

NEW SPONSORS

The William Temple Foundation

The William Temple Foundation is a Christian-based research organisation engaging with the changing urban face of Manchester. The Foundation is currently in the middle of a three year research programme, mapping the patterns of church engagement with civil society and regeneration in strategic communities in Manchester and offering a strategic response, both theologically and in terms of resource management. The current research ends in 2005. We are also engaged in work, via our economic affairs advisor, to brief the Church of England on issues of marginalisation and poverty in the UK. Hannah Skinner, our economic advisor, has just completed a substantial piece of research on the economic role and identity of asylum seekers and refugees in the UK. Full details of all our reports and publications are available on our website www.wtf.org.uk.

Urban Mission/Social Inclusion Baptist Union of Great Britain.

For the last thirty years Terry Jones has been in pastoral ministry with two churches, in Ashford Middlesex then the last 14 plus years in Toxteth, Liverpool. During that time he saw an amazing transformation of place, people and to some degree community. A lot of time was spent receiving teams for urban orientation and theology and hosting parties to stay and serve and learn.

Then six months ago, this post of Urban Mission Adviser (Urban Mission/Social Inclusion) came "looking for me" and he had to be fully open and obedient to what was clearly God's call. Now his task is to bring a Social Inclusion Unit to birth, along with a department researcher, Grahame Walker; then to promote urban mission, ministry and support. There are a considerable number of departmental responsibilities as well as regular preaching across the nation, so he is kept busy.

"My heart is to inspire, inform and give insight into urban mission, by whatever means possible. I have a wife, Ann, three children (older than I care to mention) three grandchildren and one budgie called Lunatic!"

Contact: Terry Jones, Baptist Union

BOOK REVIEWS

Faithfulness in the City, ed. John Vincent (Monad 2003)

'Witness' is a key term in Walter Bruggemann's influential work on the Old Testament and the bulk of this book can be understood as 'witness' in the sense in which he uses it, as a key task of 'the people of God'.

In the first part of the book, 'people and communities' speak from the inner city about fear, despair, hope, commitment, faith and

solidarity. Many of these voices are very moving. Nearly twenty years after 'Faith in the City' they record that in many ways the situation of the poor is worse. What has the Church done in these twenty years? The answer of these stories is that it has 'been faithful'. For John Vincent such stories are at the heart of what he calls 'theological practice', which he wants to distinguish from 'theological reflection'. The latter, he argues, represents the putting into action of agreed theological truths while the former assumes that theology has decisively influenced events, and is central to practice in the first place. Vincent notes 'the more or less complete absence of theology as "the great truths"' from this witness. Most of the stories attempt biblical reflections on their situations. Inevitably the theme of what it means to be church is an insistent theme and there is a challenge to the suburban church to understand its solidarity more radically.

Despite John Vincent's hesitation about 'reflection' the second part of the book is called 'reflections and discernments' and includes quite a sophisticated urban analysis from Andrew Davey and a splendid piece of the theological reflection on the incarnation and urban form by Michael Northcott, the one 'great truth' which really figures in the volume.

Vincent follows this with a lyrical piece on theology as harvest, the end product of struggle, produced by people on the edge of existence containing fire, incomprehensibility, violence, unacceptableness, bliss, insight, and giftedness. This is, of course, the language of Pentecost – indeed it reads like a Pentecost sermon.

All of this is fine and good but one wants to say that our present is after all mediated to us by our history, by tradition, and that, as Vincent knows very well, doctrines like that of the Trinity emerged as a record of other Christians trying to do exactly what the contributors here are doing, to refract their present in the light of Scripture and draw out the implications. Northcott shows us how illuminating the enterprise can be. Taken as a whole the volume constitutes an important continuation of the debate engendered by Faith in the City, challenging both our commandments and our understanding of where God is in our present. It deserves a wide audience – and not just in the inner city.

Reviewer: Tim Gorrington

This review was taken from 'Theology' Sept. & October 2004, by kind permission of SPCK.

Meet Them Where They Are by Richard Passmore with additional material by Jo & Nigel Pimlott. Published by Scripture Union jointly with Frontier Youth Trust and Youth for Christ. ISBN 1859997392 £5.

Richard Passmore is unusual. He is a practitioner who thinks creatively about his experience and is able to write! In this accessible book he sets out the tried and tested principles and methods of engaging with young people beyond the fringes of the churches.

The disaffected young, at risk on our streets, in our shopping centres and parks are defined as 'problems' by our society. It takes those, who are looking with Christ's eyes, to see their possibilities and potential.

This paperback, in uncomplicated language, tells us how to go about this demanding work, from getting to school to making contact, developing plans and moving on. Pitfalls and problems are faced; practical skills and approaches explained.

Throughout the book stories of incidents and situations illuminate these pages. These give a feel of what is involved and what can happen. If you are thinking of developing outreach work with young people outside your comfort zone get a copy of this book and take its practical wisdom to heart.

Reviewer: Michael Eastman

Facing the City: Urban Mission in the 21st Century by Rod Garner.

Published by Epworth Press, 2004. £14.99

Rod Garner's book is a fine and generous statement of that peculiarly Anglican, educated, enlightened, middle-of-the-road spirituality, which in our time has become typical of the best suburban Anglican parishes, but which also, as in this case, has set itself, at least for periods of time, within the disciplines and deprivations of urban places. The records of the author's own ministry in Wolverhampton, Hull and now Southport (as Diocesan Theological Consultant) are

enlarged by masses of quotations and stories from theologians, missionaries, poets and occasionally architects and planners. Everything is brought together in a thorough, wide-ranging, immensely urbane tapestry, bound by the threads of a cool, incarnational, social, 'public theology' of the William Temple/Preston/Atherton/Northcott/Ward variety.

It is, of course, an educated, intellectual tradition. The 2003 volume, 'Faithfulness in the City', comes from more down-to-earth Anglican parish ministers – and the implications of that style of faith and theologizing have yet to be worked out. But the tradition

witnessed here by Garner gives a respectable theological gloss to it all, even if it lacks some of the gutsy incarnationalism of less intentional and more vulnerable practice.

Though firmly Anglican, the book can cross denominations easily. Its presence on the Methodist Epworth list presumably was due to SPCK's having too many like titles already – but also hopefully indicates that SPCK welcomes Methodists in return!

David Sheppard's Foreword notes that Garner observes in Faith in the City 'an old Anglican caution that was readier to engage in pastoral work rather than addressing the deep-seated issues of powerlessness and political marginalization which the report had raised.' Indeed, Garner comments that 'A theology of the Kingdom, with its challenge to institutions as well as individuals has proved less palatable – partly