

Connecting People_

Jim Wallis tops this year's CRC convention programme which looks at 'Connecting People to Big Issues and Practical Action'

The event aims to relate specific issues from the global arena to the experiences of grassroots action in the region. Speakers, workshops and networking opportunities will also inspire, inform and equip delegates for practical action.



Last year's event attracted over 160 delegates to Magna in Rotherham. This year the convention travels north of the county to Northallerton in North Yorkshire where the Baptist and Methodist churches will jointly host the event on Friday 2nd July.

Information and booking forms are now available from the CRC office or to download from www.crc-online.org.uk.



New Look for CRC_

CRC have now adopted the sweeping cross emblem to represent the distinct contribution of dynamism and faith that the organisation brings to the region.

This will appear on all communications including the revised website that is being developed to bring further online services for information and support.

"The new brand represents CRC's commitment to creatively represent and involve churches from across the whole of the region" Graham Brownlee,

William Hague buys local with CRC_

Richmondshire MP, William Hague visited Leyburn Market Place with Bob Baker, the area's new Rural Development Officer to highlight the role that buying local produce plays in assisting the region's economy.

Bob's role, featured in Issue 3 of Spirit Level, was created to bring support and assistance to some of the most badly hit farming communities and rural businesses



in North Yorkshire. This job was created through a partnership of Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber (CRC), Farm Crisis Network and the local churches in response to the hardship encountered by farmers and their families in the most northerly Yorkshire dales of Swaledale, Wensleydale and Arkengarthdale.

"I would encourage us all to support our local farm businesses and farming way of life." commented William Hague. *"I applaud this excellent initiative taken by Churches Regional Commission and particularly the practical steps taken to help economic development in rural areas."*

Study Pack launched_

The Catholic Diocese of Leeds has launched a study pack supported by CRC to promote social mission in local parishes. Produced by the Vicariate for Social Responsibility, the six session study pack entitled 'The Reign of God is among You' is designed to awaken a deeper and livelier sense of the social mission within parish communities of all denominations.

The Rt Rev David Konstant, Bishop of Leeds, said: "The Church has always had at its heart the marginalized in society and has acted to help them in their needs. This project demonstrates some examples of 'best practice' in this area and encourages us to keep up the good work." The study pack and video presentations, though not specifically designed as a Lenten reflection, offer ideal material for parish groups in the lead up to Easter. The pack including video is priced at £10 plus postage and packing. For further details or to place an order please contact the Leeds Diocesan Justice and Peace Office on 0113 261 8055.

Cohesion report launched_

David Hey of the Neighbourhood Renewal Team of Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber launched CRC first keynote report on social cohesion.

Sticking Together_Community Cohesion: a response to the debate identifies issues raised by reports commissioned following the northern city riots of 2001 that remain in large to be tackled. It points out that genuine community cohesion is locally rooted, involving local people.

It can not be imposed from the outside. Also, Faith is a crucial part of the identity and practice of many people in our region. Cohesion will only come about when Faith is recognised and valued.



The report promotes concrete action by churches including partnerships with other faiths and public bodies. In particular, the report calls for churches to work with all of good faith to combat hatred, prejudice and discrimination, to combat the efforts of those who seek to exploit the tensions and divisions which poverty and unrest may produce.

"This is a crucial time for cohesion in the region with forthcoming elections and extremist groups fermenting division in our communities," commented Liz Carnelley, Policy Officer for CRC and author of the report.

"Faith leaders have a very real part to play in creating cohesive communities by giving responsible and positive messages to their communities," commented David Hey.

CRC's keynote report series will provide focused analysis of current issues within a framework of Christian belief, to encourage careful reflection and to promote concrete action. Future keynote reports will focus on the social economy and quality of life.

Sticking Together is reviewed in this issue, and available from CRC using the attached order form or from www.crc-online.org.uk.

Please let us know of information, sources of support and events of interest to others
To contact CRC write to the office: 20 New Market Street Leeds, LS1 6DG,
phone: 0113-244-3413, or email: info@crc-online.org.uk

Useful information_

Cohesion

The Home Office Community Cohesion Unit Aims to promote a cohesive community where:

- There is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities;
- The diversity of people's different backgrounds and circumstances are appreciated and positively valued;
- Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities; and strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.

