

THE NINTH OXFORD INSTITUTE OF METHODIST THEOLOGICAL STUDIES JULY/AUGUST 1992.
 GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR IN THE WESLEYAN TRADITION.
 A PAPER FOR THE WORKING GROUP ON EVANGELISM.

MISSION ALONGSIDE THE POOR PROGRAMME (MAPP) 1983 - 1993. A PROGRAMME OF THE METHODIST CHURCH IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND AN EXAMPLE OF 'GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR IN THE WESLEYAN TRADITION.' Tony Holden.

1. INTRODUCTION.

The theme and work of the Institute point back to Wesley's own identification with and service to the poor of his day.

Others will document this in detail. But we may remember that he preached in the open air to crowds, visited prisons and sought reform, established an orphanage, schools, a home for elderly women, a dispensary for the sick poor, a lending fund and that he opposed slavery. He spoke of going to those who need you most. In London he lived at his own Poor House. He wrote, to give but two examples:

"Throughout Cornwall, in the north, even in the midlands, I have seen wretched creatures, totally unemployed, standing in the streets, with pale looks, hollow eyes and meagre limbs, or creeping up and down like walking shadows." (Sermon 1775).

"The rich, honourable, the great, we will willingly leave to you. Only let us alone with the poor, the vulgar, the base, the outcasts of men." (Open letter to clergy).

On a personal level, I recall a year or two ago sharing in worship in the small cottage which housed Wesley at Trewint Cornwall and then going for afternoon tea in the fine house which had been the Vicarage in his day.

The Institute reminds us of Methodism's long tradition of interpreting the Gospel in relation to the poor and disadvantaged. At its best it has never only been about social action but has also been part of the concern for 'Sharing in God's mission' which we express in terms of evangelism, social caring, and political justice. (1 - Notes are at section 8).

This concern was developed in Britain in the Central Halls, Missions and inner city churches of our large cities - initially through the Forward Movement. It continues today in our city centre and urban work. (2).

I believe that the concern also ran through much of our work in the countryside. British Methodism's attention to small causes, to the welfare of the people and to the artisan class was soon established. It continues today in local chapels, through the activities of the Arthur Rank Centre, Stoneleigh and our Church in Rural Life Committee's focus upon the needs of the rural poor. (3).

The Mission Alongside the Poor Programme (MAPP), began, after some initial soundings, in 1983 in response to need and, some would say, crisis in our country. In many ways, it was a refocusing upon traditional emphases. In other ways it was truly a new venture.

The Mission Alongside the Poor Affirmation states:

'The Methodist Church, faithful to its missionary calling to evangelism, social caring and political justice, will strive to use its resources for all in society, recognising that this will mean especially taking sides with the poor and disadvantaged.'

2. A VIEW OF THE FUTURE.

It is important to understand why the affirmation matters so much and how the issue of poverty points to deeper questions.

These are: what sort of society and world do we want: what would it be like if we could have it? Within the sheer pace and breadth of change what are we chasing?

It would, for us as Christians and for many other people be variously expressed, but it would be marked by justice, peace and regard for the integrity of creation.

This would be translated into a quality and style of living, within a variety of cultures, in which all people would not only survive but could also find fulfilment.

It would be one in which basic needs and rights, according to international law, for food and shelter and health care would be met.

It would be one in which people could find personal autonomy and creativity in relationships and in community.

Such hopes and visions of a better world require a high level of security, money and choice. They also need political will and compassion. Above all they need a commitment which, whilst dealing with self interest and power in a realistic way, is inclusive of all who share our common humanity: so the hungry will be fed and poverty ended.

Taking sides with the poor and disadvantaged is more demanding than a commitment to our common humanity; a vision of human ideals, laws, values, rights or potential; personal survival and fulfilment; or the church's obedience, in "sharing in God's mission" to evangelism, social care and the struggle for justice.

It is right to express it in this way because what we are concerned about, when we face up to the option for the poor, is to do with our understanding of and belief in God through Jesus and our understanding of and belief in existence and humanity.

When we speak of God, or point to God's Kingdom, or pay attention to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, or invoke God's presence today through the Holy Spirit, we are in touch with the reality of "taking sides with the poor and the disadvantaged."

The Church of England report, "Not just for the poor - Christian perspectives on the welfare state" suggests (in Chapter 2) that our belief includes the recognition that -

1. Human life is created in such a way that we share a common humanity and this is to value us as individuals and communities.
2. There is an interdependence in human life.
3. There is a biblical concern for justice and the poor.
4. We have an understanding of human sin and social disintegration as part of our community.
5. The Kingdom of God, as a Kingdom of hope, is central to the message of Jesus and is a pointer to the values and relationships of human life.

