



## Church of England: Holistic Missions

### *Motion to Take Note*

**2.31 pm**

*Moved by **The Lord Bishop of Leicester***

That this House takes note of the July 2013 report by ResPublica, *Holistic Missions: Social Action and the Church of England*.

**The Lord Bishop of Leicester:** My Lords, the Church of England is on the verge of extinction, or so you would believe if you accept this week's tabloid headlines. The report of the think tank ResPublica, entitled *Holistic Missions: Social Action and the Church of England*, presents us with a different picture. It presents a picture of a church which is present in every community, town, village and city and embedded in its localities. It is a church which baptises, marries and buries a significant proportion of the population, educates some 1 million children in church schools and serves the poor, the homeless, the lonely, the hungry and the distressed in often unnoticed but crucial ways.

The report's central argument is that a nation cannot thrive and progress purely as a result of the success or otherwise of the market or the Government. These

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have both in different ways failed us. The NHS has been implicated in massive scandals of appalling care and resultant cover-ups. Our banking system has been the province of vested and bonus-seeking self-interest. In the United Kingdom, social mobility is stagnating and inequalities are rising and embedding. This debate arises from the conviction that we need to renew, recover and restore the transformative institutions which can make a vital difference. The institution primarily placed to do that is the Church of England.

I am delighted, as I am sure we all are, that this debate has attracted two maiden speeches. The noble Baroness, Lady Lawrence of Clarendon, brings to our debate an unrivalled track record of courage and resilience in challenging and shaping civil society, not least through the work of the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust. The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Carlisle benefits us with his understanding of the challenges and opportunities of the rural churches and communities in Cumbria, as well as his particular portfolio among the Bishops in relation to the NHS. As one of those from this Bench who has the longest train journey to London, he usually comes exceptionally well-acquainted with the agendas of our meetings.



If we are to grasp the unique role of the church in social action, we must recognise that faith plays a vital part in motivating and energising voluntary action at every level. Some 79% of church members who responded to ResPublica's survey have been involved in social action in the past 12 months, compared with the national average of 45%. According to the *Sunday Telegraph*, members of the Church of England give some 22.3 million hours each month in voluntary service.

I see that daily in my diocese. The street pastors in Leicester and the county towns have a transforming impact on street crime and vulnerable young people, especially on weekend nights. Our diocesan centre provides a base for the City of Sanctuary projects, reaching the most desperate asylum seekers. Our work with the Prince's Trust transforms self-confidence and life chances for unemployed young people. Apprenticeships in churches and church schools are beginning to develop high quality training and work experience. Outreach youth work in the diocese now exceeds all the resource from the other agencies put together. This pattern is replicated up and down the country where the social mission of the church is indivisible from its spiritual mission—a reflection of God's concern for all people, especially the poorest and most vulnerable.

Further, much of this work is done in partnership with other Christian denominations and other faiths. Indeed, co-operation with the faith communities around, for example, food banks and other forms of social provision, is becoming a hallmark of the Church of England's work in many of our major cities. Not only is this work widespread but it depends on an institution which is exceptional in its reach and essentially focused on the local. Churches, especially the Church of England, act both as a bridge across communities but also essentially as a gateway into communities. Quite frankly, it is the established church which is uniquely placed to achieve almost universal access through its networks of staff and buildings, and its particular place in the story of every locality.

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Speaking to the General Synod this week, the most reverend Primate the Archbishop of York emphasised that point. He said:

"Parishes up and down the country are striving hard to tackle the consequences of poverty ... Indeed for a parish not to be doing something about it is becoming the exception rather than the rule. Take Middlesbrough ... for instance, where churches of all denominations are currently running 276 activities designed to help the vulnerable. It has been calculated that these ... amount to 800 hours of love-in-action each week".

