suited to quantative statistical analysis, since there were many answers which could not be easily coded and much of the numerical information was based on "guesstimates" made by the respondents.

Furthermore there was the problem of having three questionnaires from some churches and only one from others, often with contradictory reports of basic facts. Our solution in terms of analysis was to create on computer a file consisting of the basic parameters and key notes with a record for each church. This required a fair number of coding judgements (for which GS takes responsibility) but enabled us to undertake a rapid search and ordering of basic data and a fair amount of simple numerical calculations, which could then be backed up by detailed reference to the questionnaires themselves, and if necessary to observation and local knowledge.

- Limitations to the Findings -

It has proved very difficult to make broad generalisations about the Christian presence and church life in South West Ham since each of the institutions (and even individuals) who were interviewed present a unique picture. Many different criteria and typologies could be applied in the analysis of what is happening but few of them would be clear cut and it would still not account for the networks of relationships between individuals and organisations. The primary division which we follow is between the para-church agency and the local church, although there are institutions which span even this divide. Within the churches the major differences depend not so much on denomination or theology but on whether a local fellowship is mainline or independent, traditional or newly planted, white, black or multi-ethnic.

- 3) Para Church Agencies. -

A para church agency can be defined as an institution or group of people, who are involved in some sense in Christian mission, but do not consider themselves a church, or act as such, in terms of meeting for regular (public) worship. Such institutions have a variety of relationships with the local and denominational churches in terms of finance, control and fellowship. Typically they employ large numbers of full time and/or part time staff, hold extensive buildings and draw financial support from outside sources (e.g. government and Council grants, denominational bodies, trusts etc.) In most cases the thrust of their work is towards community work and social projects.

There are at least half a dozen such para church agencies active in South West Ham. Between them nearly 100 people are employed either full time or part time in some activity which is related to Christian mission. It is of course very difficult to assess what these 100 people represent, included in them are caretakers and cleaners as well as Franciscan friars, youth workers and evangelists. Not all these employees are committed Christians and some who are may not consciously relate their work to a 'missionary calling'. However suppose only half consider themselves to be professional 'urban missionaries' it is still a substantial body of people who are involved in the work of the Kingdom on a regular paid basis.

The main para church agencies are Newham Community Renewal Programme, Mansfield House University Settlement, Mayflower Family Centre, In Contact Ministries, Society of St. Francis, Lawrence Hall and West Ham Central Mission. Since each of these has a unique history and role it is best to describe each in turn.

- The Newham Community Renewal Programme. -

The Renewal Programme is one of the largest Christian organisations in the borough and has the most overarching role, even though it has no geographical base in the survey area. It was founded in 1971 largely at the initiative of a group of local ministers. In the earlier years it had little finance or resources, but quite a lot of charisma. More recently it has acquired property, major grants for salaries and a more institutionalised structure. It is significant that a large number of the staff teams of the mid 1970's (there was a very rapid staff turnover at times) have settled in the borough and are deeply involved in the life of the church and community.

Nominally at least every church of every denomination is considered a member of the Programme and may vote to elect the

Executive Committee who control policy in collaboration with the Director and staff team. A total of 36 people are presently on the payroll, 12 of them full time (all professionally trained and incomers). Four of them are ordained clergy, the others professional community workers. Finance for these posts come mainly from local and national government (80%), 15% from trusts and donations, 4% from denominational sources and only 1% from local Christian giving. The part time staff include secretarial and administrative personnel and teachers in the English as a Second Language Project.

The Programme works at a number of different levels,

1) As a resource and network agency for local churches, for example through a monthly newsletter, through printing services and its audio-visual resources bank, and through co-ordinating, financing and servicing the children's holiday projects of local churches.

2) Through its three neighbourhood community centres, which are redundant churches in the northern half of the borough. They have been structurally renovated in the last few years and now provide homes for about 50 different community groups including 5 Christian churches. Members of the user groups are encouraged to play a part in the running of the centres on community development principles.

3) The Programme's own specialist projects, which are generally perceived to be in the 'race relations' field. Specialist members of staff come from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, and include not only Christians. There is an English as a Second Language project for Asian women, an Afro-Caribbean project, a hostel project for homeless young people and an Out of Work Centre for the young unemployed.

The Renewal Programme affirms the plural nature of the local community and the pluralism within the churches, seeking to encourage and support them in their various forms of mission. It advocates an open dialogue approach, welcomes all comers, and uses as far as possible a community development approach where local people can take responsibility for their own lives. Alongside this it is possible to detect inbuilt tendencies towards professionalisation. It clearly sees its role as a political one, diagnosing needs and problems in the community, involvement and lobbying on behalf of the community and churches on such issues as racism, the GLC, housing, education and Docklands Redevelopment. It often acts as a representative and intermediary between the major denominations, theological colleges etc. and the local church and community. As far as possible it works in collaboration with local statutory agencies such as the Education Department and Probation Service.

- Mansfield House -

Mansfield House University Settlement is one of the oldest para-church agencies in the borough and is located at the centre of our survey area. Founded as a Free Church settlement it is formally ecumenical, although for the last forty years or more the warden has always been an Anglican priest of the High Church tradition. Over the years the Christian emphasis of the settlement became relatively submerged and activities centred on the Youth and Sports Clubs based in the massive Fairbairn Hall, and the sports grounds in East Ham and Lambourne End, Essex. 600 members still use the facilities and a number of other user groups are beginning to use the premises. Six full time staff are employed plus a dozen part time youth leaders and a further 11 secretarial or manual staff. A team of 30 volunteers is also involved in various capacities. A number of residents, often people spending a year before college live in Mansfield House and take part in the various activities.

Recently a new warden and assistant have been appointed and major changes are beginning to take effect. The theology of the Kingdom of God is at the heart of the new theological emphasis. Therefore the new strategy involves openness and co-operation with wider Christian and community networks, an attempt to revitalise the spiritual roots of the work of the settlement and an expansion of radical urban mission initiatives alongside local people, especially the most deprived. A major appeal for structural renovations has recently been launched. With the major changes in emphasis the staff are very conscious of the potential for conflict, first of all between established user groups and new activities and secondly with the Board of Governors who are influential and rich people who do not live in Newham. One new project links Mansfield House with the Renewal Programme is the 'Conflict & Change Project' which has trained local volunteers to take part in a disputes reconciliation service.

- Society of St. Francis -

The Society of St. Francis is a para-church agency of a rather different kind being a well established religious order within the Anglican church. They have had a house in Plaistow since the Society was re-ordered in 1952, although their predecessors, the Society of the Divine Compassion was founded in Plaistow in 1894. At present they have nine permanent members there, two of whom are women from the sister Order. Besides their community life of prayer and religious discipline and their structural links with the mother house they are involved extensively in the local church and community. In particular they help take services in the local parishes and are involved in many of the local Christian networks and community projects. One specific project

in which they take a leading part is the 'Helping Hands Scheme' a pilot good neighbour scheme in Plaistow. One of the strengths of the friary is that they represent an independent body who are free to engage in urban mission and ministry without being tied to the institutional structures of any local parish or para church agency, although they still retain links with the Plaistow Team Ministry.

- The Mayflower Family Centre -

The Mayflower Family Centre in Canning Town also started its life as a settlement and this is still to a certain extent reflected in some of its structures and architecture. Although the buildings have been almost completely renovated in the last five years they still face inwards onto a pleasant garden and provide housing units in a manner which is reminiscent of a cross between a college and a colonial mission compound. The people housed there are 'residents', young people who move into the area and work locally while giving spare time to youth and church work, or longer term 'stay-incomers' some of whom are on the Mayflower staff team. The fact that an outside Council of influential people control major decisions and funding is also a traditional 'mission' structure.

The 'golden age' of the Mayflower was undoubtedly the early 1960's when David Sheppard and George Burton headed up the work, and when a substantial number of young people were brought into Christian discipleship. The controlling vision at that period (which is well documented in 'Built as a City' (1) and in the Hewitts' biography of George Burton (2)) was to plant an indigenous church appropriate to the culture of Canning Town. Many of the young converts from that era are still active Christians; middle aged now but still living locally and active in the church. However several key people left the Mayflower in 1977 and are now running their own independent House Church, and almost all of the early converts have been upwardly socially mobile. Nonetheless the achievement of the earlier period is unique in that there are hardly any white male Christians born and brought up in Canning Town of that generation to be found in the churches of South West Ham who did not come to faith through the Mayflower. In addition the role of the Mayflower in training many of the professional Christians involved in urban mission and church work in different parts of the country is of immense significance, despite the amusedly negative attitudes of most local people to the 'Mayflower wallies' as the residents are currently known.

The Mayflower is officially an ecumenical foundation but has always had an Anglican warden and emphasis. The church fellowship operates officially as a private chapel within the local parish. The fellowship at the Mayflower has approximately 70 people in membership of whom about 50 may attend any one service, the evening one being more popular. It is significant

that nearly half the congregation is made up of staff and their families, residents and other incomers. It has not been easy in recent years to integrate any youngsters who have found a Christian faith in the context of the youth work into the existing structure of the church. The worship is controlled by a locally elected chapel committee, and there are good relationships and united activities with the parish church and the local Methodist church.

