

A Church with People at the Margins: A Strategy for Mission and Ministry.



A church
with people
at the margins



Taking Inspiration



The URC: A Paradoxical Church at a Crossroads

“The Church’s place in a changing landscape is not solely understood by grasping the right statistics..., but by the way it acts on the ground.”





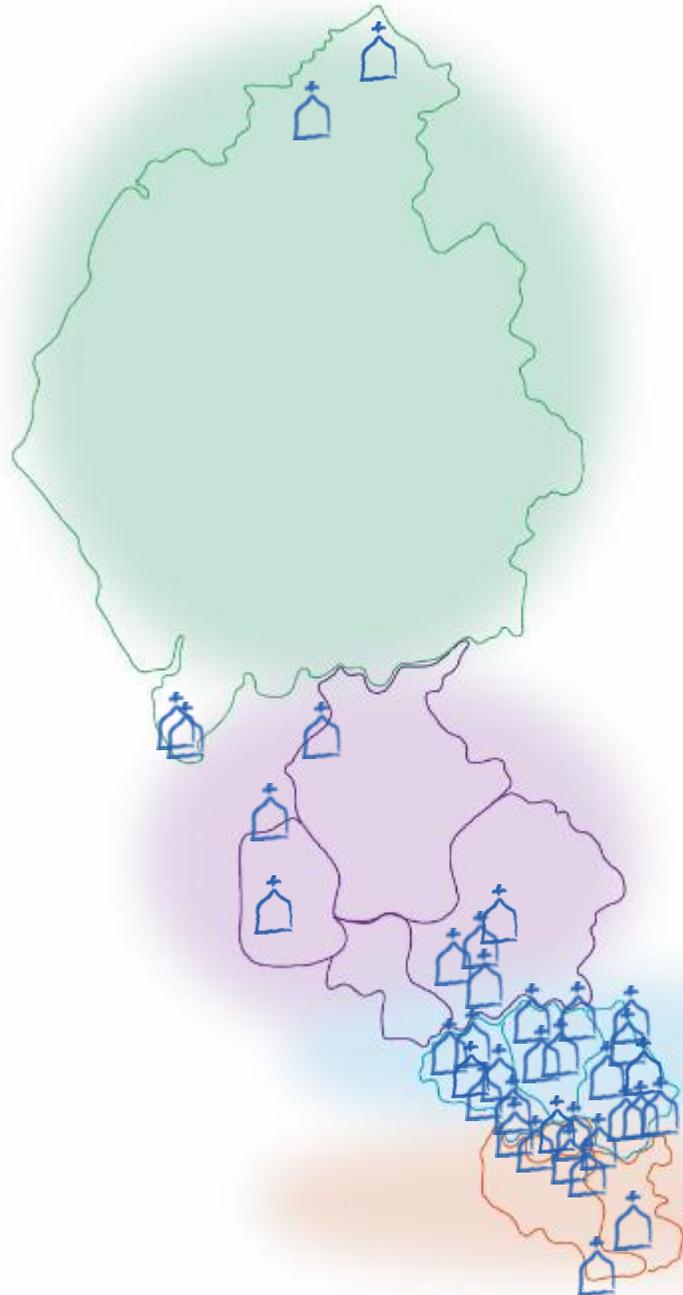
Time for Reflection

- In what ways does this story challenge the religious assumptions of the time?
- What might this say to us about working with people at the margins in our local community?

A Church with People at the Margins The Context



Churches in the 10% most deprived Parishes



- **38 out of 104 church locations**
- **Highest concentration in Greater Manchester**
- **At least 1 church in 10/11 Church Groups**

- **Variety of community settings**
- **Former Mill Towns (Blackburn, Bolton etc.)**
- **Urban Estates (Especially in Greater Manchester)**
- **Town & City Centres (Across the Synod)**
- **Coastal Communities (Blackpool, Barrow etc.)**
- **Rural Isolation (NE Cumbria)**

Source CUF Look-up Tool 2024

A Local Church Response



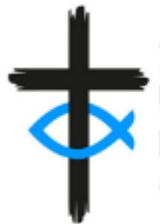
A local church story

- Facing an uncertain future
- Located in an area of very significant urban deprivation
- Engagement with a listening process
 - To God
 - To the local community
- A different type of church

- In the Mix: Dandelion Community Video

Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rsGQGYlV2Ok>

A Church with People at the Margins: A Strategy for Mission and Ministry.



The
United
Reformed
Church

A church
with people
at the margins



The North Western Synod
of the **United Reformed Church**

WITH not **To** or **For**

Strategic Principles of our Strategy

- Focus on the most disadvantaged and marginalised
- Listening to the voices of the poverty experienced
- Providing Dignity, Agency and Power
- Focused on local delivery and solutions

Behaviours for local churches (page 5 of strategy) (1)

- Integral to the life of the local community,
- Listening actively to the views of local people,
- Seeing all people as made in the image of God,
- Walking with people in their communities in the most difficult of situations,
- Using their resources to express the Gospel message of justice and compassion for all people

Behaviours for local churches (page 5 of strategy) (2)

- Fostering a family of church and faith communities committed to work together
- Generous to one another, open to sharing and learning together
- Intolerant of injustice providing a prophetic challenge
- Ensuring all can live with dignity, agency, and power

A CRCW's Perspective

Fliss Barker CRCW Wooler URC





Warm Welcome Wooler

Taking the message to the Streets





Other Activities

Questions for Discussion

Where do you see challenges for your church and community? How can listening to people in the community help you tackle those challenges together?

How might listening to your local community challenge your ideas of church growth and success and how this is measured?

Possible Topics for future webinars

- Places to Meet – Community Hubs & Warm Spaces
- Providing Food – Food Banks, Pantries and Groceries
- Knowing your Community - Audits, Community Walks etc.
- Affordable Housing
- Introducing Community Organising
- Partnership opportunities with Health
- Funding Mission - Grants and other Funding
- Organisational Issues – CIOs, CICs and other Governance matters

Some Starting Points

- **Community Meeting Places**

- Places of Welcome
- Warm Welcome Spaces
- Christian Community Hub Network

- **Affordable Housing**

- Affordable Housing Guide

- **Understanding your Community**

- CUF Look-up Tool
- Growing Good
- Community Auditing

Useful General Resources

- URC NW Synod Website
- Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT)
- Church Urban Fund
- Church Action on Poverty

Synod's Role in supporting local churches

- Offer a prophetic challenge
- Enable partnerships: Faith and Secular
- To enable and empower action locally
- To share support, resources, learning
- To respond creatively to local needs with solutions

Our Commitments (NW Synod)

- Church Action on Poverty
- Living Wage
- Food
- Housing
- Community Empowerment
- Campaigning

Community Conversations

“The first service that one owes to others in the community is to listen to them. Those who cannot listen long and patiently will always be talking past others, and finally will not even notice it. The death of community starts here.”

Dietrich Bonhoefer

The URC: A Paradoxical Church at a Crossroads

“Yet above all what shines through from the URC’s core identity is something simple and practical: a deep commitment to community engagement”