Many of those themes have been taken up recently in a major conference in Liverpool under the title "Together for the Common Good", building on the social action tradition of Bishop David Sheppard and Archbishop Derek Worlock on Merseyside in the 1980s. This morning DCLG has launched its programme, *Together in Service*, to support faith-based social action across the country. The *Near Neighbours* scheme funds community cohesion

by directly recognising the presence and effectiveness of the Church of England in every neighbourhood.

Across the country, much of the support for this work comes from the Church Urban Fund establishing joint ventures in places as diverse as Birmingham, Cornwall, Lancashire, Liverpool, Middlesbrough, Newcastle and Nottingham. These local hubs bring churches together in common action and outreach. They build capacity and confidence, and act as a source of experience and stories through which policy and leadership can be shaped for the future. All that activity contributes to a much-needed debate about the common good and the kind of society in which we all want to live and in which the fruits of all our labours are available for the flourishing of all parts of our society.

There are one or two points that I want to put specifically to the Minister, but first I want to establish a general point. We do not from these Benches advocate the co-option of the Church into the wholesale delivery of welfare programmes on behalf of the state. Experience suggests that there is a danger here of the faith and voluntary sector being systematically undercut by the big corporations, which can drive down costs and perhaps quality of service to below that which the churches could countenance.

The report does, however, issue a major challenge that the churches and government need to take profoundly seriously. It is a challenge to rethink and rebalance the relationship between state and community provision through the churches. In particular, the report calls for what it calls "a new settlement". This suggests a model of social action that focuses on service with the community rather than for the community. This model involves all parties in seeking solutions. As the report puts it:

"If we want to see powerful, resilient and faithful communities with the capacity to address their own problems, then people need the power to act for themselves rather than being dependent on services".

That requires a devolution of power both from government and the private sector and a readiness to break up monopolistic power that leaves the churches and the voluntary sector sometimes out of the equation. It also requires government to think more holistically in terms of partnering with the churches in health, education, work and training programmes and so forth.

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We on these Benches recognise that there is more that the churches themselves can do in this area. Much of this work needs to be done at local level, harnessing the networks and experience already in place. For example, efforts are being made to bring together the different levels of church social action. In 2012, a project was launched by the most reverend Primate the Archbishop of York, under the title *Resourcing Christian Community Action*, which aims to be a catalyst to bring together current best practice in providing



Christian care in local communities with the resources and knowledge needed to multiply this work across the country. The challenge in the report to the mission and public affairs department of the Church of England to set up a social action unit is a powerful one, but it suggests a top-down approach which may not be the most effective way of achieving necessary change in the dioceses and parishes of England.

Yet there is a great deal in the report to support. We support the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Faith and Society's faith and localism charter to ensure trust and transparency between commissioners and faith-based organisations when preparing to commission services from them with a view to making contracts clearer and more open.

Secondly, we would advocate that more attention needs to be given by government to capacity-building the churches as long-term, sustainable and trusted partners. There is much in the report in that area that would repay study. Will the Minister respond, in particular, to the proposal that Big Society Capital should encourage a social investment platform with good links to church-based social ventures to act as an intermediary on lending to such groups? Here especially is an opportunity to replicate and scale up established and proven initiatives and to move on from the endless construction of new schemes sometimes devoid of a track record in order to exploit contracting opportunities.

Thirdly, will the Government's new commissioning academy include advice for commissioners on how to partner effectively with church groups and how faith-based social action is of huge benefit to public services?

The report rightly reminds us that we stand at a moment of exceptional opportunity. Far from extinction, the church is ready to play its part. Its great strength is in the creation of local networks of neighbourliness and civility which allow informal bonds to develop and reduce the demands for many aspects of state welfare. This is a vital part of the ecology of welfare provision because it embodies Beveridge's conviction that strong state provision works only if there is a well-resourced informal network of voluntary action to support community resilience. The time has come to value that network more, to understand it better, to resource it more effectively and to enable it to play its vital and proper role in creating the common good that we all wish to see.