The full time professional staff at the Mayflower number about a dozen and there are about the same number of part time or services staff. Besides the warden there are two pastoral staff (one working partly with the parish church), three full time Youth Workers, a community worker, day nursery staff, sports hall manager and office staff. Funding for these posts comes about 60% from government and local authority sources and 40% from Christian giving from outside the area, either by individuals, churches or institutions.

A wide range of community activities take place at the centre. The Youth Club is open most nights, one night a week as a family club, and once a week in the middle of the day for the unemployed. There is a pensioners' lunch club each weekday and a full time nursery school. The Sports Hall provides activities for many different tastes from bowls to karate. There is also involvement in various MSC schemes for the young unemployed, and a variety of other community groups.

There is an inherent ambiguity as to whether the Mayflower is mainly a para-church institution engaged in urban mission through youth and community work or a worshipping Christian fellowship. Recently these tensions have come to the fore with conflicts about different professional and theological criteria for judging the effectiveness of the work, sharpened by personality clashes within the team. It is a matter of some debate whether such a large scale, professionalised institution, controlled and financed from the outside can ever coexist alongside a non-dependent local Christian congregation, which is trying to be a community reflecting the Kingdom of God.

- In Contact Ministries -

In Contact Ministries is one of the more recent para-church agencies, having begun work in Newham only in 1976. It is based in a redundant Anglican church in Plaistow which has been substantially renovated. The main vision was to plant new inner city churches, particularly amongst ethnic minorities, and to engage in evangelism to people of other faiths. Three churches in the borough owe their origins to the work of In Contact; one has now become completely independent of the parent body (not without considerable labour pains), the second is a fairly mixed gathered congregation using the group's main building and the third is a small Tamil speaking fellowship which meets in a hired

church hall.

A second major emphasis of In Contact Ministries has been the training of Christian workers for cross cultural evangelism. The Henry Martyn Institute was set up as a study centre and has attracted support and students from many parts of the world. It is questionable if this approach has had any substantial impact on the local churches or communities. It is very hard to tell since the relationship between this agency and the local churches has been cautious from the outset and in recent years exceedingly difficult. One of the significant effects of the presence of In Contact has been in the human resources it has helped to bring to Newham and other inner city areas. Considerable numbers of committed and gifted Christians, including some from Asian cultural backgrounds have been brought to the borough. Most of them are no longer working with the agency but are still actively involved in a long term commitment to urban mission through other local churches.

- Lawrence Hall -

The final para-church agency in the South West part of the borough is Lawrence Hall, a large Christian community centre in Plaistow. It is linked informally through its staff with the local Baptist church, and is a central point for many of the Christian and community networks in the borough. Besides the major complex of halls and meeting rooms there are over 50 housing units which are let to older people and young Christian couples. The halls cater for some 40-50 community groups including four homeless, new and growing Christian fellowships. About 16 full time professional workers are employed at the centre with funding coming from rents, local government grants and the Aston Charities. The major fields of activity are in pre school childrens work, adult education, the Volunteer Bureau, a Luncheon Club and day centre for OAP's and a Community Industry project which provides work experience for nine youngsters.

Lawrence Hall represents a philosophy of openness to the community, encouraging community development as a way to break the cycle of dependency, and is a healthy centre of collaboration between the statutory caring agencies, the voluntary sector and the churches. It appears to be sufficiently well resourced and staffed to run smoothly, despite the intensive programme of activities with over 1000 people crossing its threshold each week. However, it must be questionable whether more than a few people perceive the overall Christian vision of the centre, when they use it simply as a place to meet. Is it possible in such a context to communicate a distinctly Christian ethos of pastoral care and the proclamation of Good News? Can the Christian fellowships which worship there come to identify with the mission thrust of the centre and contribute more fully to its life?

- Other Agencies -

In addition to the para church agencies we have described it is also worth mentioning the activities of housing associations with Christian roots. The Shaftesbury Society has two major sheltered housing units in Canning Town, which have substantial links with local churches, and are also responsible for some of the housing attached to the Mayflower. West Ham Central Mission, which is now structurally independent of the local Baptist church also has sheltered housing, and a hospice wing for terminal patients. There is probably an increasing role for such housing projects in the area, especially in view of the growing number of elderly people.

There is also a Convent attached to the local Roman Catholic Church but we were unable in the time available to investigate its role in the life of the parish and as a para church agency.

NOTES

1. Sheppard, "Built as a City" (1974), Hodder & Stoughton
2. Hewitt D. & J. (1969) "George Burton: A Study in Contradictions" Hodder & Stoughton

- 4) The Local Churches -

We were able to identify a total of 23 distinct Christian fellowships regularly meeting in our area in the spring of 1984. We approached 18 of them for interview, (actually achieving interviews with 15 of them). From personal contacts and visits we have some reasonable impression of all the rest.

Of these 23 churches the denominational breakdown was:

RC	1
C of E	6
Methodist	1
Baptist	1
URC	1
Elim	2
AOG	1
Other Pentecostal	4
Independent	6

- Staff -

Eight of these fellowships have no full time minister or christian worker serving them. Ten have a single person ministry, the RC church has two priests and the remaining four churches have more than two full time workers, in three cases thanks to a particular association with a para church mission agency. In three or four cases the sole person in pastoral charge is in fact working as part of a ministry team in the form of a Methodist circuit or Anglican team parish. In only two cases is the main leader of a fellowship female, although one of the independent churches now has one female elder among five and several groups have one or more full time female workers on their staff.

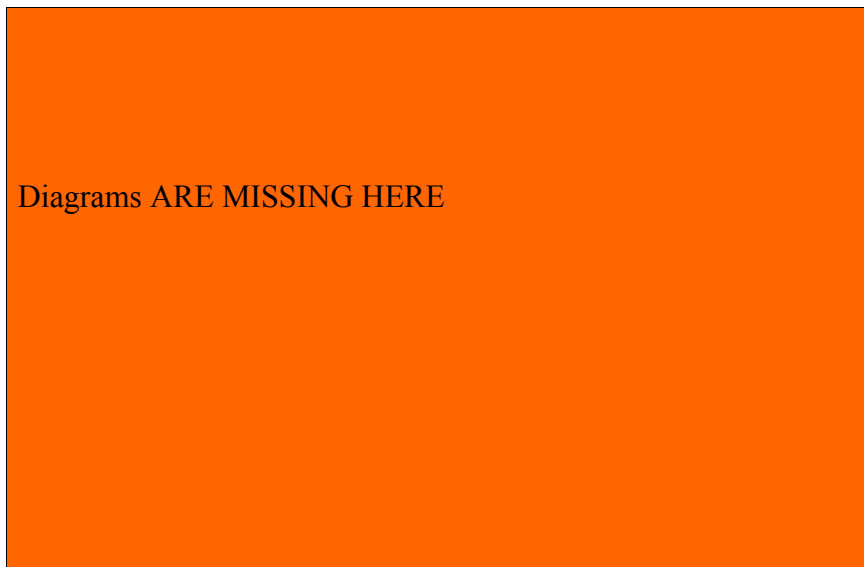
- Membership and Attendance -

Membership and attendance figures for churches are notoriously difficult to collect and analyse. Some of our interviews revealed that different members of the same congregation have widely different perceptions of the numbers attending. Therefore our figures may be somewhat unreliable except for the fact that judgements between conflicting estimates have been made on the basis of careful counting during our visits to worship.

Only two of the churches have a regular worshipping congregation of over 100 members, and only 3 others have over 50. The remainder have congregations in the order of 20-35 people with a few cases of 15 or less worshippers (see Figure 1). The total attendance figures (for the most popular service) reported by the churches visited was just over 1000 people. If we add to this an

estimated 150 people for the churches outside our interviews, and add a proportion to account for children (who may not have been counted) and for the church members who can't or don't attend regularly it seems unlikely that more than 1500 people ever attend Christian worship in S.West Ham. Undoubtedly some of these worshippers come from outside the area, probably more than the figure for those who commute out. It seems unlikely therefore that more than 3% of the population (46,000) of the area ever go to church. Probably a third of these are Roman Catholics leaving a mere 1000 shared between the 21 Protestant Churches. It is interesting to reflect that probably 50 to 100 of these (5-10%) may be full time or part time Christian workers employed by the various para-church agencies.

Figure 1



- Social Breakdown of Worshippers -

Sex: In terms of social breakdown of worshippers one significant trend is found in almost all the fellowships (except RC) interviewed or observed. Women outnumber men in an average ratio

of at least 60/40 or 65/35. This appears to be so irrespective of the age and ethnic makeup of the congregation, though obviously churches which have high numbers of OAPs are likely to have higher proportions of women on demographic grounds alone.