(Church of England BSR Social Policy Committee report Church House 1986).

What we see within the Gospels of Jesus, to which we bring all our creative skills as well as our imagination, is one who shows a God and a Kingdom that is utterly to do with graciousness, forgiveness, compassion and judgement.

In the Gospels we see an emphasis upon the poor and disadvantaged in the life, teaching and ministry of Jesus. We know the issues are complex. We know there are sharp questions. Partly it is to do with what we make of the Bible and how we use it today. But put very simply and sharply Jesus' emphasis is that God's graciousness and freedom are for all and especially for the poor and disadvantaged. We see Jesus's life and story as being a testimony that such people are included within God's Kingdom.

This means:

- Jesus's life is an example of this option.
- The Kingdom of God includes the 'poor' in its gracious generosity.
- Jesus was often in 'bad' company - with the poor, needy, sick, outcasts.
- Jesus took sides with them.
- Jesus said that the Kingdom of God belonged to the poor and outcast.
- Jesus challenged the rich - they have to face hard words.
- Jesus ended up as one of the outcast.
- This is the way to the Kingdom of God - for us.
- God's infinite graciousness can be seen today - in the church and beyond.

We see in him the brokenness, suffering and death of one who finds himself and puts himself with those who are of no reputation, those who are counted as rubbish, those who are outcasts, alienated, marginalised, those who are regarded as "the wretched of the earth."

At the centre of our faith, as we look at the one we regard as the turning point of history and the key to human meaning, is a Jesus who is on the side of the poor and the disadvantaged. Indeed in his living and dying, as well as in his resurrection and exaltation, he includes the poor and the disadvantaged in 'the feast of the Kingdom'. This feast is foreshadowed in every meal in the Gospels and our meals today.

So, when we see, children dying of hunger in Africa, or the homeless under London's bridges, or the beggars on English as well as Indian streets, we stop. When we say that there is an underclass who are not part of 'comfortable Britain', let alone the wealthy West, when people say to our face "give us some money - give us some bread" we meet the crucified Jesus and the God who suffers.

It seems clear that this is true and it is a truth that is to do with the mystery of being and existence. Those who are touched by God show compassion, generosity, love, justice to those in need. They have a passion to see justice and right prevail. Those people, including the famous and the ordinary, who take sides with the "poor and the disadvantaged" are not only obedient to God, the Gospel of Jesus and the mission of the Church, they are also seeking to be at one with God in their actions and in their struggle. (4).

3. DEFINITIONS, DESCRIPTIONS AND ARGUMENTS ABOUT POVERTY.

People began speaking again of poverty for several reasons. They recognised that in some areas of our inner cities in 1981 conditions were so bad that the street disturbances (riots/uprisings) were but a hint of the underlying problems. Los Angeles in May 1992 was a large scale American version of what happened on a smaller scale in Britain. They also sensed that Government policies were seeking to change the structure of British society and to radically change welfare provision. Those local churches and church leaders, especially in the inner-city, became more and more aware both of the breakdown of a post war consensus and the widening gap between the rich, together with 'comfortable Britain,' and the poor.

Studies and academic work followed and analysis brought into public consciousness the idea of 'relative poverty' and the political struggle was then joined. People who are described as poor are people of worth and creativity in their own right: they are not only poor. The term tends to belittle and diminish. On the other hand it pushes us to recognise and face up to the seriousness of the situation. (5).

I would define and describe poverty in Britain in the following terms:

Most people in Britain who are poor do not experience the absolute poverty which leads to starvation and death.

But relative poverty is both 'real' and serious.

"By the poor is meant those who do not have enough to eat, whose living conditions are incompatible with the dignity of the human person, and who are seriously deprived, materially, spiritually and socially, in relation to their neighbours."
(Mother Teresa, Calcutta).

The reality is in terms of how people live "in relation to their neighbours" and the breaking point is to do with whether or not people have choices.

The poor are made up of individuals. An African Church leader speaking at Methodist Conference said 'why do you need reports when if you walk in the streets you can see with your eyes what is happening!' A member of a local church said, when her husband got a temporary job, "he gave me some money and I bought some food, and enough for tomorrow."

The poor comprise interlocking groups: those who are on low pay and the unemployed, those who are homeless or in inadequate housing, single parents, young people, elderly, people discharged from large Psychiatric Hospitals, ex prisoners.

It is for many people so desperate:

People live on streets.

Families who are homeless, are put in one room in hotels. Instead of housing them long term they are inadequately and expensively housed in the short term.

People are dying from drug abuse and this includes children from glue sniffing.

Single parent families and the elderly find their resources decreasing.

Millions remain unemployed, without reasonably paid work, or on Government schemes which are very low paid.