**2.44 pm**

**Lord Phillips of Sudbury (LD):** My Lords, I do not know whether one should declare an interest in a debate of this kind, but I am a lifelong if doubting Anglican and an occasional Quaker attender. I thank the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Leicester for inaugurating this debate. It is a useful one to have. One

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must thank ResPublica for its report because it is stimulating and useful. I welcome to



today's debate the two maiden speakers, the noble Baroness, Lady Lawrence of Clarendon, and the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Carlisle.

I want to concentrate on the central recommendation of the ResPublica report. It diagnoses what it calls the failings of state departmental silos and private sector cherry picking, trapped between individualism and collectivism. I have a lot of time for that analysis: it is broadly right. It also talks of the potential institutional role of the Church of England as the "hyper-local" hub or gateway to compensate for the failings that I have just referred to. It says:

"Communities exhausted by the break-up of traditional structures of both families and communities are simply unable to access the all-inclusive and bespoke provision that alone can transform their lives. Unless we tackle this institutional deficit we will not save the poor from poverty or secure the middle classes against a similar fate".

Again, I find myself in broad agreement, particularly with the reference to the breakdown of communities about which I will say a little in a moment.

It is sometimes useful when confronted by large themes such as this to go back to local particular example. I come from a town in Suffolk that is, I suspect, typical of many towns in our nation. There are more than 300 market towns such as Sudbury. Today, it has more than 12 places of worship. There are 20,000 people, three Anglican churches, one Catholic, one Baptist church, a Methodist church, URC, Strict and Particular Baptists, Quakers, unattached Protestants, Jehovah's Witnesses, the Vineyard and others besides.

That does not give the impression of a community that is falling out of contact with Christianity. I should go on to say that there is a thriving Muslim community now, mainly made up of the local restaurateurs and their families. They carry on their services in the Quaker meeting house, which is a delightful and appropriate thing for them to be doing. There is in the town a strong Churches Together set-up, which is typical of most towns. That does a huge amount, quietly and effectively, to co-ordinate activities between the different churches and faiths, and provides a flexible and organic utility for that community.

I sometimes think that of all the aspects of our national life that we do not pay enough attention to, it is the decline of community life, which over my span has been continuous and now has now reached a critical position all round the country. The consequences of the breakdown of community are incalculable because it is through community that we learn our humanity, learn to tolerate and be tolerated, and imbibe so much of the collective wisdom that otherwise escapes us as mere individuals in our families. The ResPublica report proposes this hub role for the Church of England largely as a means of shoring up the community life of the country. The report refers to the decline of the tradition of communitarian civic conservatism. I think that that is with a small "c". Again, it is right. In my home town, for example, in the 1950s, the leaders of the community



were its natural leaders, in that they were the leading business people, the leading professional people, leaders from trade unionism and so on. Sadly, that is less and less the case. I repeat that that is a

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national tendency. Not having those in the community who are most naturally looked up to—the natural exemplars, you might say, of civic and citizenship identity—is a massive setback from which we are all suffering today.

One of my gripes with the ResPublica report is that it concentrates far too much on the Church of England. All churches have that vital, practical, exemplary role. The phrase keeps coming back to me of walking the talk. If the churches do not walk the talk, what the heck are they for and who are they following?

The report suggests that the Church of England is given the key role of being the institutional hub in the process of reviving communitarianism, countering the rabid individualism, consumerism, materialism—call it what you like—that is, I think, deforming our society today. It wants the Church of England to celebrate its values and purpose rather than celebrating celebrity itself, as we spend so much time doing, I fear.

My problem with all of that is that I do not think that the Church of England, although I love it dearly, is fit for that purpose. It is in a state of extreme inequality within itself. In some parts of the country, some churches and cathedrals are vibrant and thriving, but many are not. They are very much on the back foot and struggling. I believe that, in any event, a state church, such as the Church of England is supposed to be, is better off being less connected with the state than more. I think that it infringes on the independence of a church to be too establishmentarianist. I think that that saps the independence of the church and its congregations; it makes it more subject to the vicissitudes of Governments—sometimes the same Government, let alone changing Governments; it reduces its freedom of collective or congregational criticism; it also places a downward pressure on the potential for civic and congregational innovation.