Age: Most of the local worshipping adults (at least in Protestant churches) appear to be in one of two age groups over 60's or under 35s. Several churches have about equal numbers of the two groups, with a gap in the middle. There are at least three fellowships where two thirds or more of the members are under 35. In each case the young people tend to be highly committed and gifted people, many of them being incomers and/or stay-incomers to East London, some who are in the area simply because of their circumstances in employment, housing or education, others who feel a very definite call of God to be involved in the life of the inner city community and church.

There are several others where two thirds or more of the congregation are pensioners, who have lived locally all their lives. Substantial numbers of people in the 35-60 age group are found only in a few special cases. These are the RC church, one of the Black led Pentecostal fellowships (and probably amongst others for which we do not have detailed data). The presence of middle aged people in the Black led churches reflects the timing of the West Indian migration to the UK (young adults in the late 1950's and early 1960's). Some of the small Black Pentecostal groups have few young people but all the larger and growing ones that we know have a very active and committed group of teenagers and young adults. Finally there are significant numbers of middle aged people in the two Canning Town groups which have their origins in the work of David Sheppard and George Burton amongst young people at the Mayflower in the early 1960's.

Class: South West Ham is traditionally a solidly working class area yet with few exceptions the churches are not solidly working class. We do not have detailed data here but our impression is that in most churches the older people may have upper (respectable) working class or lower middle class origins, while the majority of committed young people are well educated and doing middle class or professional work. Again the RCs and the older generation of Black Pentecostals may be exceptional in the higher proportion of semi and unskilled manual workers in their congregations.

There is some evidence of the phenomenon of 'redemption and lift' in the Black Pentecostal Churches where active young Christians are seeking college education and finding employment (which is amazing in itself) in non-manual work. This can also be seen amongst some of the local grown leaders in the churches, most notably amongst the 1960's Mayflower converts, who now with only one exception among those we know have white collar or professional jobs.

- Ethnicity and the Churches -

There are significant differences in the ethnic makeup of the various churches in South West Ham. The mainline denominational churches tend to contain mainly white British ethnics, although almost all of them have a few members, and usually a larger number of fringe attenders from other ethnic backgrounds. It seems very unlikely that black people are represented in such churches, especially in leadership positions, at a level corresponding to their presence in the neighbourhood as a whole. There are certainly no black ministers or full time church workers in pastoral charge, and as far as we know no black churchwardens, deacons or church stewards in any of the mainline white denominational churches in the area we surveyed, (although we do know of cases in other more multiracial parts of the borough). The two 'whitest' groups are the Mayflower and its offshoot where there has been a strong emphasis on developing a christian lifestyle appropriate to the local working class (white) culture.

Black leadership does however exist and appears to have been very effective when freed from the institutional constraints of the white churches. Black led churches have, almost without exception entirely black congregations. In most cases 'black' means people of West Indian origin (including Black British young people), though recently we have heard of a mainly Ghanaian fellowship starting to worship in the area, and elsewhere in the borough there is an active Nigerian church. Congregations in black churches are often recruited on the basis of personal networks and loyalties with the result that many members travel from a good distance rather than to the nearest church of their denomination.

There are very few people of South Asian origin in the congregations studied in South West Ham, even allowing for the fact that relatively few such people live in the area. In all the congregations for which we have data there are probably less than 25 worshippers of South Asian origin. Nearly half of these are concentrated in a fellowship linked to a para church agency which has a major emphasis on evangelism to Asians. However in other parts of the borough there are at least three fellowships composed mainly of South Asians, worshipping in Urdu, Panjabi and Tamil respectively.

There are considerably more people of East Asian origin actively involved in Church life in South West Ham. Individual churches have families of Japanese and Philipino origin. But the main ethnic background which is represented is Chinese, predominantly young students and professionals from Malaysia and Singapore. Such people are found in small numbers in several of the churches but in one local pentecostal church which has a Chinese pastor they account for two thirds of the membership. This particular fellowship has a conscious policy of outreach to other cultures,

it even has the word International in its name. Worship is in English and both black and white locals are involved in its leadership along with the Chinese people. It draws from a very wide area, some members living as far as 50 miles away and can obviously provide Christian ministry to a scattered ethnic group. Bilingual people act as interpreters for Cantonese monolinguals and a Chinese bible study and mother tongue class are also run.

- Understanding of Mission: -

There are a variety of attitudes and understandings of mission to be found in the local churches. These range from total incomprehension of the concept of mission, through the 'we are here why don't people come to us' approach, through social work and community action to almost pure evangelism. In many cases especially in the mainline denominations there is a mismatch between the vision of the full time professional church workers and the people in the pew.

The whole range of theologies is found in the churches of the area. More precisely they are found among the Christian leaders and among younger highly committed people. The older local members of the traditional denominational churches are not very systematic or articulate in their theological thinking. A few churches in the evangelical and pentecostal traditions do take a strong dogmatic line, but the majority of other Protestant churches appear to be broad based and open ended in their theological thinking. As a result the traditional denominational and party shibboleths are not always very important in many churches. In some fellowships evangelical, radical, and catholic or Baptist, Anglican and Methodist tendencies work together in healthy tension, sometimes within the same individuals! There has been a lively debate in many cases about the Biblical approach to social issues and the theme of the Kingdom of God is often near the surface in many different understandings.

One common theme which appears in almost all the churches is an awareness of the immense range and depth of pastoral needs of people in the neighbourhood, loneliness, family tensions, boredom amongst kids, unemployment, housing, mental illness and problems resulting from involvement with the occult. Different churches would tackle these problems in different ways, some with an almost exclusive concentration on prayer and faith, others with a more secular approach, many with a healthy combination of both approaches and almost all (in theory at least) with a good measure of Christian compassion.

Pastoral concern however is largely a reactive approach, dealing with people and problems as they arise. One interesting trend that can be observed, particularly amongst the evangelical churches is a definite commitment to be involved and influential in the life of the borough as a whole. Christians are being encouraged to work for the kingdom in local politics (i.e. join

the Labour party and usually to move it to a more radical position), to become school governors, to join pressure groups on issues of peace, housing, education and race relations and significant numbers, particularly of the young incomers are getting involved. It is also significant that a large number of Christians are employed in positions of responsibility by the borough in its various departments and that there is an active Christian fellowship within the staff of the Town Hall.

Evangelism is also being carried out by a number of the churches. Some, mainly the Black Pentecostal fellowships are quite active in door to door work. Most churches have Sunday school work and a growing number run Holiday Clubs with some Christian teaching for children. Several churches have occasional or regular special services, gospel concerts or meetings, and many encourage personal evangelism along friendship networks. In 1983 a large number of East London churches combined under the banner of Mission to London for a series of events culminating in a two night stand by Luis Pilau in a big tent in Plaistow. It appears to be significant that only a handful of the churches in South West Ham, and none of the Black led ones were able to give their wholehearted support to this campaign, and that there was even less enthusiasm locally for the 1984 Mission to London at QPR. Numbers of people did go to these events and several churches report that they have contact with people who were deeply influenced or converted by these meetings. However, the outcome of all these types of evangelistic activity does not appear to have made any great difference to the total numbers attending local churches. Perhaps there has just not been enough evangelism, perhaps the evangelism that does take place is simply not appropriate and effective for the inner city.

One final impression is that many older local Christians (again particularly in the mainline denominations) do not see local mission as their concern. There is a traditional dependency in some cases upon the professional clergy, often a tendency to see the para church agencies as covering all the specialist community work areas, and a feeling that lay people can do nothing more than pray for or pay for their clergy. As a result even those people who are engaged in a thoroughly Christian and very effective pastoral ministry amongst their neighbours and church organisations cannot see that they are vital to, or indeed already active in, the church's mission and ministry. Thankfully this tendency is missing amongst the younger people and in the independent churches where whole body ministry is stressed, although there is often a great danger that the active presence of large numbers of incomers will simply swamp the contribution of older locals and make them feel totally inadequate.

- Buildings: -

One of the great ironies of the situation of the churches in South West Ham is that while about one third of the churches find

their buildings a burden another third have no buildings of their own and are very keen to find one. The older churches which have experienced a period of decline and a subsequent change of style are lumbered with cathedral type buildings which they cannot fill or even heat. Against this at least five or six local churches have no permanent home. One by choice always meets in homes and say they would rather split into two groups rather than take on a large building. Four or five others are looking for buildings and are finding it very hard to discover somewhere suitable. Black led churches, in particular, often feel that the mainline denominations have not treated them fairly, by selling off redundant churches in a commercial rather than a mission oriented way. In the meantime such congregations meet where they can, hiring halls from other churches and Christian centres. For the most part this is seen on both sides as a simple renting arrangement, the opportunities for Christian fellowship and united mission are seldom explored.

The remaining churches which are reasonably happy with their buildings generally have small and relatively modern premises. A number of churches were rebuilt with war damage money in the 1950's and 1960's and more recently a good number of reconstruction schemes on older buildings have been carried out, to make them more suitable. Nonetheless many buildings are still underused, when there is a great potential and need for community activities in which Christians are involved. One thing that the growth of the independent 'homeless' churches has underlined is that people matter more than things and that although Christian ministry and mission can work effectively based in homes, tents or hired halls, the most superb church plant will be of minimal use without the presence of a body of committed, caring and locally rooted Christian people.