So many people are shut away in institutions or are released into the community without adequate backup - especially from psychiatric care.

Schools, hospitals, social work agencies are all having their resources cut.

Their plight has been analyzed and recorded by Government and independent researchers and it seems to be the case that the richest people's share of wealth is increasing and the gap between the poor and everyone else is increasing. (6).

"The gap between rich and poor has hugely increased. Here are some figures produced by the Chancellor's administration to prove it. In 1990, a government survey, Households Below Average Incomes, showed that between 1981 and 1987, average income increased 10 times as fast as that

of the poorest 10 per cent. The number of people living on less than half average income soared by more than half to 7.7 million between 1985 and 1987. And the proportion of children living in households receiving less than half average income jumped from 14.7 per cent in 1985 to 20.2 per cent, more than one in five, in 1987.

In January this year Economic Trends, produced by the Government Statistical Service, revealed that in 1979 the poorest fifth of the population had just under 10 per cent of post tax income and the richest fifth had 37 per cent. By 1989 the poorest fifth had only seven per cent while the richest had 43 per cent".

(Melanie Phillips. The Guardian, 3rd April 1992).

There are at least three very tough moral questions which underline the arguments as to how the poor should be regarded and what Government policies are appropriate. Briefly they are as follows.

(1) Who is responsible within our society and nation for providing for those who are poor and disadvantaged? This debate is about social caring and welfare.

Some simply 'accuse and blame the poor.' Some deny the existence of poverty and point to overall improvements in living standards. Others believe that better management or more effort is all that is needed. Others push them out of sight and regard them as an underclass which is outside 'normal society'. Some on the other hand believe that within British tradition there should be a partnership between statutory and voluntary provision but that social caring should not depend either on charity or individual conscience. (7).

(2) Is it right to focus on poverty when the health and well being of society depends upon wealth creation and positive success? This debate is about wealth creation.

Some believe that it is mistaken to draw attention to the plight of the poor or to criticise Government policies which adversely affect the poor. Business and finance, with the market seen almost as an ideology, are regarded as the forces which shape society. Others, whilst not denying either the importance of our resources or our development of them, ask "who pays the price, who does the suffering and dying and who gets the wealth?" (8).

There is a very acute and uneasy tension between those Christians who emphasise taking sides with the poor and the disadvantaged and those who, from an understanding of creation and an insistence upon the worth of all people, affirm positive success, entrepreneurial drive, the raising of living standards through wealth creation. Both begin from the belief that all people are important and 'proper people'; one emphasises the inclusion of the poor and the other the contribution and role of 'comfortable Britain'.

(3) Is there such a thing as justice, fairness and evenhandedness in the use of our resources? This debate is about sharing resources.

Some believe that so long as wealth is created it will "trickle down" and all will benefit. So some would appeal to our common citizenship and argue that the nation's resources should be shared in a way that provides for all citizens.

There were times when it was possible for individuals to cause significant changes now more collective effort is needed. But there does not seem to be any evidence to support the view that wealth trickles down. What is needed is positive targeted action to provide affordable housing, worthwhile jobs which are not low paid or part time and the facilities and infra structure to develop more human communities. What does stand out is the injustice of a situation in which one section of society is deprived of its share of the Nation's wealth: as more and more of it is put into private hands. I would argue we should share the nation's 'cake' in an even handed and fair way not keep on waiting for the 'cake' to become bigger before some get even a few crumbs. (9).

4. A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF MAPP 1983 - 1993.

MAPP is about Methodists and poverty in Britain. It is about taking sides with and seeking justice for the poor and disadvantaged. It is about the use of our own Methodist resources in terms of our personnel and property, so that they are used for all and especially with the poor and the disadvantaged.

The main aims which have been twice owned and agreed by the Methodist Conference (1983 and 1988) can be briefly summarised. (10). (Further details are in section 9).

The Affirmation.

"The Methodist Church, faithful to its missionary calling to evangelism, social caring and political justice, will strive to use its resources for all in society, recognising that this will mean especially taking sides with the poor and disadvantaged". (Methodist Conference Agenda 1987 page 572).

The challenge.

"We challenge the Methodist people to respond seriously and imaginatively to the issues raised by the MAPP programme, to take sides with the poor and disadvantaged in our society, to strengthen their commitment to combat poverty, to engage in the sharing of resources so that they are used where most needed....."
(Methodist Conference Agenda 1988 page 603).

The basis.

The motivation and starting point for MAPP lies in the Methodist Church's response to the Gospel of Jesus. We have been amongst those who see God's

the poor and disadvantaged. We have expressed this through the 'Sharing in God's Mission' slogan. The twofold aims of MAPP have been adopted because they are consistent with and obedient to the way of Jesus.

