

# Recent Faith surveys - an overview

## Introduction

Three surveys/reports on faith action in communities have recently been issued:

1. Economic Impact Assessment of Faith Communities in Yorkshire and Humber: Grace and Generosity. (HE research June 2009)
2. Faith in England's Northwest: how faith communities contribute to social and economic wellbeing (Change Institute, Oct 2009)
3. Faithful Capital: a report on church-based community action in Leeds. (Leeds Churches Together in Mission 2009)

This briefing seeks to analyse them and draw out conclusions from the three reports. The reports were different in scope and focus, but each provide a useful view of community-based work by faith communities. All three show that the reach and provision of community projects by faith groups is immense and of great value, often serving the most vulnerable in society, and founded on principles of service derived from strong faith-based values.

Liz Carnelley

Churches Regional Commission for Yorkshire and the Humber March 2010

[info@crc-online.org.uk](mailto:info@crc-online.org.uk)

0113 2443413

## 1. Grace and Generosity

The Yorkshire and Humber report was produced by the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum to look at the economic impact of the work that faith communities are doing in communities, and to build the confidence of faith communities in this undervalued work. A survey was sent out to as many places of worship in the region as possible with an 11% return (336 responses). This was grossed up to get a figure for the region as a whole, based on the assumption that there are 3,000 places of worship in the region. (However, CRC has always assumed Prof. Kim Knott of Leeds University is right that there are about 4,000 places of worship. Angels and Advocates in 2002 assumes 3,600 churches.)

Grace and Generosity suggests that the total economic value of paid staff and volunteers in community projects run by faith communities is in the region of £218-£282 million. (The volunteers at minimum wage alone is £63 million). The rentable value of faith buildings used by community groups is estimated at £10 million per annum. The value of faith-based tourism was estimated at £4 million to the places of worship in the region (based on an estimate of 2.4 million visitors a year to places of worship in the region.) If visitor spend is considered (because visitors to, say, York Minster both give to the building, spend in the building, and spend in York, and perhaps stay in York) it is estimated at £69 million in total economic impact.

The total value to the region of faith communities' community work is estimated at £300 million per annum.

Each faith centre was involved in around 2-3 projects (Angels and Advocates, a 2002 CRC report on church-based community work, said the same). The report looked at the type of activities run, but also the values underpinning that work: service, regeneration, faith, commitment to good neighbourliness and hospitality, grassroots action, justice and making space for spiritual values. Workshops were held to discuss the survey, and find views on the values behind the work of faith centres.

In addition a DVD was produced telling the stories of eight projects in the region; six are Christian, one is Muslim and one Sikh.

The report concludes that the faith sector has a substantial number of employees and volunteers, delivering extensive activities, with an emphasis on the disadvantaged and excluded, contributing its own resources as well as levering in considerable funding.

Grace and Generosity is available from the website of the Yorkshire and Humber Faiths Forum website – [www.yorkshireandhumberfaiths.org.uk](http://www.yorkshireandhumberfaiths.org.uk)  
To see the report go to <http://yorkshireandhumberfaiths.org.uk/wp-content/Economic%20Impact%20Assessment%20Research%20Report.pdf>

## 2. Faith in England's Northwest

This 2009 research was undertaken for the Churches Officer for the Northwest, Monsignor John Devine, supported by the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA). It is a literature review and an in-depth look at 12 case studies.

Previously in 2003 the NWDA sponsored research on the contribution faith communities make to civil society – the kind of work undertaken and the scale of this work. This had a 54% response rate, from a survey sent to 4,400 places of worship. Two years later this work was analysed to produce an economic impact assessment of this work. Therefore comparing the 2009 Yorkshire and Humber findings to the 2005 North West report is very difficult since the number of places of worship assumed is different and also different figures are used for estimates.

The 2005 economic impact report found there were 5,000 social action projects for the 2,376 who replied, and volunteers *of those who replied* generated £65 million pounds. (This was based on an £8.00 an hour rate.) The rentable value of premises *of those who replied* was estimated as perhaps £811,472 per annum – a lot less than the Y and H survey. The value of faith tourism *of those who replied* was £8.5 million, including visitor spend, with almost 700,000 visitors a year (a great deal less than in Yorkshire and Humber, even allowing for more visitors in Y and H, as a different way of calculating the value was used). The total contribution of respondents is £70 million; including non-responders was estimated at £95 million. (Again a lot less than the Yorkshire and Humber survey, but again comparisons are not really possible, and also the Y and H survey included paid staff of projects at around £147 million, which the North-West survey does not include.)