- Church Programmes -

Sunday worship takes a variety of forms according to the different theological traditions but in many churches there are changes taking place. Some of the mainline denominational churches maintain the traditional pattern of 11am and 6.30pm service (traditionally in working class areas the evening service used to be more popular and there are still some traces of this to be found). Fellowships that hire buildings often find that they can only meet in the 'down time' when the fellowship who own the building are not meeting. Thus many of the black led churches meet from noon to 3pm and from 8pm to 10pm. There is a significant trend among the newer churches to hold longer meetings on Sundays; 2 or 3 hours not being uncommon. It is also significant that a growing number of churches are concentrating their efforts into a single meeting, most urban people finding it difficult to make two trips to church in a single day. In many cases the actual worship service only forms a relatively small part of the meeting time, as in some cases Sunday School (or

club) runs on into the service, or people have tea and chat, or even a full meal together before or after the service.

Content of the worship varies considerably and many experimental and unusual types of service take place. A few churches still appear to be stuck in a very traditional pattern, either a prayer book service or hymn sandwich led by one preacher person, or the equally traditional pentecostal worship service. However many churches are stressing participation in worship, involving members of the congregation with different levels of spontaneity.

Some churches are using dance and drama in worship, and music increasingly tends to be of the guitar and chorus type rather than the organ and choir set piece variety. Communion services are perhaps the most resistant to change particularly in denominations where a professional priestly person is deemed essential to make the magic bits valid.

Midweek activities take a variety of forms. The majority of the churches now have some form of home groups for fellowship, bible study and prayer although some still hold midweek prayer or Bible study in the building they own or rent. Perhaps it is significant that the churches who have neither home groups nor prayer / Bible study seem to be the most despairing and declining ones in the survey. Many churches in the mainline denominations continue to run traditional organisations, such as women's meetings and uniformed organisations; their survival often depends on the continued commitment and enthusiasm of one or two leaders.

Some of the churches are involved in various community work initiatives such as parent's and toddlers clubs, children's and youth work, and social activities for pensioners. However in most cases such initiatives depend on the availability of a building and of people who are available in the daytime in the week. This usually means that community work by the local church fellowship is limited, for while the newer churches often have committed and capable people they are usually at work full time and they do not have access to a building, the mainline churches rarely have the human resources and commitment for new initiatives. As community work becomes more professionalised and secularised responsibility passes from the local church to the local authority and the para church agencies. Some churches have appointed community workers as a conscious policy but this can have its problems, unless the person involved has a strong team support. If the traditional minister majors on community work or the community worker is the only person employed by the church, the expectation of the church membership is still that she will do the work of the pastor in preaching, teaching and visiting, so that conflict arises. One small local church has recognised this problem and tried to solve it by appointing a community pastor who is explicitly expected to share time equally between ministry to the membership and the community and to bridge the gap between them.

SOME PAGES ARE MISSING HERE

- Church Growth -

Numerical growth of churches is one sign of God at work but is very hard to analyse on the basis of our questionnaire. Our wider knowledge suggests that about five of the 23 churches in South West Ham have experienced remarkable numerical growth in the last five years at least doubling in size. They are without exception in the Evangelical / Baptist / Pentecostal / House church tradition, although other churches from the same tradition are declining or static. Much of this increase (probably 50%) can be put down to transfer growth (i.e. Christians who have left other churches) yet within these churches there have been several conversions from local unchurched people. Most of the other churches claim to have held their own or suffered a slight decline as older people have begun to die off. There are one or two cases of churches in rapid numerical decline.

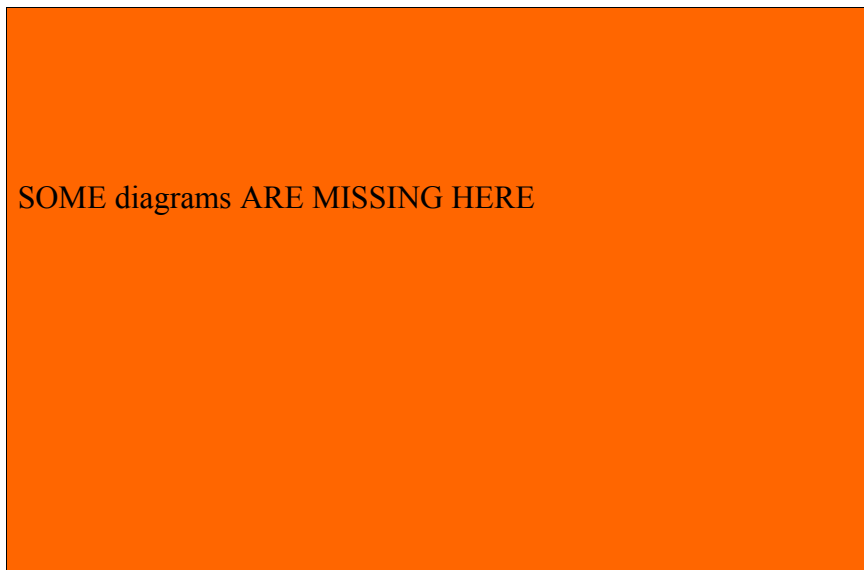
Qualitative growth is equally important but even harder to measure. Some churches reported instances of exciting personal growth, 'God at work transforming individual lives', and a few that they had grown in involvement with the wider community. However, it is highly significant that almost every person questioned in the survey reported an increase in the quality of fellowship in their church. This may indicate the permeation of rediscovered Biblical teaching about the body of Christ and its interaction with an urban society where the individual is privatised, cut off from an extended family and alienated from the wider community. It would be an important follow up study to investigate how far church members do see their church as family, and how many of them have satisfactory family lives. It is noticeable for example that in a few churches which we know very closely there is a noticeable absence of whole nuclear families in membership or association.

- A typology of Churches -

There are many ways of classifying the churches in South West Ham including the traditional denominational categories and the church/sect typology used by sociologists. Probably most of the Protestant churches in South West Ham are closer to sects than to typical 'Churches' in that they inevitably consist of a small minority of highly committed people who must see themselves as radically different from the folk around simply because they go to church. However almost every church in the area would need treating separately in these typologies so we propose to use here a simple three way typology based on their historical situation. The high proportion of recently founded fellowships is highly significant (see Figure 2). It would be invidious to state the category in which each church should be placed (especially as we don't want to lose any friends), except to say that national

denominations, particularly the church of England should be concerned that for them category 3 is larger than category 2.

Figure 2



1) New Churches which have emerged in the last ten years, either as the result of splits from existing fellowships or of church planting and growth within ethnic minority networks. Typically these are lively, growing, people centred rather than building centred and totally self supporting in terms of leadership and finance

2) Renewing Churches are denominational churches with a building of their own which have been seeking to reverse previous years of decline. Often this has been the result of a change of leadership, and/or the arrival of new members with youth, commitment and professional skills. Often there has been some resistance to change and there is not always any evidence that the tide has turned in terms of attendance. However, the change of emphasis is there and people have started to look forward in hope rather than Back in nostalgia.

3) Declining Churches are typified by an elderly membership, a traditional style of worship and a sense of introverted despair. Maintenance rather than mission is the order of the day.

- 5) A Wider Picture: Personalities, Networks and Perceptions. -

- Personalities: -

It is impossible to understand the recent development of the churches in South West Ham without understanding the role of a number of 'personalities' who have exercised leadership in the churches and para church agencies in the last 25 years. Some of them have been 'charismatic' leaders others simply filled important offices for a long period of years. There has been a tendency to build empires and institutions, many of which have had feet of clay and which have been unable to stand when alternative leaders have emerged. There have been conflicts and splits on many occasions which in some cases have actually led to new independent movements and perhaps even to the growth of the Kingdom. It would be uncharitable to mention in further detail the problems and personality conflicts which are currently near the surface, which are well known to most of the full time workers in the area. However it is worth mentioning that the Christian world outside Newham rarely knows what is going on, that many institutions have inflated reputations and therefore attract funding power. People closer to the ground often raise major questions here.

- Networks: -

More recently there has been a proliferation in an alternative approach to the 'empire building' syndrome, which could be described as 'Kingdom building networks'. These are based above all on relationships of trust and involve sharing of experiences and resources, together with occasional united events. Some of them are remarkably free of clergy domination although inevitably a high proportion of the people involved are full time church or para-church workers. Many of these networks are borough wide (or even wider) and cross the divides of denomination, and church/para church agency. The networks themselves overlap at many different points. One fundamental question is whether they will be able to remain outside an institutional framework or whether they themselves will start to accumulate, funds, staff, projects and buildings.