The aims (Methodist Conference Agenda 1988 page 602 - 603).

There are two main aims which are clearly stated in the affirmation and the challenge.

The first concerns Methodists and poverty in Britain who are "to take sides with the poor and the disadvantaged" and "to combat poverty". This has been about awareness and action.

It has meant trying to address the issues which underlie poverty in a way that is faithful to the Gospel. This is to do with justice. It is also to do with raising awareness, encouraging action, struggling for justice. In this the Methodist Church is often in partnership with other churches, people of other faiths, other secular agencies, Governmental initiatives and statutory provisions.

The second concerns Methodists and the use of our own resources - "sharing our resources so that they are used where most needed."

It has meant striving in all ways possible to address Methodist Church policy, priorities and use of resources so that people consider taking sides with the poor and the disadvantaged. Obviously this is not straight forward, it involves church politics and negotiations, it leads into conflict, it is never wholly won. Part of the energy and challenge for this has been created by seeking to raise £3 million over the ten years.

It has meant encouraging local churches to respond in their situations and be concerned with 'caring with justice'. Some of these initiatives have needed funding and some 220 churches and church projects have received part funding from MAPP on criteria established in 1983.

5. **A PERSONAL NOTE.**

Working for an organisation which "takes sides" with the poor and disadvantaged is not the same as identifying and becoming one with the poor, choosing to become poor, or, as a matter of fact, being poor. But it does have its own cost. It isn't easy to traffic between and be a messenger between "comfortable Britain" and "the poor and disadvantaged." Telling the story of racism or poverty or human rights can damage the messenger and do a disservice to the poor's struggle for self reliance and empowerment. Also, there is a polarity and tension between trying to see the truth about what is happening in society as a whole and what is true from the perspective of the poor and disadvantaged.

None of these pressures compare with the sheer stress and attrition of poverty. To be without basic choice, to be without options, to feel trapped is the diet of the poor.

My personal commitment comes from my belief that there are good reasons for caring for and acting alongside the poor (12). Let me look at the main ones briefly.

1. **We must act out of obedience to the way of Jesus.** Any interpretation of the Gospels of Jesus has to 'get round' Jesus' relation to the poor and the rich. It seems overwhelmingly to be true that he cared about healing, forgiving, being gracious, giving hospitality. In his life and his teaching those who were on the edge of society, or regarded as aliens or outcasts, or who were certainly not among the most important people were put at centre stage. Meanwhile the rich came in for some very heavy criticism and challenge as did the religious of his day. It is 'scandalous' that Jesus should prefer 'them' to 'us'.
2. **We must also act out of faithfulness to our Christian history and teaching.** Much of it is unhappy. Much of it is to do with conflict and violence. Even today we Christians find it hard to tolerate one another let alone love one another. Yet the best of our history and teaching drives us to see that 'Sharing in God's Mission' is about evangelism, social caring and political justice. A local church that is healthy needs to attend to all three. Evangelicals and Radicals/Liberals in the church have to take account of those areas in which they are weakest. There is some indication of convergence within British Methodism but I suspect a great deal depends on our personal tendencies towards confrontation or cooperation.
3. **We must act because the need is real and urgent.** The facts and experiences are clear enough. We have to join hands with all those who are trying to change the situation. It is especially useful to engage in something specific and concrete like MAPP or a local church project because it means you can respond directly and creatively. But on a larger political scale it is difficult to secure real progress at the moment. Regularly on TV News we hear accounts of the number of people unemployed or those who are homeless and without adequate housing and the nation still does not require Government to solve the problem.
4. **We must act out of human self interest.** It is important to recognise that self interest is a normal part of everyone of us and that at best we are acting out of more than self interest. It is also in our long term self interest to end poverty in Britain, and for that matter world wide, because otherwise there will not be law and order, sustainable growth, the control of violence, and end to human diminishment.
5. **We must act out of compassion.** There is an important sense in which our own humanity is at risk. But it would be wrong to suggest that we are always capable of responding to need. Recently on the London Underground a young girl/woman came up to each passenger and without speaking held in front of each person a note which asked for money. If questioned as to what it was about she motioned with her fingers to her lips that she wanted food. Everyone of us, everyone, found some reason deep within ourselves to give her nothing. We are imperfect in our compassion. We turn away from what one theologian called the icon of Jesus that comes to

us in the poor.

6. We must act out of our concern for and vision of justice and peace.

Although we fail some of the time it is vital to keep alive our hope in a better world. This vision and dream; these 'end-words'; this obsession with human individual and collective self realisation remains. We seek it now in our neighbourhoods, communities and societies. It pursues us as we make our laws. It pursues us in our Christian worship and prayers. It persists with all people of good will. The hope for a world free from poverty, disease war is not utopian. It is for this we strive rather than for Auschwitz or Hiroshima, or the deepening of the North/South divide.

