

Church and Community:
The Church at Mission Transforming Society

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The Church's involvement in matters of social concern

Some of the characters in Thomas Hardy's delightful novel *Under the Greenwood Tree* reminisce at one point about the good old days when Mr Grinham was their parson. Mr Grinham did not want parishioners to bring babies to be christened if they were inclined to squalling. He visited one parishioner only once, to tell her that as she was such an old aged person, and lived so far from the church, he did not expect her to come any more to the services. He was the man, they say. He never troubled them with a visit from year's end to year's end. There's good in a man's not putting a parish to unnecessary trouble. Things have changed, though, with the arrival of the new parson, Mr Maybold. 'And there's this here man never letting us have a bit o' peace; but keeping on about being good and upright till 'tis carried to such a pitch as I never see the like afore nor since.'¹

Hardy's novel is set in the second quarter of the nineteenth century. In keeping with his fictional parishioners' comments is the report that Lord Melbourne, Queen Victoria's first Prime Minister, remarked after hearing an Evangelical preacher that if religion was going to interfere with the affairs of private life, things were come to a pretty pass.²

In referring to this report, William Temple observes that later Prime Ministers have felt and said the same about the interference of religion with the affairs of public life. And yet he argues that the claim of the church to be heard in relation to political and economic problems is no new usurpation, but a re-assertion of a right once universally admitted and widely regarded. He warns that this right may be compromised by injudicious exercise. Still, his

¹ Thomas Hardy, *Under the Greenwood Tree or The Mellstock Quire* (1872), Pan Books, London, 1978, p. 75.

² Mentioned in William Temple, *Christianity and Social Order* (1942), SPCK, London, 1976, p. 31.

assessment in the early 1940s was that the interference was increasing and would increase.³

The last sixty or so years tend to bear out Temple's assessment. Theology of hope, political theology, theology of liberation, feminist and ecological theologies have heightened the sense that the vocation of Christians and the Church includes taking up initiatives created by God for personal and social transformation. This has ramifications also for how human beings relate to the world of nature. Interestingly, the phenomenon of the Religious Right in the USA (and now Australia?), which otherwise has little in common with those other theological movements, may also demonstrate Christian involvement in society.

Clearly not all Christians agree that a social involvement which includes the possibility of social transformation *is* part of the Christian vocation. And what constitutes proper exercise of the Church's right to 'interfere' in political and economic problems requires serious attention in each instance.

One might ask, for example, whether Australian churches and their leaders have the right, perhaps a responsibility, to raise questions about industrial relations reform in this country, particularly its potential effects on vulnerable workers. And it is timely to ask whether Christians worldwide have anything to contribute to discussions on climate change, an issue with enormous implications for all life on this planet. The Eastern Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomeos I is quoted as claiming that climate change is more than an issue of environmental preservation. Insofar as it is human induced, it is a profoundly moral and spiritual problem.

Unless we take radical and immediate measures to reduce emissions stemming from unsustainable - in fact unjustifiable, if not simply unjust - excesses in the demands of our lifestyle, the impact will be both alarming and imminent.⁴

³ Ibid., p. 31.

⁴ David Fines, 'Climate Change a Symptom of Spiritual Disorder says Patriarch'. *Ecumenical News International, Daily News Service*, 28 November 2005.

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Not everyone will welcome Christian engagement with such issues. Excluding them from the Christian purview, however, risks ignoring or denying their moral and spiritual dimensions, and debarring any response to what God might be asking of God's people in relation to them.

It has become a common understanding among Christians of many different traditions, Anglicans included, that the Body of Christ and its members have something to contribute to matters of political and social concern.

In recent decades a perception has also grown of the Church as sharing in God's mission. One indication of this development in the Church of England is *Mission-shaped Church*, a report from a working group of the Church of England's Mission and Public Affairs Council.⁵ Currently in Australia there is widespread interest in this report, which is seen as deserving serious consideration.

This article will investigate whether *Mission-shaped Church* points a way ahead in taking account of potentially transformative social involvement as a task for Christians and the Church as one aspect of the vocation to share the triune God's mission to this world.