I see the Church of England—indeed, all churches—not as great, hub institutions embraced with and by the state but as seed beds of individual civic activism, hotbeds even. Often, thank goodness, churches and chapels are. I see them more as fertilisers of community vitality rather than some sort of grand master of the same. For those reasons, I am sceptical of what I take to be a central proposition of the ResPublica report, although I thank the organisation for addressing the issues and challenging me.

Lastly, lest I sit down on what may sound too complacent a note, I think that the Church of England has a huge amount to do—we have a huge amount to do. The failure of the Church of England to engage young people is, I fear, central to its challenges. In my congregation, I suppose that the average age must be about 70. We do not have a



Sunday school, but we are thought to be a successful church. We are not. You cannot say that you are in those circumstances. We are still far too middle class and far too disinclined to get our hands dirty. I do not oppose the central proposition of the report or by any means suggest that all is right in the state of the Church of England. It comes down to action: walking the talk, as I said earlier. We have a great deal to do in that direction. My word, does not the country and do not our communities need the

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Church of England, all churches and humanists? For goodness' sake, do not let us, in our religiosity, get trapped in some bubble that does not allow others who do not share our beliefs the same dignity, respect and potential power.

I close by quoting good old Chaucer, who often got it spot on. Vis à vis what the Church of England should be doing today, he wrote the wonderful sentence,

"if gold rust, what shall iron do?".

**2.55 pm**

**The Lord Bishop of Carlisle:** My Lords, as I take the place of the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Liverpool, perhaps I may say how very grateful I am for the warm welcome, kindness and assistance that has been afforded to me by both the staff and your Lordships.

I have the great privilege of living in the beautiful county of Cumbria, which is also the diocese of Carlisle. People naturally associate it with the magnificent scenery of the Lake District, which makes it one of the most popular holiday destinations in England, but it has its share of deprivation, especially on the west coast. In recent years, it has experienced particular difficulties, among them the devastation of foot and mouth disease, severe floods in places such as Cockermouth and Workington and, of course, the terrible shootings, which attracted worldwide publicity.

The people of Cumbria have shown extraordinary resilience throughout all that, prompting one local man to describe them as being as tough as teak but gentle as lambs. Cumbrians are also very warm and appreciative. As one of my 20th century predecessors, Bishop Herbert Williams, observed:

"A true Cumbrian does not express his amazing affection for those who live in his vicinity until he is quite certain that they are safely dead".

The diocese of Carlisle is not the oldest diocese in the country, dating from only 1133, but it is geographically one of the largest and one of the most colourful in its history. Early Bishops of Carlisle acted as the King's agents in the north. Together with the Bishops of Durham, they were responsible for keeping the Scots out of the so-called



disputed lands surrounding Hadrian's Wall and, to that end, they employed a small private army, which was housed in their official residence, Rose Castle. According to a local chronicler, at least one bishop was more noted for his prowess in the saddle than in the pulpit and Rose, together with the medieval cathedral in Carlisle was frequently attacked and pillaged by Robert the Bruce, among others, with the direct consequence that both the castle and cathedral are half their original size—rather, it must be said, to the relief of those who have to maintain them. Subsequent bishops have included Thomas Merck, who features in Shakespeare's play "Richard II", currently being performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford, and Owen Oglethorpe, who crowned Queen Elizabeth I because there was then no Archbishop of Canterbury and the Archbishop of York claimed that he was too old to make the long journey down to London.

Today, the diocese is generally flourishing, although rather mixed, with Church of England congregations beginning to grow after a long period of decline.

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Tourism is one of the county's main industries, and we are developing church trails and other means of welcoming some of the 16 million visitors to Cumbria each year and introducing them to our rich cultural and religious history. With Sellafield in the diocese, we are involved in continuing discussions about nuclear power, the disposal of nuclear waste and future possibilities for energy generated by wind and water. We continue to make submarines in Barrow, and although only 4% of the inhabitants of Cumbria now work on the land, farming remains a tremendously important part of the county's life.