7. We must act out of our vocation for the future. There is a line in Albert Camus (The Rebel P.51.) in which he says "all the knowledge in the world is not worth a child's tears". We need to be driven by our concern for our children and our children's children. Somehow we have to get beyond our divisions - including our religious ones and I mean religious not just Christian - to the point where our energy is channelled into actions which mean that no child cries from hunger or from violence.

6. A COMMENT ON SOME OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF MAPP.

It is for others to evaluate what the Programme has done. Some things do seem to me to be significant achievements. (13).

We have:-

- Attempted to run a Programme over a period of ten years. There has always been a tension between local Methodist Churches and Conference but MAPP has sought to maximise local Church initiative and be national without being centralist.
- Got into a serious theological and ethical debate. It is one that will continue.
- Had opportunity at every level of the Church's, life to examine our policies and priorities in the light of MAPP. It is true that the stated aims of MAPP were general and that the idea of 'integration' came at the second stage. It is also true that because some of the initiative was left with the local churches the response has been, not surprisingly, uneven. None the less churches were given, in many different ways and at different times, opportunity to join in.
- Raised some new money and redistributed some resources.
- Supported 220 local churches in their locally initiated responses to the poor and disadvantaged in their context. Many of these have been ecumenical.
- Worked in partnership with agencies beyond the local church and have been, however modestly, a sign in society.

- Enabled some churches who are better off to 'twin' with more needy churches.
- Shown the importance of context for the mission - strategy of the church whether it to be urban, industrial or rural.

7. **AN ANALYSIS OF SOME OF THE CONTINUING DIFFICULTIES AND PROBLEMS.**

1. If anything, the situation for the poor is worse.
2. **The Church as a whole and the Methodist Church within it has to work hard at its relation to Government in particular and society in general.**

Although we are still declining as a church and although there are very serious disagreements between the churches we do have a responsibility to act together. The media 'hears' Archbishops and Anglicans more than anyone else. Maybe Methodists have to try harder or simply work through Churches Together In England (CTE) and Council of Churches in Britain and Ireland (CCBI). In either case we wrestle with the difficult task of being critical and prophetic as well as affirming the Government and society of which we are a part.

Methodist Church Presidents twice found themselves unable to get an interview with the Prime Minister even though Methodist Conference had asked them specifically to express its concern for the poor.

Archbishop Carey found himself (May 1992 Derby), as the 'Faith in the City' Report had done before, facing controversy from those who are unable to recognise what I would call a 'critical loyalty' to the state.

We need to visualise and explain in simple language what we want for ourselves and for other people. We have to keep on asking where we are going. The primary purpose of Government is not to make Britain top of some economic league but to make Britain a good place in which to live for all citizens. We want to improve living standards so that people are not broken and damaged by crime, violence, drugs, pollution, bad housing, a lack of jobs, too little money and too few choices, or inadequate schools, health care, welfare.

3. **At local level many church people recognise that it is very difficult to address political issues.** Within the life of the Church they fear conflict. They are often wary of party politics. Yet those who are poor and disadvantaged and those who take sides with them often find themselves politicised by the sheer weight of injustice. Some then get involved in campaigning on issues or organising at local level.

There is no doubt that some churches and many inner city churches among them have grasped this nettle. They have discovered that listening to the people and engaging the issues of the inner city compels them to take sides and engage in politics. They learn albeit painfully about the normality of self interest and power. They wrestle to include those who are normally excluded.

4. **The issue of poverty overlaps with our concern for racial justice and our opposition to racism. It also overlaps in this Decade of Evangelism with how we relate to people of other faiths. (14).**

Christians find it no easier than other people to relate in an even handed way and without prejudice or racism to people who belong to other ethnic groups. Many find it hard to relate to people who adhere to another religious faith and do so with commitment and dedication. Many Christians are finding it very difficult to cope with the reality of an interfaith and plural society. Often Christians do not know where to begin because they are uncertain about sharing their faith, they see themselves as right and others wrong, and they are confused by similarities and differences. In some situations - though by no means all - the fact of poverty is also real in the black and Asian communities. This makes the whole thing extremely complicated and inaccessible for many white Christians.

5. **It is important to assert that the churches and the voluntary sector are not going to 'solve' poverty.** Only Government has the resources for Urban Regeneration; social welfare programmes; creating employment; providing good and affordable housing.
6. **It is however, important to realise that the Churches face a real dilemma in seeking to be both a religion and a 'prophetic' church in which they are disciples of Jesus and one voluntary agency among many.** This does lead to real tensions. There are some hard political and theological questions about charity, charitable funding, partnership. The church is servant, missionary, disciple. The church lives through the daily lives of "the whole people of God." As such people have to face up to the demands of the Gospel.

