

# 1. Introduction



With this resource the Justice and Peace Commission hopes to encourage and support Christians throughout London and the areas covered by the London Church Leaders' Group who are working for justice, peace and care for God's creation. We firmly believe that education about justice and peace is important if we are to understand our global responsibilities, and to play a full part in working to bring about God's Kingdom on earth

The resource is ecumenical both in the traditions on which it draws, and in the examples of inspiring practice it presents, since the challenges to social justice, world peace and the survival of our planet demand that we develop an approach which will overcome sectarian differences. We particularly wanted to show the wonderful and hopeful initiatives already taking place in the London area, so that none would feel that the challenge was insurmountable. In many cases, Christians of different traditions are working together, sometimes with people of other faiths.

We have outlined the Scriptural imperative to work for the Kingdom here and now: an understanding of biblical teaching that unites all of our denominations. We rely on the tradition of 'Catholic Social Teaching', that is, the body of writings from the popes and bishops in modern times, begun with Pope Leo XIII in 1891, and continuing to our own times. We rely also on the Anglican tradition of teaching and recommendations, in such documents as Faith in the City, the Church and the Bomb, Faithful Cities. As a case-study, we describe the legacy of Christian social reformers of all denominations in Britain in the nineteenth century, holding them up for inspiration today.

In a time of such rapid change in our churches as in society at large, we found it helpful to think of the "Five Marks of Mission" used by the Anglican communion, (and increasingly adopted by other denominations) as a guide to where our churches stand in their mission to proclaim Christ, and have directed attention to them in our parish audit section. Catholics may see social action as a logical outcome of the Christ Among Us discussion group series, part of the At Your Word Lord renewal initiative. The United Reformed Church may call on its Church and Society tradition, to inspire action. After a self-review, a parish might be ready for action, and our section on Starting and Running a Group might help to get things going.

To challenge the status quo, or to try to change seemingly intractable global situations, it is easy to despair. But Christ has promised, "Fear not, for I have overcome the world". To remain faithful, we need a spirituality to sustain us through the darkest times. The section on spirituality gives us role models, and ideas for reflection. Finally, since such a small document can only cover a fraction of the ideas and material available, we include a resource list, arranged in themes, with many websites leading to further riches.

The films that accompany this resource illustrate powerfully what church people are doing and saying about justice, peace and social change in London and the South East. More can be done: it just needs our helping hand.

We hope this resource will make a small contribution to Greater London's justice and peace endeavours today.