Read more at:

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/inside/org/dob/direct/ccu.html

This unit, supported by the independent Community Cohesion Panel, monitors the implementation of the Cantle and Denham recommendations through its work with other Departments, Government Offices and local authorities. Find out more from:

www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm200203/cmhansrd/cm031111/text/31111w19.htm

You can have access to guidance, useful regional and policy information, with examples of good practice and links to other relevant sites from:

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/comrace/cohesion/index.html

The Commission for Racial Equality CRE published a useful introduction to cohesion. It is available from:

www.cre.gov.uk/pdfs/cohesion.pdf

Neighbourhood Renewal Team

There is a neighbourhood renewal team in each Government Office. Their role is to help the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit oversee local renewal strategies, administer various funds, oversee renewal programmes and feedback to the NRU what is going on locally. Find out about Yorkshire and the Humber here:

www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/renewal/yh.asp

Agencies

A range of contacts in agencies across the region is provided here:

www.renewal.net/England/YorksHumber/Contacts.asp

Asylum Seekers The Refugee Council

In addition to CRC's paper on Destitute Asylum Seekers available from www.crc-online.org.uk, more detailed information is provided by The Refugee Council at www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/supportus/campaigns/camp001.htm

Asylum Voices edited by Dr Andrew Bradstock and Rev Arlington Trotman published by CTBI 2003. £6.95 ISBN 085169-287-7

Public Relations Toolkit

The Neighbourhood Renewal toolkit aims to provide those involved in running regeneration partnerships with the basic information, useful tips, good practice and checklists to create effective and eye-catching communications for their local partnerships and organisations. This is not a guide to community consultation and engagement; it is a guide for generating positive public relations and media coverage.

Download this document (pdf file) from: www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/formatteddoc.asp?id=574 or order free copies by post, tel. 08450 82 83 83.

Events_

Citizenship, 'Race' and Identity conference, JUST West Yorkshire

Thursday 18th March 9.30 – 4 Bodington Hall, University of Leeds.

Conference aims to hear first hand from young people about how issues of citizenship, 'race' and identity affect their lives; to explore these issues further and discuss future action and solutions; to provide networking opportunities and inform agencies. Students and unwaged free: £20/£40 for others. For more information tel. 01274 545735 or email mag@jrct.org.uk

Public Hearing on a Regional Elected Assembly Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber

18th March Sheffield, 1st April Hull, 22nd April Halifax 6 – 8 pm (venues to be confirmed)

To receive a ticket and invitation, contact Jackie Nucera by email jnucera.goyh@go-regions.gsi.gov.uk specifying your preferred event. Look out in press for more details.



**Leeds Credit Hearings Church
Action on Poverty
March 27th 10.30 - 12.30
Oxford Place Methodist
Church, Leeds**

A panel of listeners headed by John Battle MP

and John Packer Bishop of Ripon & Leeds will hear from people whose lives have been affected by debt, loansharks and poor access to banking facilities. Everyone interested is invited to come and listen and ask questions of the panel which will include people from the economic and financial life of the city. Tickets and briefing pack available from Leeds Justice and Peace tel. 0113 261 8055

**Vision Reshaped Leeds Church Institute
Saturday 6th March 9.30 – 12.30 Headingley
St. Columba United Reform Church, Leeds.**

An exploration through sign, symbol and song led by Kathy Galloway leader of the Iona Community. £4. For more information tel 0113 245 4700

**Ministry Reshaped Leeds Church Institute
Thursday 6th May 5.45 – 8.30 pm Leeds
Church Institute**

Working towards clarity and integrity in relationships between laity and ministers. Led by Neil Burgess
£5 including light refreshments. For more information tel 0113 245 4700

**Changing Communities Leeds Church Institute
Tuesday 11th May 12 – 2 Leeds
Church Institute.**

An exploration of census material led by Jackie Pruckner (Leeds City Council) and David Randolph-Horn (LCI)
£2 including drinks. For more information tel 0113 245 4700. For information on the full Leeds Church Institute Spring and Summer Programme tel 0113 245 4700

**Everyone Together!
Tuesday 23rd March 10 – 4.15 Wilson Carlile
College, Sheffield.**

Covering the laws governing provision for people with a disability.
£30 including info pack and lunch. For more information tel. 0114 278 7020
email j.richardson@churcharmy.org.uk