Examples are

1) The Celebration network, alias 'Newham Christian Fellowship' (which overlaps with ECUM and the Mission to London Networks and has recently linked with Badger Group). At the core of this are six charismatic / evangelical fellowships whose pastors meet regularly for prayer, and whose congregations combine for a monthly celebration service. They are also consciously seeking influence in the life of the borough, symbolically hiring the Town Hall for their prayer meetings, and organising a float in

the Town Show as a method of witness.

2) Keir Hardie Group and the Plaistow Churches Group are examples of 'unofficial' ecumenical gatherings of Christian leaders and their congregations. In the former, three churches have agreed to work together recognising and sharing their ministries and ministers, occasionally worshipping or having social outings together. Two years ago they worked together in a local mission week and for some time produced and distributed a regular community paper. In the Plaistow group leaders ranging from Catholic to Pentecostal are meeting together in an attempt to discover ways of co-operating in mission.

3) Badger Group is a borough wide group linked to the Zebra Project and Renewal Programme which tries to link up some of the Black pentecostal networks to the white church networks. A small group of committed people meet regularly for open sharing of information and prayer, and every six months a service of praise and testimony involving roughly half a dozen black and half a dozen white churches is arranged.

4) The Renewal Programme itself is an important network agency. It works formally through its monthly newsletter which goes to every church in the borough, and which carries any information which churches want to circulate. However, the many informal links through its staff and numerous ex-staff are also very important.

5) The Evangelical Coalition for Urban Mission has an active networking strategy which is concentrated in East London, and has an administrative focal point at Lawrence Hall. The Evangelical Race Relations Group which is one of the partners of the coalition has a developing local network which overlaps with that of the Badger Group.

6) Methodists in Newham is a regular meeting of Methodist clergy which spans the four circuits which split the borough. Some of the members of this group are also involved in the national Alliance of Radical Methodists, COSPEC, and One for Christian Renewal Networks. At the grass roots level a small churches alliance has been formed to link Methodist and URC fellowships working in council estates in Newham and Tower Hamlets.

7) Newham Youth for Christ has developed a local network and now have a full time worker. Many of the local evangelical churches are involved in this initiative.

8) Both Anglicans and Roman Catholics have deanery networks for both ministers and laity, geographically based in the borough of Newham.

Some Christian Perceptions -

One section of the questionnaire asked respondents to list problems, needs, visions and good things about life and church in the area. The replies are open ended, fairly loosely structured and in some cases instant stereotypical answers. However they are worth discussing, since they do give an indication of the overall views of a range of articulate Christians who live and work in the area. We combine here the views of para church agency and church respondents since they have many common themes and the only detectable difference is the predictable one that para church respondents seemed to be slightly more community/politically orientated and church ones slightly more 'spiritually' orientated (not of course that we, or necessarily they, see these emphases as contradictory).

- Local Problems -

The list of problems mentioned can be split into three major categories, socio-political, personal/pastoral and spiritual. Unemployment came at the top of the socio-political list being mentioned by at least half the respondents. Housing came next, followed by education both being mentioned quite often. Issues connected with racism were mentioned by only a few people, with the emphasis on racial harassment of black people by whites and on institutionalised racism e.g. in the immigration rules. Poverty was acknowledged as a problem by a few people, as was vandalism and crime, and the lack of youth provision. One person each mentioned hospitals, lack of community facilities, single parents, the police, and services for the old and handicapped as problem areas. Only a couple of people singled out government policies, notably the GLC abolition, as a major problem area, although there was some indication that a number of church councils had recently discussed such issues.

At the personal level problems were seen to lie most of all at the level of powerlessness, apathy and lack of self confidence. Repeatedly respondents from all sections of church life were stressing that local people had no self confidence, a low self image, a lack of self respect or pride, but always without blaming the people themselves. Rather as one respondent put it, it is the negative images and stereotypes of the area conveyed by the media, and (we would add) by schools and the church that has robbed people of their sense of self worth. In this context the gospel message which many churches are rediscovering is that in God's eyes every individual is immensely valuable and that in Christ the fullness of human dignity can be restored.

Other personal and pastoral problems were seen as centred on loneliness and isolation, the basic need to rediscover fellowship and community and on the problem of broken family relationships, especially marriages. One or two people also mentioned the need for inner healing, the removal of deep seated resentments and bitternesses against other people and life as a whole.

At the 'spiritual' level the most common perception was that

people needed 'salvation' (usually meaning a religious experience or faith to guide their lives), or to come to church. One or two respondents suggested that the community as a whole needed to find or rediscover spiritual or Biblical values. One person mentioned the problems arising from the occult and another also talked of spiritual warfare but in terms of the demonic principalities and powers which control the political and social institutions which oppress the powerless.

- Good Things About the Area -

Almost all the respondents had at least a few good things to say about life in the area; after those who hadn't, if they could afford to move, would have already moved away. Most of the good things centred on local people and their qualities, the remainder on specific local institutions. Local people were valued for their warmth and openness, their directness and honesty, their resilience and communal spirit, their sense of humour and strong sense of family loyalty and finally for their latent potential which is in some cases being applied and developed in new local initiatives. As a balance to this concentration on traditional East End (stereotypical?) values a large number of respondents saw the multicultural society which is developing as positive, exciting and relatively unproblematic. (It should be pointed out that this perspective was largely articulated by white professional Christians and that it would be exceptional elsewhere in the churches or community).

Institutions which were seen as good things included some of the para church agencies and the good relationships between different Christian groups, the many developing projects and initiatives in the voluntary sector, and established institutions such as the Newham Academy of Music, and West Ham United (the survey was done in the close season, not on winter Saturday evenings after their usual abismal performance!). Even the Council and their services received some praise, for example for nursery schools, parks and the potential for redevelopment in the Docks.

- Vision -

The vision for the future of the local church expressed by the respondents was very diverse, ranging from 'keeping the rumour of God alive' to the imminent 'return of the Lord'. The only vision that was shared by more than a couple of churches was that of numerical growth; evangelism leading to more Christians being incorporated into the church. A couple of churches wanted to acquire their own buildings to help in this, a couple more were keen to divide in a planned way as numbers increased. Several people saw growth through contact with the community as the key area, and had realised some of the implications involved in building a multiracial fellowship. Several were interested in developing a credible form of biblically rooted Christianity which could be articulated in terms, and in deeds, which would be appropriate for the local setting. The need for a God centred,

caring, open and vulnerable, participatory, Christian body in the area was clear to many respondents. One or two people linked this with the notion of small group 'basic communities' on the Latin American model. There was a wide desire to share resources and co-operate with other Christians, but a very cautious resistance against building imperialistic ecumenical institutions; 'co-operation can only come out of relationships of trust between people'.

- 6) Conclusions and Recommendations -

- Introduction -

Some years ago, one of the writers when studying at theological college was involved in a debate with a Baptist theological college on the motion 'This house believes that independency is a necessary feature of the renewed church'. It had been expected that the debate would run along familiar lines where 'independency' as understood in Free Church circles would be proposed in opposition to 'establishment' as characterised by the Church of England. In the event those opposing the motion avoided this confrontation by introducing the idea of 'interdependency'. The result of the debate is irrelevant to our present concerns and we have only told this story because we believe strongly in the idea of 'interdependency' in Urban Priority Areas, not only between churches, fellowships and para church agencies working in UPAs but also between them and churches coming from other areas. At the local level the survey has shown that the new emerging 'independent' congregations have important insights for the traditional churches. However, the fact that all of the new churches are to a greater or lesser extent becoming more involved in denominational or ecumenical networks which are being chained together in Newham shows that they too realise the importance of interdependence. At the national level the fact that Urban - Priority - Areas have been recognised to exist as a matter of concern for society means that they should be a matter of concern for the whole Church (1). There are also theological reasons and Biblical precedents for sharing relationships between churches in different types of area, provided they are entered into in a way which avoids the immature dependency of one upon the other but encourages a spirit of interdependency whereby the Church as a whole can be enriched.

As this report is being submitted first of all to the Archbishop's Commission on Urban Priority areas many of our recommendations may not necessarily apply to the independent fellowships which exist in UPAs. On the other hand there may well be suggestions from which they might benefit. The main thrust of what we say is directed to denominational church bodies with local churches in UPAs, including of course, the Church of England. Many people believe that these local churches will inevitably decline. The historical evidence and the findings of the present survey confirm the numerical weakness of the traditional churches in West Ham and the limited impact of the massive input of missionary work. However we have also discovered signs of new life, not only in the new emerging churches but also in some of the fellowships with roots in the traditional denominations.

Undoubtedly West Ham appears to be somewhat unresponsive to the Christian Gospel. Popular attitudes to the church seem to range

from mild tolerance, through total indifference to outright hostility. Folk religion lingers on, while immigration has led to the existence of a multi faith society. In the context of such 'stony ground' some church leaders, sociologists and missiologists might argue that resources currently deployed in UPAs could be used more favourably in other areas where a more favourable response could be expected (2). We would not agree with such a view. Withdrawal, or a mere holding presence would only reinforce the attitude which many people have towards the Church, and particularly towards the Church of England, that they are on the side of the rich and powerful and not on the side of the poor and powerless. Furthermore it would be a fundamental negation of the values of the Kingdom which by definition is 'good news for the poor'.