At times there is almost a contradiction between our concern for humanity and our commitment to the Church. Being in the world and not of it is tricky. We have to guard against living in the church as though it is our only sub culture. We have to be careful lest we try to trap God and Jesus within the Church. And, at the other extreme, we have to be careful lest our passion for justice and peace leads us to rail against 'the world as it is' and makes us insensitive to the ordinary reality of self interest, power, conflict, suffering and change.

In a way this is all about how we exercise a critical loyalty. There are a whole number of related issues here that are important: whether we regard ourselves as right and 'ok' and others as beyond the pale and definitely 'not ok'; who we include as within our circle and who we exclude from circles of privilege; if we put loyalty to church before loyalty to the wider society and the 'common good'; whether we regard the church as a group from within which we relate to and judge all other groups. There is always the danger that we so identify with our group (our group of Christians, the inner city, the poor or the institutional church, suburban living, comfortable Britain and the rich) that we miss seeing the truth of what is happening.

7. **The Methodist Church has hard choices to make in how it uses its resources.** How do we develop appropriate buildings and a diversity in mission and

ministry which serves all and "especially the poor and the disadvantaged"? We need to admit that since we will always tend to put most resources in the hands of those who are most powerful we shall need 'positive action' if we are to develop our mission alongside the poor.

8. **Some people ask if there is a church of the poor coming into existence.** There are local churches working with and alongside very poor people. Some of our churches include people who are poor in their worship and activities and many more serve people who are poor. But to be a church of the poor seems, in the normal usage of the term, unlikely. One reason is that often when poor people become part of a local Church their skills, situation and social expectation improve.

I'm reminded of Jon Sobrino's comment about theology and see in it a parallel for the local church. He wrote:

"Liberation theology is not - directly - a theology for the masses, for the people, any more than any other conventional theology is, but it is related very specifically to the lives of the mass of the people because it deals with their real situation, certainly their poverty, their suffering and hope. Not only that; it also draws on many of the reflections and popular theologies of the communities. Those who do theology about this situation may be few, an elite; but the situation they study is that of the many, the poor." ('Companions of Jesus' CAFOD/CIIR 1990 P.49).

9. **Finally, in all of this, the life of the local church and the life of each Christian is crucial.**

A key contribution in our work has been encouraging churches to identify specific and often short to mid term pieces of work. These church projects, set within the ongoing life of the local church, have been an opportunity for initiative and renewal. All organisations, especially when under pressure and decline, tend to lop off the new, the so called experimental, the initiatives which take place at the frontiers of the organisation. It is crucial that the Methodist Church continues to put resources of buildings, finance and personnel into such creative endeavours.

Just as in our own personal spirituality we have to develop 'good practice' so in our local churches we need to develop specific projects which are part of the policy of the local church and therefore owned by them. We need to do it in a way which fits into our missionary strategy. We need to do it in a way which release resources, energy, skills, people so that the "poor and the disadvantaged" can take more control over their own lives.

8. **NOTES.**

1. Methodist Church Home Mission Division 'Sharing in God's Mission' 1985.
2. On Methodist Church and cities: Tony Holden In the Streets of Every City Methodist Church Home Mission Division 1988; Urban Mission Committee report to Methodist Conference 1992; Eric Gallagher At Points of Need (Belfast) 1990; David Sheppard and Derek Worlock Better Together (Liverpool) Hodder

and Stoughton 1988; Richard Rogers and Mark Fisher A New London Penguin 1992. Paul Harrison Inside the Inner City (London) Penguin 1983.