**Faith Leaders Training Faith Forum
West Yorkshire
Wednesday 24th March 10 – 5 St. Catherine's
Church Centre, Wakefield.**

Training and mentoring to enable faith communities to engage in community learning and neighbourhood regeneration initiatives sponsored by the Learning and Skills Council. For more information tel. 01924 211130 email info@campitor-ltd.com

**Churches Festival: Open Churches North
of Lincoln**

8th, 9th, 15th, 16th May
Local history exhibitions, art and crafts shows, guided tours, music etc. For more information tel. 01427 676666
email tourism.info@west-lindsey.gov.uk

Is inter-faith Relevant?

More than 77% of people in Yorkshire and the Humber say that they have links to a faith community

Faith and our religious and spiritual beliefs remain a significant part of life today. And with the structure of our regional governance changing, the opportunity is there for faith to raise its voice. How can this work in practice for the common good of all communities in the region? A model for regional faith is currently being proposed by the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly (see 'An invitation to be heard' inside).

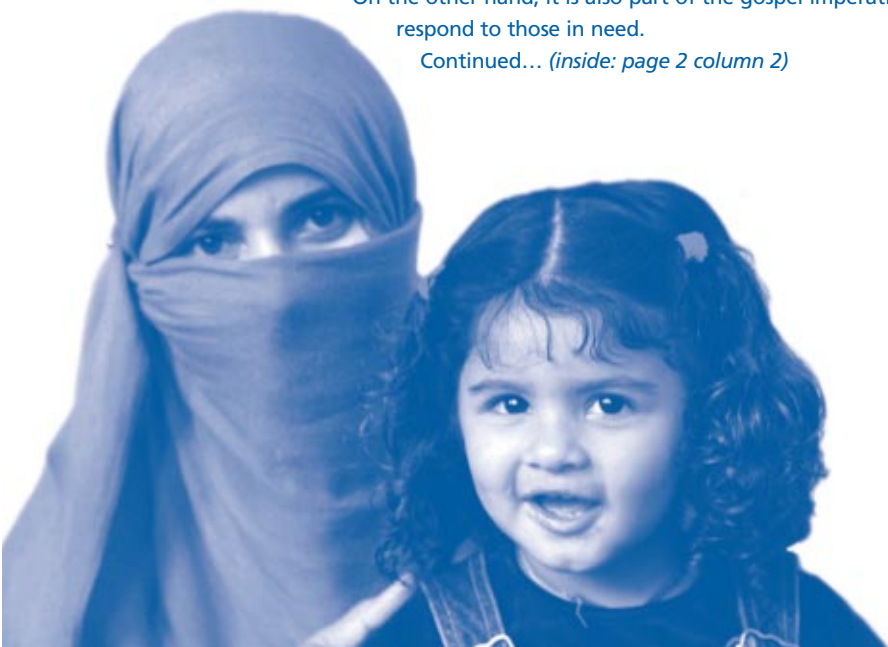
There is also a key role for faiths in promoting social cohesion within our communities (see 'Transforming Communities' inside). Liz Carnelley, Policy Officer with CRC writes in her latest report 'Sticking Together': "Faith communities share common values such as respect for others, a desire for peace, a view of each person as unique and valuable, and a desire to service the community." (see Book Review inside). With forthcoming elections faith leaders have a particular role to play in lessening the impact of extremist groups. In particular, deprived communities where people feel they are not listened become a fertile breeding ground for extremists.

"Faith leaders have a very real part to play in creating cohesive communities by giving responsible and positive messages to their communities." comments David Hey, Community Cohesion Team Leader at Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber. "There is a real need for faith communities to become engaged in this agenda. There is an enormous number of people who take great heed in what faith leaders say and there is a recognition within government of how important faith groups are and how they need to engage more with faith groups. The opportunity is there to get more involved and I think that it should be within the ethos of each church to actually get involved."

Successful initiatives show that harmony can be promoted in our most challenged communities (see 'Church Action' overleaf). Key issues such as the arrival of asylum seekers in communities require a practical and organised response from the church to encourage relationships and understanding across the wider community. CRC have recently published a paper (available online, at www.crc-online.org.uk) on the current situation in relation to the increasing number of destitute asylum seekers in our region. There are already many church initiatives and responses but there may well be more that we can all do together or further opportunities for sharing good practice. It is recognised that there will be different views about the issue of asylum seeking among Christians, and it is also obvious that there are no simplistic answers.