As we saw during the shootings, the church remains at the heart of our rural communities, creating local networks of care and enabling a great deal of informal support, as we heard from the noble Lord, Lord Phillips. This is not just the Church of England. We are beginning to work so closely with other Christian denominations—I think the noble Lord, Lord Phillips, will be glad to hear this—that Cumbria has become the first so-called ecumenical county.

One current project that has already generated a great deal of interest is a plan to turn Rose Castle into an international Christian centre for reconciliation. We hope that very soon it will become a global hub for scriptural reasoning between Christians, Muslims and Jews, for training journalists, politicians and others in religious literacy, for conflict resolution at various levels and for environmental sustainability.

That brings me to the subject under debate: holistic mission. It seems to me that the imaginative proposal for Rose Castle, the former residence of the Bishops of Carlisle, is a very good example of the way in which the church is already involved in a number of activities contributing significantly to the public good. Reconciliation between people of different faiths, including not just the great world faiths but, of course, humanism and





atheism, is an obvious priority in today's society.

Like my friend the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Leicester, I am grateful to ResPublica for highlighting some of the extensive and excellent church work that is currently taking place. This week, as we heard, the General Synod of the Church of England has been meeting here in London. Several of the topics under discussion related directly to how the church can and does create social capital and add value in our society. For instance, in a debate on church schools, we were reminded not only of their high educational standards and increasingly inclusive approach to admission but of the fact that our clergy give hundreds of thousands of hours each year to the million or so children who attend such schools in their parishes. There was a meeting on credit unions, something with which many individual Christians and whole congregations have become involved in recent years and a very hopeful way forward in these times of mounting personal debt.

As mentioned by the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Leicester, we also heard a presidential address on poverty and talked about the way in which churches have been instrumental in establishing food banks around the country. I have some first-hand experience of them. There are several in Cumbria. At the recent launch of a new report on poverty and deprivation in Furness, the local MP singled out the churches for

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particular mention in this regard. In many ways, initiatives of this sort are building on the sustained work of the Church Urban Fund which, as we heard from the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Leicester, has sponsored a huge number of social projects over the past few years.

In my role as lead bishop on healthcare, I am very conscious of the holistic, patient-centred care that is offered by the church to many individuals with mental health problems, recognising that mental health underpins a wide range of social challenges. We are also exploring and trying to develop schemes such as parish nurses, health centre community chaplains and parishioners acting as local carers for the elderly and housebound in their own homes. These all approach the issue of health from a holistic angle and have the potential to save huge amounts of money as well as offering a lifeline to some of the most vulnerable people in our society.

As the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Leicester indicated, we do not envisage the church taking over all the provision of health and social care in this country or delivering major welfare programmes on behalf of the state. That is not how it works best, nor would that be appropriate, but we are glad that ResPublica highlights so much valuable work that is already going on and applaud the potential for closer working together and partnership to which this interesting report draws our attention.



**3.06 pm**

**Lord Griffiths of Burry Port (Lab):** My Lords, I rise with great pleasure to follow the maiden speech of the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Carlisle. It is not a good week to be a Methodist Minister, so I am hoping very much that the right reverend Prelate will recognise the sincerity of what I am about to say. The pair of us go back quite a long way. When I was on the management committee of an ecumenical project that he was running at Bar Hill, just outside Cambridge, I used to have to keep an eye on him to make sure that he was doing the right things. That is the right relationship of the Methodist Church to the Church of England. Subsequent to that, in Grasmere, when he was the Bishop of Penrith, we had a marvellous, county-wide effort and we met up again there. What he does in Cumbria for the cause of ecumenism is almost proverbial and is certainly trend-setting. I hope that since there are two other right reverend Prelates sitting there, they will learn from his example and follow the same route.