In our view therefore the only viable strategy for the church is to take UPA's really seriously, indeed to make them a priority in the life of the church. There is a need for a fundamental change of attitude towards them and for a major redistribution of financial and human resources towards them. We would only make one caveat that, as we mentioned before, the redistribution must be carried out in a way which does not reinforce immature dependency, but in one which fosters mature interdependency and in which people living in the UPAs have appropriate power and control over the decision making processes.

Whatever the evidence to the contrary, there is significant strength in the national denominational networks as far as UPAs are concerned. For example the denominations have resources, expertise in strategic planning and some access and influence to the centres of political and economic power. Locally the parish system of the Church of England may have much more long term staying power than it is often credited with. History provides many examples of 'successful' ventures in UPAs which have not stayed the course, and this may prove to be the case for some of the independent fellowships at present emerging, especially where they are highly dependent on a single authority figure with charismatic personality and other gifts. The challenge for such new churches is whether they can build solidly into the next generation without 'quenching the spirit'. Meanwhile for the denominational churches the challenge is to learn from such churches and discover their renewing energy and enthusiasm for themselves. Of course this does not mean that parish churches should attempt to swallow up or infiltrate such groups (nor as seems more plausible vice versa) but that both types of church should recognise their complementary ministries, to develop Christian relationships of trust and love and together with the para church agencies to work together in open and healthy collaboration.

At a more general level we would want to stress the dangers of thinking of UPAs merely as a 'problem'. There are indeed problems in such areas, and people who have problems too. But the main problem is that of human society which as a whole is

structured in injustice (3). The Church as an institution is of course part of this wider problem. But from within the UPAs there is also good news which is good news for the whole of church and society. It comes at many levels from the joy of a community celebration like the Notting Hill Carnival, to a group of parents working together to lobby for better education facilities, to the new spirit of freedom and reality in worship which is found in some of the churches.

We dare to hope (in our moments of wildest fantasy) that the Archbishop's Commission and the other groups concerned with UPAs will be so effective in the transformation of the wider church and society that the very title 'Urban Priority Area' will become a contradiction in terms and very much a thing of the past.

We now go on to make specific recommendations about the mission, ministry, buildings and structures of the Church which we believe will assist in the task.

- 2) Mission -

2.1) First of all the Church should have a clear understanding of what is meant by Mission in Urban Priority Areas. This theology can be developed at least as effectively by ordinary Christians with open Bibles and the guidance of the Spirit in local situations as by the academics in the colleges. In any case the only theology of mission which is going to be acted upon by local Christians is one which is contextually rooted and relevant. We can expect to see a wide range of theologies developing in inner city mission situations. Most will include Proclamation of the Gospel (and the making of disciples), Pastoral Care for Christians and others and the Prophetic role of Christians in challenging injustice as vital elements. Of course the balance and emphasis of these three 'Ps' will vary in different cases. One unifying theme which emerged in the survey is the 'theology of the Kingdom', which has captured the imagination of people from vastly different theological backgrounds.

To assist in this theological task the theological resources and institutions of the church should make a radical reassessment of their priorities, assumptions and methods learning from the experience of the church in the Two Thirds world, the black Churches and such groups as the Urban Theology Unit. We would also recommend Roger Dowley's booklet, 'Towards the Recovery of a Lost Bequest' as worthy of wider study (4).

2.2) The national denominations should collaborate with each other in the assessment of which geographical areas might be conveniently designated Urban Priority Areas for mission and ministry, in order to

strategically redistribute resources more equitably. A star rating system rather than a simple YES/NO categorisation would be necessary and analysis would need to be done at the electoral ward level to make sure that resources were directed to the neighbourhoods where the need was greatest. Suggested criteria to be used in such assessment: (a) neighbourhoods identified by local authorities; (b) areas in which most residents are unskilled or semi skilled workers, areas which have been deserted by the economically more successful and where high proportions of elderly people and single parent families remain, areas of high unemployment, areas of environmental decay, areas adjacent to town and city centres which have been or are being completely demolished and redeveloped, areas where a large proportion of housing is below standard and/or municipally owned, areas where schools fail to educate the majority of children to the level of their potential (5).

2.3) Mission in UPAs requires a flexibility in the types of church presence appropriate to the area and a blanket policy is to be discouraged. As well as supporting the traditional church structures strategies might well include grouping churches in a geographical area, or according to style of ministry, new ecumenical projects covering particular neighbourhoods, para church centres, house churches, shop front churches and basic church communities. Each area should be treated on its merits and the focus should be first of all on people rather than plant (6). In many areas there is 'room' for a wide range of mission enterprises which complement rather than conflict with each other. Therefore clergy and traditional churchpersons who see new initiatives as threats, and other christian groupings as rivals need to be encouraged to change their attitudes.

2.4) Urban mission centres (para church centres) will be an important feature of UPAs and are to be encouraged. However, our evidence suggests that they can be very easily cut off from local churches, in fact their very success can discourage local church efforts. The issue of the relationship of the community of believers to the wider community needs working on in the context of such centres. As the report of the inner urban areas working party for the Diocese of Manchester recommends, these centres should be run by local interests to support local initiatives and should attempt to minister to the lives of local people (7).

2.5) Urban Priority Areas are often the object of redevelopment, planning and other social policies which drastically affect the local population, although they

have virtually no say in the initial decisions and in reality little opportunity to do anything about altering them. It is very important that national churches act as a watchdog in keeping abreast of national and regional plans which might affect UPAs. This means using the influence of senior church leaders and Christian lay people who are near the centres of political and economic power to speak politically and prophetically on behalf of the weakest members of society. At the same time such people can often assist local churches in involvement with the appropriate departments of local authorities (8).

2.6) Churches in UPAs should reflect as far as possible the people who live in the neighbourhood. Each church should be encouraged and resourced to monitor how far this is in fact the case, and to take appropriate action if it is not. Since many UPAs are multi ethnic in character it is desirable that congregations and leadership should reflect this. Where this is not the case and ethnic minority churches also exist, meaningful and sensitive attempts at co-operation should be encouraged. Church leadership and representation on synods, committees and boards from local to national level should include people from UPAs not merely as token representatives. In many cases this will mean considerable change in style and operation for their full participation e.g. less paper and less reliance on constitutional niceties and formal agenda (9).

2.7) We agree with the Newham submission that there is a need for social workers, health workers and teachers, (especially Christian ones) to consider living and worshipping (as well as working) in UPAs as a - long term - vocation, supported and encouraged by the wider Christian community (10).

2.8) Local churches (and the main denominations) need to face up squarely to the issues of racism in society and within the Christian body. They need to see how their attitudes, practices and structures reflect racist assumptions, and white Christians need to listen to the experience of and accept leadership from black people.

2.9) Evangelism must not be neglected if the church is to reproduce itself and grow in the years to come. Traditional methods including the Mission to London Crusades have had negligible impact. Where churches are growing it is usually based on personal network evangelism, followed up by incorporation into a strong deeply caring fellowship. Besides the obvious spiritual qualities of faith and confidence in the gospel which are the essential prerequisites, there is a need to discover new and more effective ways of communicating the Good News and the challenge to follow Jesus, to people living in the UPAs. In a multicultural community a plurality of approaches will be necessary, sometimes employing specialist workers for particular ethnic groups. There is also a need to make known and utilise effective methods and the resource materials already available. We would like to commend the work done in the early 1980's by the Stepney Action Research Team (START) based on Oxford House in Bethnal Green in discovering effective ways of communication in UPAs, helping people to discover from within their own experience, 'signals of transcendence' (11).

2.10) Much of the communication that is sent to (and from!) churches in UPAs is far too dependent on the written word. Much more communication from church bodies should be in tabloid form or indeed in audio visual presentation. After all many local people possess more video cassettes than books. Face to face personal communication is also important and a heavy investment of leaders' time in personal contacts would pay real dividends. It would for example be good if the ACUPA report was accompanied with an audio visual and a precis in tabloid format (12).

2.11) We endorse the plea from Manchester and in the Newham Submission that worship should be allowed to be less formal and more flexible (13). This would also apply to the style, culture and organisation of church life in UPAs, particularly in the Church of England. People responsible for leading worship need the opportunity to sample a wide range of the styles of worship which are available already in the various local churches in order to experience and assess alternative models.

2.12) The development of small, informal and intimate cell groups in every fellowship is a vital strategy if we wish to see qualitative and quantitative growth of the church.

2.13) Mission in UPAs should be as ecumenical as possible. There is a vast potential in UPAs if churches were able to pool their resources. As the Newham submission points out there is need for ecumenical stimulation from the top as well as from the bottom. Church authorities should not fear losing their distinctive denominational ethos, or powers of control in local ecumenical projects. We need to take seriously the Lund Principle, 'we should act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conscience compel us to act separately'. Too often it is not conscience but vested interests, fears or petty regulations which prevent collaboration.

