



THE GENERAL SYNOD OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

Board for Social Responsibility

Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3NZ Telephone: 071-222 9011
Fax: 071-799 2714

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FAITH AND ECONOMIC FOCUS ON LONDON DOCKLANDS

The Church must not back away from getting its hands dirty in relation to economic policies and practical action, the Bishop of Stepney, Rt Revd Jim Thompson has warned.

Chairing a special consultation on 'Christian Faith and Economic Policies and Priorities' held in London's Docklands on 18 and 19 January, the Bishop said: "Our Christian vision has far too often bypassed the world of work. London Docklands is a stunning visual aid for exploring how the Gospel and prosperity relate".

The consultation, organised by the Church of England's Board for Social Responsibility, was held on the Isle of Dogs, at the premises of Littlejohn Frazer, beside the towering Canary wharf development. It consisted of 30 participants from business, trade unions, the civil service, local government, academic institutions, voluntary organisations and the churches.

The consultation began with a guided tour of London Docklands with a commentary and description of the area by the London Docklands Development Corporation's Director of Marketing and Employment Sunny Crouch, and Bishop Thompson.

The 'moving lecture' visited Wapping, the Isle of Dogs and the Royal Docks area, and detoured off into Stepney and Bow, where the Bishop pointed out the sharp contrast between the poverty of that area and some of the thriving and prosperous parts of London Docklands.

After the tour, the consultation discussed what had been seen and heard on the trip, drawing from it a better understanding of the economic changes that have taken place not only in London Docklands but throughout the country and beyond, especially over the past decade.

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The debate then wrestled with the values and convictions which have fuelled these changes, and sought to identify what might be the particular and distinctive contributions to policy and practice which the Churches and Christians should make.

Key questions about the role of the market, the exercise of democracy and the place of the State in welfare provision were raised, and the contrasts between wealth and poverty, power and powerlessness were investigated. The uses of language were highlighted, for many terms familiar in a church and theological context, such as 'mission', 'vision', 'community' and 'regeneration' have acquired new and dynamic meanings in the business setting, building on different underlying values and assumptions.

A report of the consultation will shortly be available from the Board for Social Responsibility at Church House, Gt Smith St, London SW1P 3NZ.

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For further information contact:

On Monday 28 January:

Rt Revd Jim Thompson
Bishop of Stepney
Tel: 081 981 2323

Tuesday 29 January onwards:

Ms Margaret Jeffery
Board for Social Responsibility
Church House
Tel: 071 222 9011