On the other hand, it is also part of the gospel imperative to respond to those in need.

Continued... (inside: page 2 column 2)



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3 projects promoting cohesion in our communities
- **Transforming Communities**
cohesive communities in the run up to elections
- **Sticking together**
CRC report responds to cohesion debate
- **Global Issues for the local Church**



Jim Wallis
at CRC's
July 2nd
convention



Church action_

An update on three contrasting faith-based projects from across the region which contribute to social cohesion in their local communities.

They illustrate not only the form that multi-faith action can take to promote cohesion in local communities, but also how to effectively understand and address issues of global impact benefiting from the perspectives and knowledge of different communities within the area.

Faith Together in Leeds 11

The Hamara centre opens its doors in February 2004 as a healthy living centre for elderly Asian residents in Leeds 11. This former Methodist church represents the second half of the Leeds 11 project, with Building Blocks built on the site of a Parish Hall opening in 2003.

But far from being two separate buildings, one for the Asian and one for the white communities, the reality is that the project is being used in a much more cohesive way. The Christian owned Building Blocks building is frequented in the main by the Muslim community and service delivery is multi-faith. The latest plan is to convert the road to link the two buildings not only to improve access, but also to provide a focal point for the whole community. So the fundraising continues.

And what of its impact on the local community? Despite being the most deprived ward in Leeds suffering from multiple deprivation and social exclusion, with high levels of unemployment and crime, it has not suffered the same unrest as similar areas.

"Leeds 11 provides a

living testament to the idea that different communities can work together," comments Revd Neil Bishop, Methodist Minister and Project Supervisor. *"The area is all the more harmonious for its presence."*



Hanif Malik, Muslim Vice-Chair of Trustees agrees. "The project has helped to dispel myths and misconceptions that existed, particularly amongst older residents. We are beginning to counteract similar attitudes in younger people with sports activities bringing people of different backgrounds together."

Visit www.faithtogether.org.uk or read more about Faith Together in Leeds 11 in Angels and Advocates a report on church social action in Yorkshire and the Humber available from CRC (use the attached order form or find out more from www.crc-online.org.uk). Neil Bishop is a member of CRC's Inter-faith Task Group. Find out more on www.crc-online.org.uk.

Thornbury Mission Partner Project

This local ecumenical project was established in June 1999 to work among the local faith communities for common good. It is based at the award winning Thornbury Centre in Bradford built on the grounds of an original Church building which itself provides a statement of belief and hope for the future.

The project aims to build bridges of communication to reduce religious and cultural barriers and reduce misunderstandings through friendly discussions. Activities are diverse: meeting people from faith communities such as Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs; visiting places of worship such as Temples, Mosques, Gurdwaras; arranging visits to places of worship to listen and learn from their context (about one hundred groups and individuals from different parts of the country and from abroad to date); organising Religious Friends meetings to discuss important issues such as terrorism, drugs, integration in education, asylum seekers; organising multi-cultural fellowship, day conferences, day workshops and inter-religious living together away events are some of the important work of the project.

"The project contributes largely for the common community by providing something practical for those at grass roots level," comments Solomon Joseph Mission Partner. *"The co-operation, support and welcome for this mission received from different communities is encouraging for the future harmony of the area."*

North Lincolnshire Multi-faith Partnership

Enlightened Christian church and council officials have been meeting regularly to discuss a shared direction since the unitary council was formed in 1996 and North Lincolnshire Council have continued to support the Partnership.

"Whilst the council are required by central government to foster relationships between different groups, their involvement here has gone far beyond that and we are very grateful for their vision and commitment," comments Revd Derek Brown

Great steps forward were made when the discussion encompassed leaders from other traditions in the area and the Partnership was formerly established in 2002. The fostering of good relations between different communities will be boosted this month with the appointment of a project worker funded by CRC.

Since North Lincolnshire is primarily rural with Scunthorpe the urban focus for the county, time will show how experiences compare and contrast with initiatives in purely urban areas where issues of social cohesion have previously been the focus. In addition, the approach taken in this project of working from the point of view of the community rather than faith first and foremost draws interesting practical issues.