A theology of mission in *Mission-shaped Church*

In examining fresh expressions of Church and positing values of a missionary Church, *Mission-shaped Church* (henceforth referred to as *MSC*) notes the *Five Marks of Mission* identified by the Anglican Consultative Council and then the Lambeth Conference of 1988. These are:

To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.

To reach, baptize and nurture new believers.

To respond to human need by loving service.

To seek to transform unjust structures of society.

To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the earth.⁶

⁵ *Mission-shaped Church: Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of Church in a Changing Context*, Willow Publishing, Brookvale, NSW, 2005.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 81; p. 156, n. 62.

These marks envisage a Church sharing God's mission as being involved in the society in which it finds itself, and as practising social and ecological responsibility. Alongside them, *MSC* puts forward five values of a missionary church:

A missionary church is focused on God the Trinity.

A missionary church is incarnational.

A missionary church is transformational.

A missionary church makes disciples.

A missionary church is relational.⁷

The report expands on each of these values. With respect to each in turn it notes:

Worship lies at the heart of a missionary church.

A missionary church seeks to shape itself in relation to the culture in which it is located or to which it is called, and it seeks to be responsive to the activity of the Spirit in its community.

A missionary church exists for the transformation of the community that it serves, through the power of the Gospel and the Holy Spirit. It is not self-serving, self-seeking or self-focused. The kingdom of God is its goal, and the church is a servant and sign of God's kingdom in its community, whether neighbourhood or network.

A missionary church is active in calling people to faith in Jesus Christ, and equally committed to the development of a consistent Christian lifestyle appropriate to the culture or cultures in which it operates. It engages with culture, but also presents a counter-cultural challenge by its corporate life. It is concerned for the transformation of individuals as well as communities.

As a community, a missionary church is aware that it is incomplete without interdependent relationships with other Christian churches and communities.⁸

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-2.

These values lead into the Chapter, 'Theology for a missionary church', which points out that Christian speech about God as Holy Trinity means that God has to be understood relationally and communally. And it means that God is a missionary. The mission of God as creator, through Christ, in the Spirit, is to bring into being, sustain and perfect the whole creation. The Church is both the fruit and the agent of God's mission. It is of the essence (the DNA) of the Church to be a missionary community.⁹

From this theological perspective, conversion involves not the transfer of individuals from their native culture to the culture of the Church, so much as the conversion of their culture enriching the cultural life of the Church. The incarnation of God in Christ and the planting of the Church into non-Jewish cultures suggest that the Gospel can only be proclaimed within a culture, not at a culture. Jesus belonged to his own culture, but significantly, he was prophetically critical of it. His life of faithful obedience to the Father, in his culture, led to his death. And so he was shown to be universal Lord who is able to belong to and challenge the cultures of every time and place (Jn 12.32). The incarnation should never be separated from the cross. And so Christians are called to live, within each culture, under the lordship of Christ, irrespective of the cost. A truly incarnational Church imitates, through the Spirit, Christ's loving identification with his culture and his costly counter-cultural stance within it.¹⁰

Consideration of incarnation and cross leads *MSC* to suggest that the Church is most true to itself when it gives itself up, in current cultural form, to be re-formed among those who do not know God's Son. In each new context it must die to live. It is the resurrection that shows that our work for Christ is not in vain but is potentially of eternal value. The mention of 'first fruits' in 1 Corinthians 15.20 and Romans 8.23 indicates that the first part of the harvest of the last day, the promised new heaven and earth, is in the world now. Churches can be pointers to God's promised future; sources of hope; imperfect local pilot plants of God's future world. God's kingdom is where the blind see, the deaf hear and the lame dance with joy. The Spirit provides the first fruits of the coming kingdom, and makes it possible to

⁹ Ibid., pp. 84-5.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 86-8.

experience something of this kingdom unity within the present diverse body of the Church.¹¹

MSC holds that any theology concerning the nature and shape of the church in a new missionary context must address the appropriate place of culture in shaping the Church. In inculturation or contextualisation, a three-way conversation is needed. The conversation partners are the historic Gospel, uniquely revealed in Holy Scripture and embodied in the Catholic creeds; the church which is engaging in mission, with its own particular culture and history; and the culture within which the Gospel is being shared. The purpose is to allow the Gospel to transform a culture from within. *MSC* shows itself wary of syncretism. For it, the missionary challenge is to embody the Church within Britain, while challenging the prevailing consumerist pattern there.¹²