The 2009 report is a literature review, considering work like Faithful Capital from the Church of England, the national policy agenda of the government, and especially Face to Face, Side by Side (an inter-faith framework from the Department for Communities and Local Government), and then a look at 12 case studies, some multi-faith, some single faith, from across the north-west region. This part of the report has a lot of resonances with the CRC report with Faithworks, Effective Christian Presence and Enterprise, looking at the motivation of the projects, the role of committed individuals, the importance of leadership, the crucial role of volunteers and the significance of partnership. The projects are needs-led, they have high levels of trust in the community, the faith organisations are embedded in communities for the long-term, they focus on individual wellbeing and community neighbourliness, and they have levered in significant funding. The main risks are identified as future funding and burnout. These are all resonant with the ECPE research.

The report then looks at the different kinds of social capital in the case studies and the links to the government framework for working with Faith Communities Face to Face, Side by Side. The added value it concludes are the social capital engendered: the commitment of staff and volunteers and the shared values; and the high trust levels in their locality: their embeddedness in the community, their “stickability”.

Some key findings are: faith communities should be acknowledged as key partners by public bodies, be engaged in Local Area Agreements etc, and involved as stakeholders in policy consultations. In turn faith communities need to engage with public bodies, ensure their representation in inter-faith bodies is effective and adopt a “service-delivery” mindset.

To see the North West report go to:

<http://www.faithnorthwest.org.uk/publications.html>

To see the CRC’s Effective Christian Presence and Enterprise report go to:

<http://www.crc-online.org.uk/reports.asp?slid=89&mid=90>

To see the government framework Face to Face, Side by Side go to:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/interfaithdialogue>

### 3. Faithful Capital.

This report from Leeds Churches Together in Mission, with the support of others like Network: Leeds and Livability, was a survey of church-based community work in Leeds. Of 341 churches approached, there was a 43% response rate – 147 respondents. The report's aim was to highlight this work and encourage strategic working across churches.

The survey looked at who were the beneficiaries of the work e.g. by ethnicity and age; the kinds of projects and the needs they seek to address; the resources available (e.g. buildings, funding, staff and volunteers). Of 70 respondents who answered the question about contacts, one fifth of the total of Leeds churches, they recorded contact with 85, 200 people – 11% of the population of Leeds.

The “discussion” of the findings, (pp. 19-29) is extremely thought-provoking and worth churches looking at in detail, in my view. There are references to the CRC's Effective Christian Presence and Enterprise (ECPE) report, and again, like the NW report, there are many resonances with that report. The role and motivation of volunteers is examined, the issue of funding faith-based projects, and how buildings are utilised.

The report suggests that it would be good for the churches to work more strategically, and encourages more partnership working and wider engagement for example with the Local Strategic Partnership and its Vision for Leeds.

In terms of the churches' mission there is a helpful look at the 'five marks of mission' (from the Anglican church). A number showed many of these - proclaiming the kingdom, nurture in the faith, loving service, transforming unjust structures and ensuring the integrity of creation. The last two were the least evident.

The last section considers the relation between church based work and other work with similar values, often originally initiated by churches. It is argued that there should be a wider understanding of mission which values partnerships of this kind. It quotes Rowan Williams – “mission is finding out what God is doing in the world – and joining in”.

To see the report go to

<http://www.networkleeds.com/Publisher/Article.aspx?ID=106611>

(you need to go to the bottom of this page to find the report!)

## Reflections

Many secular funders are keen to see the potential or actual economic impact of projects – how much volunteer time is worth for example. For us as churches or faith communities we are often more interested in the “soft” outcomes of projects such as improved community cohesion, or building skills, which are more difficult to measure, and stories about lives changed, which are of course important too. Livability have been recently doing training on measuring the impact of your community work – “Measuring real success in your community work “ – see their website

[http://www.communitymission.org.uk/training\\_events/livability\\_events.aspx#Measuring](http://www.communitymission.org.uk/training_events/livability_events.aspx#Measuring)

It is important for us as churches to better “sell” what we do as we are not very good, generally, at shouting about it – or even talking about it in way that make sense to others such as voluntary groups, parish councils, or local government. So, for example a church might say ‘we just run a lunch club’ – but that might be about giving people confidence in catering, training up potential community leaders, giving people who are isolated contact with others, providing people on limited incomes with a hot meal, giving opportunities for pastoral care and support to those who come, providing an opportunity for mission and engagement.

What these reports show is that the contribution of faith communities through their community action is immense, in terms of the scale, the reach and the the economic value it brings in to the local economy. In addition the faith communities themselves are fulfilling their own purposes and mission which is to live out our values through service with and for our communities, especially the most needy and vulnerable.

## What churches can do

1. We can try to measure the impact of that we do. CRC, the Churches Commission on Urban Life and Faith and the Church Urban Fund developed a toolkit to help do that – see the Churches Community Value Toolkit at <http://www.cuf.org.uk/page18562133.aspx>
2. We can look at the Outcomes of our work – a term much used by funders now. See <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/advice-support/funding-finance/income-sources/outcome-funding>
3. Churches should learn to value the work that we do in the name of Christ – for our own sake, to celebrate it and give thanks for it, and those who are involved in it.