Whatever the formula, the results have been positive, not least with world events heightening tensions across the international community. The Project provided the opportunity to listen to and understand differing view points. World Peace Day is now marked annually with a ceremony at the Peace Stone erected after major development in the centre of Scunthorpe in 2002, indicating graphically the desire for all communities to work together on local and global issues.

Transforming Communities_

People can make a difference, things can change, communities can be transformed believes Liz Carnelley, Policy Officer with CRC.

As May elections draw nearer, Liz draws on her own experience living and working on the Isle of Dogs when the BNP were active in the early 1990s to show that communities can come together and people can learn to live in peace and harmony. A skilled and co-ordinated response is necessary to offset the impact of political extremism. A checklist of practical things we can do is provided here. You can download the full CRC paper on responding to the BNP at www.crc-online.org.uk.

Why are the BNP attracting support?

They respond to genuine local grievances, such as the end of funding for a project in a white area in Mixenden, or the lack of affordable housing on the Isle of Dogs. They often have success on the 'forgotten' white estates, where people feel no one is listening to them. And there is often a lack of "safe space" for such people to air their feelings – they struggle to find a language/a place to say what they want without being thought racist.

The BNP often find support in a context of significant problems: high unemployment, deprivation, lack of educational achievement, a vacuum of credible leadership/ a time of unstable politics, high crime/drugs, and people of different ethnic backgrounds living separate lives which encourages the growth of myths and rumour. These could be – the council are funding a huge mosque, St George's day is being banned, the Asians receive all the money... etc. There is often poor coverage by local media who add to the problems and tensions by irresponsible reporting.

When the BNP target a bye-election they bus in people from all over to canvass. The BNP are highly organised and focus on local issues often not being open about other policies such as the repatriation of non-whites out of the UK. If election turnout is low, they are much more likely to be elected. They already have seats in councils in our region and came second in others.

An Invitation to be Heard_

With around £570 million a year being spent in our region by public organisations in our region the Yorkshire and Humber Assembly (YHA) believes that everyone should have a say in how the region develops. CRC currently represents faith communities on the Assembly, but has been working with YHA to find a way of encompassing all faiths. Following a research study conducted by Leeds University, a regional faiths forum has been proposed to ensure that all faith communities have a better chance of being heard when important decisions are being taken. A series of information events are running in the region to find out what people think and if there is enough support YHA will begin to develop funding, membership and other important issues.

Events in March are being held in Bradford, Scunthorpe, Sheffield, Hull, York, Huddersfield, Wakefield, Northallerton. Rotherham and Leeds. To find out more, and receive a booking form, contact Michelle Stephens on **0113 244 3413** or email mstephens@mstephens.go-legend.net or download from www.crc-online.org.uk.

...Is inter-faith Relevant?

CRC aims to equip churches with the practical skills required in such action. In addition to the paper mentioned previously, the question of responding to asylum seekers will be addressed in a workshop at CRC's forthcoming convention (see Events). CRC also keeps in touch with other faiths through a multi-faith steering group, a key sounding board on regional faith developments. Find out more about CRC's events, papers, publications and how to get involved on the new CRC website launched last month: www.crc-online.org.uk.

How Do We Combat Extremists?

- **We need to give out facts and figures** to contradict the myths and rumours: e.g. how funding is shared
- **Working with the media and local press** is vital
- **Events need to bring people together** who otherwise wouldn't meet – a visit to a mosque, faith forums etc.
- **There needs to be a space to raise hard issues** and let people be heard
- **People need to turn out and vote** – a higher vote means less chance of a BNP victory. On the Isle of Dogs transport was arranged to polling booths.
- **Other political parties need to be encouraged** not to "play the race card"
- **It needs to be clear where churches stand**, (though sensitively - without making people feel excluded from the church if they sympathise with the BNP) as the BNP often claim to be Christian and target Muslims for blame.
- **Public statements promoting racial/religious harmony** may be useful.
- **Local events can change the mood** such as prayers for peace and school events. On the Isle of Dogs, the rainbow ribbons for peace campaign encouraged people to celebrate diversity. Thousands were given out in doctors' surgeries, churches and community centres.