One section in the Chapter 'Theology for a missionary church' is headed: 'The Church is designed to reproduce'. Here the Church is rightly considered a sign and disclosure of the kingdom of God. Qualities of the kingdom including its breaking of social boundaries, its hope for the poor, its message of God's welcome for all, focused in Christ. Then comes a 'but' which can serve to identify the central concern after making the required affirmations. In this instance the 'but' heralds the conviction that the kingdom is something that grows. A good number of parables are viewed as concerning reproductive growth. In John 15 the purpose of remaining in Christ is to bear fruit to the Father's glory. A tree bears fruit to reproduce itself. So it is with Christ and the Church.¹³

This conviction is central to the section under discussion. Perhaps because of the purpose of the report, it gives every indication of being close to the core concern of *MSC* as a whole. The Church is seen as the 'reproducing community'. Only in heaven will mission and planting cease. Growth, by reproduction, will be vital to fill the earth. To be sure, the affirmation follows that the Church is also called to be a foretaste of the coming kingdom. It is more an imperfect anticipation of God's future world than a preservation of earlier cultural forms.¹⁴

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-90.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 90-2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

MSC presents not only theological reflection on the church at mission, but a series of case studies in Chapter 4, 'Fresh expressions of Church'. These warrant investigation. I shall undertake this, though, with a measure of suspicion that, while *MSC* clearly looks to potentially transformative social and cultural involvement as irreplaceable in the Church's mission, its more central concern in mission has to do with church growth. I need no convincing that this latter is of great significance to a missionary Church. This does not mean, though, that it is always the core concern for a Church sharing God's mission.

Fresh expressions of church: practice and theology

Here I shall consider to what extent the case studies in *MSC* exemplify the values that a missionary church is incarnational and transformational.

It is somewhat concerning that the summary of common features *MSC* finds in several of the expressions of church described does not include any with an immediate bearing on social involvement and transformation.¹⁵ A closer look at what is said about certain of these new ways of being church is in order.

Alternative worship groups are considered open to criticism for lack of any ongoing engagement with mission, either social involvement or evangelism. There are signs, though, of this imbalance being addressed.¹⁶

Base Ecclesial Communities are found to offer the most obvious sign of engagement with social transformation. BECs are identified with people at the bottom or edges of society, and offer a gospel of liberation: a church of the poor, for the poor. They seek to bring hope to the oppressed, and the challenge that together people can work for a better society. Bishop Peter Price prefers the term 'SCC' (small Christian community), and has called for the widespread birthing of SCCs. *MSC* observes, however, that outside Roman Catholic practice, they are not that well known. It was difficult to find Anglican examples. The lack of pastoral agents in the UK, together with much English leadership training demanding an enculturation into middle

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-5.

class values, may help explain this.¹⁷

With regard to cell church, the report notes that the church-like roles of building community, offering worship, hearing and applying the Word, and engaging with society are normative for each cell. Cell worship, community and mission are all infused by a Christocentric spirituality emphasising discipleship.¹⁸

Churches arising out of community initiatives are typically found in areas of social deprivation, and among people who have experienced significant dislocation from existing forms of church. Work with youth has often featured in these expressions. Christians in mission to the non-churched have prioritised the building of community as the entry point. This involves Christians in partnership in building community and in modelling community through their own lives.¹⁹

Network-focused churches are developed for mission to particular social and cultural groups. They are shaped by engagement with that particular context and culture, as well as by engagement with the essentials of Gospel and the traditions of the Church. The mission opportunity is to connect Church and Gospel with the culture and way people are living. Examples of networks are those formed by common work, leisure interest, music preference, or disability. Network churches are committed to being culturally accessible, as well as repudiating some of the ugly or unchristian aspects of modern life. Mission is expressed through relational evangelism and practical acts of service to local communities. The essence of network is to be non-boundary, engaging with a specific social or cultural context across a wide area.²⁰

The Chapter 'Fresh expressions of church' records different styles or types of church that

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 47-9. Reference is made to Peter B. Price, *Telling it as it is - Interactive learning for churches building small Christian communities* (New Way Publications, 1999).