Another problem has arisen even when collaboration has taken place because of the 'establishment' attitude of some Anglicans who, consciously or unconsciously, feel themselves superior to other Christians. An example given by Rupert Davies is of the vicar or rector taking the chair and the initiative on all ecumenical occasions because he is the incumbent of the parish and that joint action can only be carried out provided it meets his approval. Such a paternalistic attitude is to be deplored, especially as in any case the C.of E. is hardly the strongest denomination numerically in many

UPAs (13).

At the local level co-operation is already arising, which is based on informal but trusting personal relationships between Christians rather than on formally structured ecumenical projects. Our feeling is that the informal method is the the place to begin and formal structures may become appropriate when initiatives have proved their medium to long term viability.

Many of the new emerging would wonder what all the fuss is about. They would criticise other churches for talking and reflecting too much about mission rather than getting on with it. We hope they will be patient and not give us up for lost, and that despite possible conflict they would try to co-operate as far as conscience allows to our mutual benefit and for the sake of the Kingdom.

2.14) We would heartily agree with Bishop David Sheppard that the kind of church needed in UPAs is one which

- a) stays present in the neediest areas and continues to believe and worship
- b) recognises, develops and supports local ability within the church and outside it,
- c) serves people where they are,
- d) tries to understand what God might be saying to both rich and poor (15)

2.15) Within many UPAs there is a remarkable proliferation of different churches which makes us want to ask the question, why cannot they pool their resources? One of the writers of this report on a bicycle ride around the borough of Newham succeeded in stopping at 50 places of worship and noting them down within a period of two and a half hours. In this time he travelled through well under half the area of the borough. However at the same time there are neighbourhoods where there is no visible church presence at all. The churches should act together to consider the appropriate strategic missionary response to such areas.

3.1) The word 'ministry' by etymology means 'service' and has been misused too long to refer mainly if not exclusively to the corps (corpse?) of ordained professional men who form the priesthood. The New Testament, and the new and renewing churches we have described make whole body ministry an important theme. The church as a whole needs to reconsider its view on this issue, not only theologically, but in the way it deploys, rewards and values its full time workers and vast army of part time volunteer workers. Clergy need to take on the roles of servant and enabler, and congregations need to be weaned from dependency on an vicar who they tend to see as a superstar jack of all trades.

3.2) Newham's experience that very few local Christians appear to be called or able to consider full time Christian ministry will be shared by other UPAs. In one way this is not surprising given the numerical weakness of the church. Furthermore the possibility is blocked for two thirds or more of the local membership of the Church of England simply because of their gender. As the Newham Submission has stated a further barrier is that training is far too academic and middle class, and often inappropriate for leadership in a UPA situation (16). Is a cerebral theological training always the best, or can a more relevant apprenticeship training be devised? (17). Is there a bias anyway, against people from UPAs being selected for training even when they offer themselves. This needs serious consideration by the churches, their leaders, selection boards and their colleges. 'It is surely the task of the church to recognise the gifts of God in people and offer appropriate help to encourage these gifts for the benefit of the local church and community.. Official recognition needs to be given to those in whom gifts are recognised so that those gifts can be fully and freely expressed to the glory of God' (17).

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3.3) Where it is feasible national churches should exercise positive discrimination in terms of the full time ministry in UPAs. This could mean

- a) extra resources and support for those already working in such areas
- b) making it easier for parishes in such areas to recruit and retain the 'best' staff for the job
- c) actively recruiting candidates for the full time ministry from disadvantaged and excluded groups e.g. women, black people, working class people, and giving

them extra help to fulfill their calling.

d) dioceses in the Church of England should draw up their own 'Sheffield' proposals in favour of such areas (19).

3.4) National denominations should build up lists of lay and ordained persons who are committed to, and have appropriate skills for work in UPAs. They should actively place this vocation before the Christian public, and develop more effective ways of recognising and matching people's skills to particular areas of work. When jobs have to be filled specific job descriptions should be drawn up. Opportunities in inner city areas for those starting out in ministry should be increased; it is significant that there are relatively few curacies in a place like Newham since most Anglican churches do not have the resources or membership to support a second clergy person. It is important for such areas that staff are appointed not in proportion to the size of a church's membership but in proportion to the size and challenge of its mission field (20).

3.5) The denominations should radically reconsider the question of tenure of posts, both for clergy and other full time workers. Is the concept of the 'vicar's freehold' appropriate for an urban parish. In some cases a fixed or flexible contract period may be more appropriate. For new ministry posts, such as youth and community workers 'pump priming' grants of less than five years lead to insecurity and lack of continuity and should be funded for longer periods wherever possible.

Consideration should be given to the methods of selection and appointment to particular posts, with a view to increasing the real power which can be exercised by local congregations. Job sharing posts should also be encouraged.

3.6) In co-operation with ECUM and others an annual conference for Christians working in inner city ministry might be established. In one year it might be ecumenical (including the widest range of theologies and traditions, not forgetting the independent and pentecostal groups), and the next year denominational. (This pattern is established practice for chaplains in higher education.)

3.7) It is a matter of high priority that ordained and lay Christian workers in UPAs should reflect the multi ethnic nature of these areas. (This does not mean of course that black people should never be sent to work in the 'white highlands'.) As this is not always possible it is essential that clergy, full time and spare time lay workers in UPAs are given appropriate information and training for a multi ethnic community. This would include pre-service and in-service training in understanding and respecting the various cultures to be found (including white working class culture) (21), in the theology and practice of cross cultural mission, and in personal racism awareness. There

are many resources already available and we would particularly commend the 'New Humanity' pack recently published by the Evangelical Race Relations Group and the work of the Zebra Project in this field (22).

3.8) As an ideal, full time Christian workers should feel a long term and practical involvement in UPAs, preferably a specific neighbourhood, and in the particular cultures to be found in them (23). In many situations workers will be much more effective if they can master at least one of the minority languages spoken in the community and every support should be given to enable them to receive appropriate training. This is to be seen as an essential addition to the policy of recruiting Christian workers who are native speakers of these languages.

3.9) It must be recognised that a substantial increase of committed ordained and full time lay workers in UPAs is only part of the solution. It could all too easily have the effect of reinforcing dependency rather than reversing it. Ministers who see themselves as a one person mission or as the Church's local branch manager are a liability, while those who seek to enable the building up of an indigenous church with shared leadership are an asset. An important skill for clergy is therefore the ability to recognise when to respond personally, when to delegate, and when to insist that local people work out their own solutions (24).

3.10) Churches in UPAs should look closely at their own leadership patterns and structures and consider the appointment

of 'elders' representing the local congregation and community (25).

3.11) Careful selection for ministry in UPAs is important (26). It is well known that full time church workers in such areas are often under considerable pressure. Tragic incidents such as nervous or marital breakdowns and alcoholism are not uncommon. Research into the causes and remedies of such stress should be undertaken.

3.12) It is important therefore for all full time church workers to receive adequate pastoral, spiritual and professional support, perhaps in the form of a group (not necessarily meeting formally) which would include other colleagues in the area, local people, close personal friends, and consultants.

3.13) Many people would strongly argue that full time church workers should always be part of a group or team (27). Judging from the evidence of the Newham submission others would disagree on the grounds that, although teams can provide mutual support and encouragement, they also tend to increase professionalism in its worst sense, and reinforce dependency (28). Some congregations and parishes are developing teams of ordained and lay ministers in an attempt to avoid the pitfalls of both professional teams and the one man band. Our feeling is that

flexibility should be retained to cater for different circumstances.

3.14) All full time church workers (and their spouses) need proper rest and holidays with an effective cover for their duties when they are away. The weekly day off (other than Sunday!) should be regarded as sacrosanct except in cases of emergency when a day in lieu should be taken (29). Special consideration should be given to clergy with families to ensure that the day off can regularly be spent with the rest of the family, which is not always possible if the spouse is in full time work.

3.15) One problem seems to be the houses in which full time church workers live, particularly vicarages. Unreasonably high standards are demanded, which tends to lead to an isolation from those living in surrounding terraces and tower blocks. A majority of Newham's detached vicarages have been burgled. There are practical problems involved in moving to an ordinary local house and flat because many church workers use their homes as an office and need relatively large rooms in which to host meetings.

Where this strategy is adopted it is essential that appropriate office provision is made. One possible solution is to make future clergy housing an integral part of church plant (preferably not as the only housing unit in the building) thus reducing the chances of burglary and vandalism, while at the same time increasing availability and efficiency (31). Housing for assistant staff should not be seen primarily as a local responsibility but should be supported from central resources.

3.16) Hardly anybody would argue that people should be given financial incentives to work in UPAs to compensate for their difficulties and low status. However, many people do experience a drop in real income because certain costs are higher and expenses are very often inadequate. If a worker wished to be given adequate expenses (s)he might be placed in an invidious position with a congregation facing financial problems. A case could be made for outside assistance to make up the difference in accordance with some recommended scale of rates (32).