3. On Methodist Church and the rural poor: Methodist Church In Rural Life Committee Report to Methodist Church Conference 1984 and 1992; Arthur Rank Centre Stoneleigh; the ecumenical report Faith in the Countryside ACORA 1990. Sarah Mason and Rhys Taylor Tackling Deprivation in Rural Areas for Gulbenkin Foundation 1990.
4. On the very poor, the Gospels and liberation theology: ATD Fourth World The Wresinski Approach 1991; Boff and Boff Introducing Liberation Theology Burns and Oates 1987; Catholic Institute for International Relations Third World Debt Catholic Institute for International Relations 1991; Rosino Gibellini The Liberation Theology Debate SCM 1987; Jose Marins The Church From the Roots CAFOD 1989; Janet Morley Bread Of Tomorrow - Praying with The World's Poor Christian Aid 1992; E.P. Sanders Jesus and Judaism SCM 1985; Jon Sobrino The Crucified Peoples Catholic Institute for International Relations 1989; Kathryn Spink A Chain of Love - about Mother Teresa SPCK 1984; Wolfgang Stegemann The Gospel and the Poor Fortress Press 1985; Michael Taylor Good for the Poor Christian Action 1990; John Vincent Radical Jesus Marshall Pickering 1986.
5. On research and comment: Conrad Boerma The Poor Side of Europe WCC 1989; Christian Action; Commission of the European Communities Final Report on Second European Poverty Programme 1985-89, 1991; London Weekend Television Series Breadline Britain 1990's MORI Survey 1991; Colin Marchant Signs in the City Hodder and Stoughton 1985; National Children's Homes Factfile Children in Danger 1991; Lord Scarman Report on the Brixton Disorders of 1981 HMSO 1983; David Sheppard Bias for the Poor Hodder and Stoughton 1983; Peter Townsend Poverty in the UK Penguin 1979; John Vincent Two Nations One Gospel and other Booklets Methodist Church Home Mission Division and Sheffield Urban Theology Unit 1981.
6. On rich and poor; Central Statistics Office Key Data 1987; Child Poverty Action Group; Church Action On Poverty Bulletin and Election Pack 1992; Frank Field Losing Out Blackwell 1989; Methodist Church Division Social Responsibility No Mean City 1989; Peter Townsend The Poor are Poorer Bristol University 1991; John Vincent Britain in the 90's Sheffield Urban Theology Unit and Methodist Publishing House 1990; Walker The Growing Divide A Social Audit 1979 - 1989 Child Poverty Action Group 1987.
7. On social caring and welfare: Bishop's Conference of England and Wales Homelessness: A Fact and a Scandal 1990; Board of Social Responsibility; Social Policy Committee Not Just for the Poor 1986; Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales From Charity To Empowerment 1992; CAWTU Church Action On Unemployment 1984; Donald English Caring and the Struggle for Justice Methodist Church Home Mission Division 1988.
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11. On ecumenical: ACUPA Faith in the City 1985 and ACORA on rural 1990; John Atherton Faith in the Nation SPCK 1988; Eric James Seven Devils and the Church Urban Fund Crucible 1991; Richard O'Brien Faith in the City of Birmingham Paternoster Press 1988; Raymond Plant Faith in the City/Winchester 1988.
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9. A MORE DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF MAPP.

Let me briefly describe some of the internal workings of MAPP.

Ecumenical.

In Church affairs ecumenical cooperation is uneven. At the local level some churches are in ecumenical partnerships or have come into partnership so as to initiate a MAPP type piece of work. Some of these are funded both by MAPP and the Anglican Church Urban Fund. (11).

Staff and fieldwork.

From 1983 - 1989 MAPP was staffed part time by a Home Mission Division Secretary with some back up funded by HMD. Since September 1989, at the instruction of Conference, a part time Fundraiser, John Fidler, was added to the staff.

Fieldwork has included project formation and development where we are involved in encouraging and advising churches as they seek to develop specific pieces of work.

It also includes us in awareness raising through worship and education. This had been done mainly by Tony Holden and John Fidler but the MAPP Chairperson and members of the Committee have been involved as are, from time to time, people from MAPP funded projects, HMD staff, DSR staff.

Committee.

The MAPP Committee meets twice a year for a discussion of policy and grant making. We have tried to keep it representative. There is also a small policy sub group which meets two or three times a year.

Fundraising and the MAPP fund.

It was not intended that we set up a new national charity but that we raised new money and redistributed Methodist central funds.

In the first stage, with a target of £1 million, £380,000 came from block grants (£50,000 more than stated in the blue 1983 - 1988 report) and the rest came from individuals and churches.

In the second stage, with John Fidler appointed as fundraiser from August 1989, and with a target of £2 million, successful in negotiations with several independent trusts and John Fidler pursues the task of fundraising with vigour. So far £1.2 million has been raised in phase two.

Local Church initiatives.

Many local churches have engaged in 'mission alongside the poor'. Some of these initiatives in fundraising, in initiating work, in prayer, in releasing volunteers, in twinning with other churches have not, quite properly, come to the MAPP Committee. Some churches have used their general church meeting as an opportunity for raising the issues, others have held special services, many have responded to members of their own congregations and their involvement with local organisations. It would be quite mistaken to think that local Methodist action and response to 'mission alongside the poor' is confined to MAPP funded projects or is even always known to the MAPP Committee. This is true at local, Circuit and District levels.