¹⁸ *Mission-shaped Church*, pp. 53, 57.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 57-9.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 62-5.

have emerged in the last decade. They are ways in which the Church of England has sought to engage with the variety of diverse cultures and networks that are part of contemporary life. Many of these fresh expressions have been motivated by a desire to connect the Gospel and Church with fresh cultures and unreached people. The five values of missionary churches, with which the Chapter concludes, are criteria for discerning authentic missionary churches.²¹

These five values in *MSC* can act as checklists for missionary churches, and as reference points for the wider church in entering into dialogue with particular churches. There is now quite wide agreement with the claim that if the Church is the Church of God, then it shares God's mission. *MSC* is also on solid ground in stating that a church has to proclaim afresh the faith of the Scriptures and the creeds; that this is the foundation upon which church is built.²² What is less clear is how well the values that a missionary church is incarnational and transformational actually play a vital part in a number of the fresh expressions of church considered. How theology relates to practice at this point is unclear. A fair and not unkind reading of this report might be that in its theological affirmations it implicitly encourages fresh expressions of church to reflect all five values of missionary churches more fully than some of them currently do.

In the Chapter 'Some methodologies for a missionary church', *MSC* identifies a process which involves double listening: listening to the culture where a church might be established, and to the inherited tradition of the Gospel and the Church. This is the starting point for determining what form a new church might take. It seeks to hold in tension both a creative engagement with context and a faithfulness to the good news in Jesus.²³ As already noted, this allows for imitating not only Christ's identification with his culture, but also his costly counter-cultural stance within it.

What *MSC* proposes in this regard is very much in keeping with what Kosuke Koyama had earlier spoken of as the 're-rooting' of the Gospel: a thoughtful attempt to translate the inner meaning of the message of Jesus Christ from one historical and cultural milieu and root it into

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 80-2.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 81.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 104-5.

another.²⁴ A concern I have is that, for all its focus on its setting in the UK, *MSC* often speaks of culture in quite general, non-specific terms.

It is not uncommon for Christian writers to speak in this way. In his influential work *Christ and Culture*, for instance, H. Richard Niebuhr attempts to set forth typical Christian answers to the problem of Christ and culture. He comments that ‘culture as we are concerned with it is not a particular phenomenon but the general one, though the general thing appears only in particular forms’.²⁵

Obviously Christians respond to the same socio-cultural context in quite different ways. To this extent there is merit in delineating a range of possible Christian responses to culture in general. However the specifics of a context are vital to the discernment of what may actually constitute authentic Christian responses in that setting. The range of options appropriate to Germany in the 1930s would differ from that appropriate to Hippo Regius in the time of Augustine and from that appropriate in Australia in 2006. In exploring ways in which the church might inculturate itself while remaining true to the Gospel, it is essential to pay attention to the particular issues arising in each setting, as well as to the more general question of the tension between identification with culture and prophetic critique of it.

Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, has spoken of a wealth of local detail and theological stimulus in *MSC*.²⁶ Perhaps these two could have been related more closely. Clearly there is value in the local colour given in the case studies. And the theological reflection on mission is pertinent. Closer investigation of the actual context for which the report was prepared might have been beneficial. The brief discussion of consumerism provides a small step in this direction.

In rejecting syncretism, *MSC* observes that Britain at the start of the third millennium is

²⁴ Kosuke Koyama, *Waterbuffalo theology*, SCM Press, London, 1974, p. 121.

²⁵ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (1951), Harper and Row, New York, 1975, p. 31. Note also pp. 40, 43. Niebuhr is seeking to contribute to the mutual understanding of variant and often conflicting Christian groups (*ibid.*, p. 2).

²⁶ *Mission-shaped Church*, p. vii.

predominantly a consumer society. The missionary challenge is to embody the church within it, while challenging the prevailing consumerist pattern. Inculturation seeks the Gospel transformation of a society from within, and so a distinctive Christian lifestyle in a consumer society is fundamental to the task.