3.17) Regular and appropriate in service training should be insisted on, with sabbaticals after seven years for all full time workers (32). David Sheppard makes the extremely sensible suggestion that there should be an annual work review for all ministers with an understanding consultant who is able to bridge the gap between indifference and interference. He also recommends consultants annually reviewing the work of teams and church councils.

3.18) There should be realistic support and counselling available if things start to go wrong.

3.19) Denominations should consider appointing local leaders / consultants / trouble shooters at the level of (rural/urban) dean in the Church of England. Although they should have had

experience of responsibility in the local church, it is important they should be set free from this in order to avoid a conflict with the role of resource person for the area. One specialist skill would be in understanding how to manage and develop buildings in co-operation with architects, surveyors and planners. Another would be in dealing with local authority and government departments. Skills in counselling and supporting those engaged in ministry would be useful too. In some situations an ecumenical appointment might be appropriate (34).

3.20) Training for all types of ministry is best done within the locality. The educational method must be practical and progressive with the participants having a major share in planning and running the programme. The focus should be on acquiring skills rather than knowledge. For example in theology learning how to use the scriptures in grappling with local issues alongside local people would be more important than textual criticism. Research into the needs and priorities and resources for local mission could be enabled by groups of Christians pooling their knowledge then going walkabout and talkabout in the local community. The content of courses should include practical training in counselling, group leadership, evangelism, preaching and leading worship as well as in administration and leadership skills for church, community, working and political life. Such training should be available for all new stewards, church secretaries, treasurers, churchwardens and other church officers at the area deanery and local church level (35).

There is also a place for training and theological reflection

courses for Christians in the professions, such as teachers, social workers, local politicians etc. London ECUM has already put on such courses and more are planned.

courses for Christians in the professions, such as teachers, social workers, local politicians etc. London ECUM has already put on such courses and more are planned.

- 4. Buildings and Finance -

4.1) Although a major emphasis of this report has been that people matter more than plant, we would not advocate a total abolition of church buildings, since on the whole they are a valuable resource for mission. Flexibility in church presence requires flexibility in buildings. Some large buildings should be demolished and some should be retained. Cathedral type buildings can be useful for the big occasions, for the sense of awe and transcendence, and for that feeling of being part of something much bigger, but there is also a real need for the small church centre serving a local neighbourhood and providing that sense of intimacy which many Christians require. Buildings for urban mission centres are needed too, and some of them such as Lawrence Hall provide good models for future developments. Sharing of buildings with other church and community groups should be encouraged together with partnership between churches

and local planning authorities over a more effective use of buildings (36).

4.2) Effective management of buildings for wider community use needs to be adequately resourced. Any medium to large size building in a UPA which is open for community use will need full time staff to look after administration, maintenance and community development work taking place on the premises. Clergy should not be expected to run a large community building on their own, in the few spare minutes they have, but a building manager or warden should be appointed. However, the role of a warden should not be seen merely as administrative; pastoral and community work enabling skills are vital. The contribution of volunteers should be developed, and efforts should be made to involve user groups in the overall management of the building through a centre council or equivalent body. Where other there are overtly Christian user groups they should be encouraged to become involved in the wider ministry of the centre.

4.3) Local churches with large buildings, considered worthwhile saving, may still be overburdened with the problems of maintenance and repair which take up virtually all their energies which might have been better used for mission. Local churches often require expert advice over re-ordering their buildings and how they might be put to better use. Not many inner city congregations have qualified architects, surveyors or solicitors in their congregations, though there are many in the church at large who might give informal advice without charging crippling professional fees. In the first instance this will be a shared responsibility between the parent denomination and the local church. Within the Church of England such a conversation might

take place at the time of the Quinquennial Survey. Conversations should take place between the local church council, the deanery Pastoral committee, diocesan departments with a special concern for UPAs and very importantly with other local churches and the local planning authority. An important item on the agenda will be future missionary strategy in the area (37).

4.4) It is most important that churches in UPAs with large buildings are not left on their own. Parent denominations should assist financially with the upkeep and repairs from large reserves which they ought to be building up for such purposes. Since people with fund raising, financial and accountancy skills are also notably absent from most inner city churches and the amounts of money required for capital projects are beyond the comprehension of most inner city church members, the denominational authorities should also help with fund-raising and practical advice about grants. If money is needed for repairs or rebuilding, they should also assist with negotiations with national and local government when applications for grants are made. Churches should compile lists of public and church funds which might be available to local churches in UPAs. They should also consider making available low (or no) interest capital loans (38).

4.5) In cases where church buildings are declared redundant they should not be put on the market without considering their potential for alternative forms of Christian Mission. In Newham we have discovered several homeless but growing churches which are looking for a building in which to worship and minister. It is our belief that they should have the first refusal on any redundant building at a price which is not determined by the market so much as by their resources and needs. Various forms of cheap leases may be appropriate here. A second possibility to be explored is to send in a team of evangelists and community workers with the specific task of planting a new Christian fellowship which would be entirely free from the traditional structures and regulations of the denomination which had failed to maintain its presence. Options for conversion to community use, or selling or leasing the redundant building to bona fide community groups (including those of other faiths) should always be preferred to a purely commercial deal which is of no benefit, and may in fact be harmful to local people.

4.6) Some local churches have to contribute fairly substantially to regional or central funds (e.g. Diocesan quotas in the C.of E., Mission and Service Fund for Methodists). Any assessment system requires regular review to take account of the financial resources and overheads of each church. It should not be based simply on the number of clergy or the number of members, or on a percentage of total income, but should take into account the level of potentially surplus resources and the potential for mission. The idea of a church's 'potential' implies a commitment to sharing resources. And if we wish to make a prophetic contribution to wider society over justice in the

distribution of wealth we must first practice what we preach.

- 5. The Wider Church -

5.1) The relationship of parent denominations with their local churches often raises the question of who does the wagging, the dog or the tail, as well as the intractable conflict between different forms of church government on offer. If the local church in a UPA is to be taken seriously it does mean that national and regional church departments should aim for maximum co-operation between themselves, rather than the creation of rivalry, departmental empires and personality cults which can so easily harm the church's mission. Examples have been given as to how denominational departments could help local churches with conversations about missionary strategy as well as with buildings and finance. They could also give help and expertise (and receive it) on such issues as unemployment, housing, racism and poverty so that these issues might be tackled constructively, instead of merely with empty rhetoric. It is perhaps a judgement on some of the denominational departments that much of the most constructive thinking and action upon inner city mission issues emanates, not from them, but from independent ecumenical networks

and agencies such as the constituent members of ECUM and COSPEC.

5.2) It is essential that at least some of the leaders in parent denominations actually reside in UPAs (and in housing like Ronan Point rather than Lambeth Palace), in order to help with the interpretation of the inner city to the wider church and vice versa. Otherwise the leadership of the church is liable to find themselves increasingly out of touch with life in UPAs (40).

5.3) There is a need for (residential) centres in UPAs where people can come on 'advance' to learn about life and mission in the inner city, taking part in 'Urban trails' and hearing from people who live and work in UPAs. Sensitivity is required to prevent the feeling that local people are inmates in a 'zoo'. At the same time people from UPAs need the regular opportunity to go away together for cheap holidays and weekends for growth and relaxation. Parent denominations should compile lists of residential places (including perhaps Christian families or churches in rural and suburban areas) which could provide accommodation and ministry.

5.4) There used to be a tradition for students to get to know inner city areas through the work of the university settlements, although this was often accompanied by paternalistic towards the people living in such areas. However, residents did have their horizons considerably widened and with the diminishing importance of the settlements there is probably less exposure to and understanding of UPAs. One possibility along the lines of (USPG) Root Groups and similar projects, is for young Christian volunteers from other backgrounds to live in a small urban community house for at least two years, while being involved with

an urban mission centre. Such Volunteers, perhaps in pairs or small groups might equally become involved in a local fellowship, giving personal vitality and receiving personal growth themselves. Some might have full or part time jobs and be self supporting while others would give all their time to the work of mission. This is already happening in a small way although housing and finance often present problems. Ideally local and ethnic minority Christians should be involved in such community houses in at least equal numbers with incomers. National resources should be made available to buy or rent suitable properties, to discover suitable people and church situations and to provide a basic wage for those who were had no outside income.

Another way of increasing understanding of UPAs in the wider church is for urban mission centres to run weekends for church youth groups, schools and colleges. However such weekends must involve real contact with local people and wherever possible lead to a two way exchange for mutual learning and growth.

5.5) Partners in Mission and the twinning of churches is now getting a wider acceptance as an important missionary principle in the Anglican Communion, and there are similar schemes in other worldwide churches. There is no reason why this principle should be limited to co-operation

between churches in different countries. Encouragement should be given to partnership between churches in UPAs and in other areas, and also to partnership between churches in UPAs in Britain and similar urban situations overseas. It is important not to forget the experience of missionary societies and overseas churches. In conversations about UPAs the Council for World Mission and the missionary societies should be brought in alongside home mission agencies.