Our impression from many visits, is that many, though of course not all, local churches, are now less hostile to MAPP. In earlier days people often expressed serious doubts about the existence of poverty and some even

responded quite aggressively. Some are more aware of issues and poverty, more able to get into the Christian discussion which lies behind party politics, wanting to help change things for the better. This comes out in consultations about churches and projects, in worship and lunchtime discussions, in conversations. But we are aware that some churches have not even considered the challenge of MAPP.

In many situations individuals, local churches, or groups of churches, have responded to need in their situation with remarkable energy and vision. Sometimes this has been done as part of a coordinated policy of mission and ministry. In some situations a specific project, with a clear task and defined limits, has brought new purpose and life to a declining and struggling church. Increasingly these are ecumenical, often in difficult situations, frequently requiring lay workers, and very often a first sign of hope.

Grant making.

We have tried to develop a method of grant making which is 'user friendly' so that the process is accessible and flexible. We have also put great reliance upon local, circuit and district approval. When extensions have been requested we have sought an independent, though sympathetic, report. Grants have been made to some 220 churches and projects since 1983 some of which have been extensions. It should be appreciated that a proportion of this funding triggered the release of third party funds which might otherwise not have been made available. In 1989 - 1991 we were able to endorse some applications which were then "funded from outside sources". This amounted to £291,000 of grant applications being endorsed.

Publications.

From the outset publications were produced for information and education. In the first phase this was mainly the material which is now gathered in 'Background Papers 1'. Conference specifically asked for more popular material and this led to leaflets and an information pack which have been widely circulated. It also led to the video and posters.

Divisions, Presidents Council and Methodist Church Conference.

There has been considerable support for MAPP above all within Home Mission Division. HMD has given significant financial and staff support and has already integrated MAPP into its 'Sharing in God's Mission Programme'. Donald English General Secretary of HMD was the first Chairperson of MAPP.

Particular work within HMD also has MAPP on agendas: Urban Mission Committee, London Committee, Church in Rural Life Committee, Industrial Mission, Stewardship.

The rural dimension of MAPP has been present ever since the report 'MAPP in Rural Areas' (1984) and the Church in Rural Life Committee has had it as an agenda item from the outset. The Archbishop's report 'Faith in the countryside' (1990), emphasises starkly the changes which are affecting the

countryside and the problems of poverty which have built up. "Deprivation is not an area matter in the countryside. Deprivation amongst individual families and peoples can exist amidst a great deal of affluence". The Division of Social Responsibility has the Church's Public Affairs brief. Specifically there was the Poverty Project and links through them with Church Action on Poverty. Within their work on political systems they have had groups and discussion on wealth creation. There has been interchange of staff on committees and regular meetings. Resources have been produced jointly and in consultation. A national seminar was held with a Minister of State. The overlap between public affairs and mission is a crucial one. The work also overlaps with the responsibilities of the Community Race And Relations Committee and the Inter-Divisional Multi-Racial Projects Fund, where again there is staff overlap and consultation. There is also DSR responsibility for International Relief and Development.

The Property Division has representation on the MAPP Committee and property grants have always been made with Property Division advice and consent. There is now a Property Division Discretionary Fund "which the Property Board has agreed can be used to underwrite MAPP property grants".

The Finance Division has, since 1989, been involved in the Connexional Coordination of Grants Committee and is part of the attempt to coordinate and improve central grant making.

The Division of Ministries has cooperated by using its networks and mailings to promote MAPP resources. There has also been cooperation in relation to collaborative ministries and lay ministry both of which have been crucial in the development of churches responding to the MAPP initiative. (See e.g. the Committee for Collaborative Ministries, the Advisory Committee for Lay Workers, the Community Development Group, and the Division's work on lay training). The Local Preachers section has carried information and helped in networking.

The Overseas Division embraces MAPP aims in its own work and there has been specific cooperation in publications, resources and fieldwork. NOW magazine December/January 1991 is an example of the first, a joint seminar an example of the second.

The Division of Education and Youth has not formally been involved in MAPP, though MAPP input to a DEY residential staff meeting in 1990 will lead, it is hoped, to new initiatives. It is clear that many DEY regional offices 'traffic' between richer and poorer churches within their Districts and often seek to represent the needs of the one to the other. It is also clear, that colleges and private schools are part of the total resource of the Methodist Church. The MAYC theme for 1991 was 'Who Cares' and MAPP took part in the 1992 MAYC weekend.

All Methodist agencies, which are answerable to Methodist Conference, come within the intention to integrate MAPP by 1993. We are very aware of independent work being done, for example by National Childrens Home Methodist Homes for the Aged and Women's Network.

MAPP was set up by Methodist Conference, was extended by Methodist Conference and reports, through the HMD, to the President's Council. It has been the President's Council which has brought major recommendations to Conference and it is the President's Council which is directed by Conference to bring plans for the next stage.