The willingness to ‘die to live’ provides one key to this challenge. A commitment to lay aside one’s own preferences, give priority to a different culture, and work with those in it to discover how to express an authentic shared life in Christ, is the opposite of self-centred consumerism.²⁷

This analysis could have gone further and deeper, contributing to a more constructive analysis of what is positive, what is negative, and what might be neutral in English society in relation to the Gospel. The conviction that Christians and the Church are to take account of culture in the service of mission is compelling. The need for an engagement with the particular cultural setting which provides both affirmation and critique is plain in the theological affirmations, but the limited part this plays in the accounts of mission initiatives in *MSC* reinforces the need for closer relating of theology and practice of mission.

There are prescriptive as well as descriptive elements in *MSC*. The values for missionary churches are presented as criteria for discerning authentic missionary churches. The Chapter ‘Theology for a missionary church’ has the intention not of providing a blanket theological underpinning for all new forms of church, but to suggest some theological principles that should influence all decisions about the shape of the Church of England at this time of missionary opportunity.²⁸ *MSC*, then, provides criteria for further developments in the Church of England, and does not simply describe what is happening. In presenting ‘An enabling framework for a missionary church’, the report notes how the English preference for slow evolutionary change influences the Church of England. This may hint at a need for a cultural critique which could help resolve a perceived problem in Anglican methodology.²⁹

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 81, 84.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 131-2.

Church and society in Australia

The stories and experiences and reflections in *MSC* are worthy of being taken into account as the Anglican Church of Australia explores what it means for us to be a church at mission. For all the local colour it contains, though, this report does not engage at depth with English society and culture (cultures?). Our local practice of mission and reflection on it need to examine more closely the history and present reality of church and society in this country. To undertake such an examination in this article is not possible, but I shall offer a few preliminary comments.

Miroslav Volf demonstrates how issues raised by a particular context can fuel theological reflection on what God might be offering human beings and asking of us; reflection which can be both promising and demanding for Christians living in quite different settings. In the Preface to *Exclusion and Embrace*, Volf speaks of being goaded by the suffering of those caught in the vicious cycles of conflict in his native Croatia and in different parts of the world. He goes on to speak of going on a journey, whose report is presented in the book. This report, he says, is intensely personal, in the sense that he struggles intellectually with issues that cut close to the heart of his identity. In his reflection on exclusion and embrace, Volf struggles to remain loyal both to the demand of the oppressed for justice and to the gift of forgiveness that the Crucified offers to the perpetrators.³⁰ What he writes obviously offers no cure-all to ills in Australian society. And yet it has the potential to speak to Christians and churches here because it has faced up theologically to confronting issues in other societies and cultures. There is little doubt that there are instances of exclusion and even demonisation of 'others' in Australian society at present. How Christian witness to the embrace that the triune God offers can make an impact in this divisive situation is something to explore.

Which is not to say that our society is greatly interested. Christians in Australia face real difficulties in presenting a united witness to what the Gospel might ask of us in relation to issues confronting local communities and the nation. And even if we succeed in this, there are obstructions to having that witness heeded.

³⁰ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1996, pp. 9-10.

In his research into Australian Anglicanism, Randall Nolan identifies a tendency within Australian society to treat religion as peripheral or irrelevant, or to dismiss it out of hand as a negative force in Australian history. Bitter sectarian struggle, and the widespread distaste for the ‘wowsers’ of the churches’ repeated moral crusades have contributed to this situation. It has left religion in this country with a difficult reputation to overcome. Nolan argues that Australian Anglicanism must face its own demons: ignorance of its own tradition, its struggle with factionalism and its concern for self-preservation, if it is to become a broad, mediating tradition within the wider national context. Still, he is convinced that Australian Anglicanism can have a creative role within the life of this nation.³¹

Perceptions of the churches among many Australians provide a reason or an excuse for not taking us too seriously. Individualism inside and outside the church exacerbates this. It may be *just* all right for Christian citizens to have their consciences quietly affected by their religious convictions. It seems more problematic for churches to identify advantages or dangers in particular developments within society. The increased awareness in recent times of the particular perspective from which each person and group speaks and acts can add to the difficulties Christians face in working together to welcome or oppose social initiatives (though thankfully it also puts barriers in the way of Christian leaders becoming powerful demagogues in the name of religion, as has happened in other times and places).

It would be *hubris* for Christians to claim instant expertise in matters of social concern, or for church leaders to expect society always to act on what they say on such matters.

