



SOCIAL JUSTICE

'Speaking truth to power'

London Challenge 2: Commitment nos 4

Mission and Ministry The Diocese of London

Introduction

Scripture and **Christian tradition** place social justice at the heart of the church's mission:

The words of the prophet Amos typify the demands for justice that run through the Old Testament **scriptures** like fire: *"I despise your festivals and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream"*. In response to the message of the angel that she is to bear God's only son, Mary anticipates Jesus' own teaching about the kingdom by spontaneously proclaiming: *"He has scattered the proud in their conceit. He has cast down the mighty from their thrones and has lifted up the lowly. He has filled the hungry with good things and the rich he has sent empty away"*. And the psalmist declares that *"righteousness and justice are the foundations of God's throne"*.

In the **Christian tradition** we find a deep vein of teaching and practice in response to God's demand for justice. Not only in reports like 'Faith in the City', 'The Church and the Bomb', 'Unemployment and the Future of Work', and most recently 'Faithful Cities'; but also in the lives of Christian men and women whose faith has impelled them to tackle head on the deep injustices of their day: Martin Luther King Jr, Josephine Butler, Desmond Tutu, Jackie Pullinger, Lord Shaftsbury, Oscar Romero, Florence Nightingale, and Thomas Merton.

The **examples** set by such people have inspired millions of other Christians to get involved in social justice issues as a core part of their Christian vocation. They have also inspired the establishment of mainstream Christian mission, development and campaigning activity that has mobilised Christians around the world in support of social justice. Examples include Christian Aid, Faithworks, Jubilee 2000, Church Action on Poverty, the anti-Apartheid Movement, and Stop the Traffik. They all rely on churches and individuals getting involved.

One sign, perhaps, of a healthy diocese and a healthy parish is that it's people are offered the vision and the encouragement to get engaged in such activities as a key component of the Church's mission in the world. Working for social justice (and remember work can be prayer and prayer can be work) helps to build God's kingdom on earth, for which we pray daily in the 'Our Father'.

Behind and within such people and such prophetic activity lie deep foundations of Christian formation and prayer. Biblical reflection, spirituality and work for social justice are inexplicably bound up. It was true for Trevor Huddleston in his leadership of the anti-Apartheid Movement, of whom Desmond Tutu said:

"it was all a consequence of his daily, moment by moment encounter with the transcendent and all-holy Trinity in the regular offices of his community, in meditation and in the Eucharist. He took the incarnation and the doctrine of creation seriously; that each person was precious, with an infinite worth, because they were created in the image of God."

The Five Marks of Mission

The Partners in Mission process which took place across the Anglican Communion in the late 1970's and early 1980's indicated the value of a church carrying out a periodic audit of its mission priorities. This led to the five-fold understanding of Mission developed by the Anglican communion, endorsed by the 1988 Lambeth Conference and by churches of other denominations. It provides a touchstone for the communion by which local priorities in mission can be assessed. Mission is now characterised by the following five marks:

- 1) To proclaim the good news of the kingdom
- 2) To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
- 3) To respond to human need by loving service
- 4) To seek to transform the unjust structures of society
- 5) To strive to safe-guard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth

Work for Social Justice is explicitly required by marks 3, 4 and 5 above, and is implicitly required by marks 1 and 2 (Luke 4: "I have come to *proclaim good news* to the poor ..." and Luke 10 "you must love your neighbour as yourself...")

The London Challenge

Five of the Bishop of London's 'London Challenge' Commitments relate directly to a core social justice agenda for our diocese and parishes:

- ❖ We are committed to serving London and all its people:
 - We are determined to maintain our presence in every community with a particular bias to serving the poor and vulnerable
 - We will engage with local and national government on behalf of the powerless and relearn the difficult language of speaking truth to power
- ❖ We are committed to expressing God's Love in our World City:
 - We will engage with the Millennium Development Goals and build on our existing partnerships with Mozambique and Angola
 - We will strive to achieve Fair Trade status as a Diocese
 - We will implement the C of E policy on Shrinking our Environmental Footprint and will play a full part on ecological matters

Holistic Mission

The Five Marks of Mission, and the London Challenge Commitments, are a very useful set of guidelines to our PCC and church community in promoting and facilitating a holistic approach to mission. One that seeks **both** to build, sustain and nurture our own church community **and**, in partnership with others, to transform the world around us. 'Non-believers' are deeply attracted by a Church that is seen to be addressing and speaking out on social justice issues.

Getting Started

- **Mission Action Planning:** use the Five Marks of Mission and the London Challenge Commitments to stimulate ideas and to prioritise activities, for all ages. Many people in church are longing to engage in Social Justice issues. Once encouraged they will take the lead.
- **Start at Home:** ask church members who are already involved with social justice issues to share their passions and special interests.
- **The Church's Year:** use the Social Justice Calendar (at www.london.anglican.org/SocialJustice) to identify 3 or 4 Special Sundays or themes in the year e.g. Christian Aid Week, Environment Sunday, Prisons' Week. Invite a preacher, focus liturgically on the theme, make resources available.
- **Fair Trade:** use Fair Trade tea, coffee, sugar etc at all church events to register as a 'Fair Trade Church' (<http://fairtrade.london.anglican.org>). Use this as a springboard to speak out about trade justice issues.
- **"Faithful Cities" Report:** present a summary of the report to your church; use the study guide and toolkit; provoke a discussion on 'What Makes for a Good City'. Excellent resources available: www.culf.org.uk
- **ALMA:** our Diocesan partnership with the dioceses in Mozambique & Angola. Appoint an ALMA representative and consider twinning with a parish or school in Mozambique or Angola. See www.almalink.org
- **Green Church:** join the C of E 'Shrinking the Footprint' programme (see www.shrinkingthefootprint.cofe.anglican.org); use the diocesan 'for Creed and Creation' guidebook (available from diocesan house).
- **Prayer & Fasting:** arrange an occasion/day for prayer, fasting and teaching in church related to particular social justice issues or events and/or organise prayers for Justice and Peace throughout the year.
- **Postcards:** commit one Sunday a year to building the service theme around a congregational 'postcard write-in' supporting a campaign.
- **Parish News:** regularly feature Social Justice issues in church media.
- **Put Down Roots:** set up a 'Justice and Peace' group in your church, or ecumenically in collaboration with other local churches.
- **Diocesan Social justice Newsletter:** www.london.anglican.org/SocialJustice

More Help: Rev Chris Brice, Diocesan Adviser for Social Justice, 0207 932 1121, chris.brice@london.anglican.org www.london.anglican.org/SocialJustice

cjb 12 July 07