Initiative development fund unveiled_

CRC's Chair, Julian Cummins has announced the scheme for this year's Initiative Development Fund which aims to support innovative church work. This fund seeks to promote new approaches which will become models for others and is open to local churches and church projects, particularly those working in partnership with other denominations, faiths, and public, business, or voluntary organisations.

"We know that churches are involved in almost every community and providing an impressive range of social action. Yet there are new ideas waiting to be acted on; new partnerships to be started and fresh opportunities to be grasped. The Churches Regional Commission is keen to encourage local churches to go for it," commented Julian Cummins.

CRC aims to sponsor contributions to social inclusion, rural renaissance, culture, inter-faith working and lifelong learning, which are at the heart of the CRC's current action. These areas are designed to be as inclusive as possible and to be open to a wide range of proposals. Last year 14 projects benefited from a total of £22,500. For 2004/05 £30,000 is available.

Currently, CRC are particularly interested to encourage initiatives relating to environmental action, disability partnerships, social enterprise, healthy living and links with education in schools or colleges. For 2004/05 there is a special theme, which the CRC is developing in partnership with the Countryside Agency. This is for work with young people to develop links between urban and rural communities.

If you are starting something new, or extending the work of an existing project in one, or more, of these themes, it's worth getting in touch. What you are planning may fit more than one theme. We can fund a study, support for a group, or the time put in by workers. We cannot fund building work. You can use this fund alongside other sources of funding.

Last year's fund supported a range of initiatives across the region including Eternal Benefits Furniture in Hull which collects unwanted furniture and delivers it to low-income people. The funding contributed towards the set up of training and tools costs for a new employee to recycle white goods (fridges, cookers and washing machines). In Sheffield, Initiative Development Funding contributed towards the staffing costs of the Victoria Community Enterprise Community Café, part of a multi-purpose centre at a large Victorian church in Sheffield 2, a deprived multi cultural inner city area. The café promotes healthy living and acts as a focus for the local community and volunteering.

To find out more and receive an application form visit www.crc-online.org.uk email info@crc-online.org.uk or tel. 0113 244 3413

CRC Publications order form_

I would like to order:

copies of the **Sowing the Seed** at £3.50 plus £1.00 p+p (Yorkshire & Humber church) £5.00 plus £1.00 p+p (Standard price).

copies of **Angels & Advocates** at £3.50 plus £1.00 p+p (Yorkshire & Humber church) £5.00 plus £1.00 p+p (Standard price).

copies of the **Angels & Advocates Summary** at £1.00 for 10 copies plus £2.00 p+p.

copies of the **Angels & Advocates Bible Study Packs** at £1.00 plus 75p p+p

copies of the **Sticking Together_ community cohesion: a response to the debate** £4 plus 50p p+p

Your Name

Address

Post Code

Tel No

Email

Please post or fax to:

Churches Regional Commission
for Yorkshire and The Humber
20 New Market Street,
Leeds, LS1 6DG.

T_ 0113 244 3413 F_ 0113 243 2038

Book review_ **Sticking Together_ Community Cohesion: a response to the debate**

The CRC in the person of Liz Carnelley has produced a useful booklet on the issues and challenges of community cohesion. The booklet falls into three parts. Part 1 sets out in a brief but comprehensive manner the main points of the various reports published in 2001/2 following the riots in summer 2001. This is helpful for those coming new to community cohesion issues and a helpful aide-memoire as to some of the specific points of the reports for those of us who can't carry the reports in our heads!

Part 2_ demonstrates how responding to these issues is part of the Church's mission in the world at local, regional and national level. And, in the light of the local elections in June, there is a timely warning about the dangers of continuing along a path where division and hatred are the norm rather than diversity and mutual care.

Part 3_ offers issues for discussion. This

section is not clearly laid out and tries to give too many answers rather than highlight potential points for debate. However that should not stop anyone using this booklet to encourage their Christian community "to work with others of good faith to combat hatred, prejudice and discrimination" and build up our common life.



Kathryn Fitzsimons, Urban Ministry Officer, Diocese of Ripon & Leeds.

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Available from CRC using the enclosed publications order form, by visiting www.crc-online.org.uk, tel. 0113 2443413 or email info@crc-online.org.uk