Grandstanding does not promote authentic Christian witness. There could well be a need to repent of times when we have spoken and acted as Christians and churches in triumphalistic ways, and to seek more sober and humble ways of living out and witnessing to God’s will for us in our local area and in our nation.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer can be helpful in relating certain aspects of practice to theology in this regard. In letters he wrote in prison in Nazi Germany in 1944, he finds it clear in Mt 8:17 that Christ helps us, not by his omnipotence, but by his weakness and suffering. Human religiosity

³¹ Randall Nolan, *A Mediating Tradition: The Anglican Vocation in Australian Society*, Draft PhD Thesis, Griffith University, Brisbane, 2006, pp. 171-2.

looks to the power of God in the world. The Bible directs humanity to God's powerlessness and suffering. Only the suffering God can help. And so humanity is summoned to share in God's sufferings at the hands of a godless world.³²

This is a powerful statement of a Christian role in a destructive context. It certainly does not offer a complete role description for Christian mission in Australia now. It does offer a critique of some temptations which confront Christian mission and highlight one dimension of mission which is apt to be overlooked.

From a different context, Gustavo Gutiérrez has claimed:

Every attempt to evade the struggle against alienation and the violence of the powerful and for a more just and more human world is the greatest infidelity to God. To know God is to work for justice. There is no other path to reach God.³³

Gutiérrez is convinced of the value of work for human liberation in this world. But he does not equate it with the growth of the kingdom of God. The process of liberation cannot conquer the roots of human oppression without the coming of the kingdom, which is above all a gift.³⁴ The value of Christian work for justice depends on taking up God's gracious initiative, seen above all in the mission and ministry of Jesus Christ.

In Jesus' life and proclamation of the good news in word and deed, the promised reign or kingdom of God has entered human history in a new way. The cross is the culmination of his mission and proclamation, and through it God's reign enters into the pain and suffering of this world. Jesus' resurrection anticipates the coming kingdom, the promised consummation of

³² Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison* (1953). Enlarged ed. Ed. E. Bethge. Trans. R. Fuller, F. Clarke, J. Bowden and others. 3rd ed. SCM Press, London, 1971, p. 361.

³³ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics and Salvation* (1973). Rev. ed. Trans. and ed. C. Inda and J. Eagleson, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 1988, p. 156.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-5 and 104.

life and salvation.

In living from the lordship of Jesus Christ, the Spirit-filled Church itself is an imperfect but real sign of the kingdom in human history. Christians and Christian communities bear witness to that lordship and live from it in our everyday life. No sphere of life is excluded from it. Romans 8:18-23 tells us that the creation itself will be 'set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.' An acceptance of Christ's lordship involves a discipleship that is both personal and communal. It is lived out in the world of social, political and ecological concerns.

Already in the 1940s, William Temple was suggesting three ways in which the Church should 'interfere' in this world:

- (1) its members must fulfil their moral responsibilities and functions in a Christian spirit;
- (2) its members must exercise their purely civil rights in a Christian spirit; (3) it must itself supply them with a systematic statement of principles to aid them in doing these two things, and this will carry with it a denunciation of customs or institutions in contemporary life and practice which offend against those principles.³⁵

We are the Body of Christ not only when we gather for worship, but when we are dispersed through the week. Each of us seeks to give expression in our dealings with people and situations to the love and acceptance we have found in Jesus Christ. Some of us may have expertise and wisdom to bring God's love and will for justice to bear publicly on matters of social concern. Even when dispersed, we do not act in isolation, but as members of God's Church. Our witness, both personal and corporate, will be imperfect until God's reign is fulfilled, and will not always have the effects we hope for, but it has value even now.

In *A Common Prayer*, Michael Leunig prays:

God help us to change. To change ourselves and to change our world. To know the need for it. To deal with the pain of it. To feel the joy of it. To undertake the journey without

³⁵ Temple, *Christianity and Social Order*, p. 43.

understanding the destination. The art of gentle revolution.

Amen.³⁶

As Australian Anglicans we are invited and challenged to take up the opportunities God provides as we enter into Jesus Christ's mission and ministry in the power of the Holy Spirit.

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³⁶ Michael Leunig, *A Common Prayer*, Collins Dove, North Blackburn, Vic., 1990. No page number, but it is the second prayer in the book.

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