It is lovely to hear that extra dimension being drawn into the right reverend Prelate's remarks. We must remember, as we concentrate on a debate that so specifically picks out the Church of England, that that is only one player in the field—of course, I want to draw attention to that. However, we look forward to many useful, helpful, edifying contributions from the right reverend Prelate. If they are not forthcoming, I will tell him so. Of course, I feel as if I am in the middle of a sandwich here, because I look forward with great interest to the maiden speech of the noble Baroness, Lady Lawrence, who has set a tone for British civil society and indeed for the national consciousness that we must all learn from. It is not for

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me to thank her for what she has not yet delivered, but I stand in great anticipation of what she will deliver.

On this debate, I have to say that my greatest anxiety is that it can delude us into thinking that the Church of England is where it all is. What does it mean to be a Methodist? It is often thought that John Wesley, when he started off, was a pietistic preacher, full of spiritual energy and indefatigable zeal. However, perhaps less is known about the fact that intrinsic to his ministry from the beginning were actions of social commitment that were totally convincing. He had a kind of mini health service, free at the point of need, which he ran from the place in City Road where I now work. He had a ministry to people on death row in Newgate Prison, a microfinance project with a commitment to helping the poor with their financial needs, and a ragged school, which attracted boys and girls from the Moorfield slums, clothing and feeding them if necessary. I can say only that the vital religion of a Methodist like John Wesley is coupled inevitably with a commitment to the transformation of society, so we do not have to think of it as an add-on at all. We think that we are not doing our job if we are not doing such things,



and that is the end of the matter.

I have been the superintendent of the West London Mission for a number of years and was the boss of the late Lord Soper of Kingsway—although if anybody says that they were his boss, they need their head read—who initiated extraordinary work across the capital city that still exists to a large extent. That included a bail hostel with a day centre for over 25 year-olds—it is easy to get money for the needs of children and young people, but getting money for the needs of older homeless people is immensely difficult. There was total commitment, and it was open 365 days a year. He also initiated work with young offenders, a walk-in centre for people with addictions or substance abuse of one kind or another, which is multifaceted and free, again, for all who cross the threshold. That was a remarkable piece of work, with 80 employees and hundreds of volunteers who helped to keep it running. That, therefore, is of the essence; I have often said from the pulpit, “What’s the point of you having religion if you don’t bring a smile to someone’s face and make their lives a little easier?”. There does not seem to be much point otherwise.

I want simply to draw the circle outwards a little—no, I do not want even to do that. I do not like the compass having its fixed point in the Church of England, with ever larger circles drawn outside it. We are partners in this, and this whole thing must be seen in that sense. Why finish there? Why think that that is the range we are thinking of? My colleague, a very redoubtable Yorkshirewoman, is at this very minute standing up—if the programme that I have here is running to plan—to introduce someone from the Amida London Buddhist Centre. Ten minutes ago she introduced Mohammed Kozbar from the Finsbury Park Mosque as part of Inter Faith Week. Our work with the faiths is considerable.

John Wesley’s sermon on bigotry said that if someone else is doing a good piece of work, and it is recognised as being good, those of us who are Christian have no right to think that we cannot collaborate with them. You hold hands together and do the good, and that is

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the end of it. The work in the field of interfaith work has to be recognised at this point; there is so much of it around. I will give some figures: there are 289 social projects run by Islington faith-based organisations—that is 289 in one London borough. There are 536 volunteers, 68 full-time staff and 52 part-time staff. Some 74% of faith-based organisations work in partnerships across faiths and within faiths, and 65% are done in collaboration with people of good will who have no faith at all. At the end of the day, social need is social need, and you work together. If people who have faith feel that that is what motivates them, that is fine—but you do it with everybody else. Phrases such as the “unique place” of the Church of England, and self-aggrandising phrases like that, set my teeth on edge when I read this particular report.



I go back to Islington, as all good people do in the end. Of the social projects run by faith-based organisations in Islington, 32 are in the area of education, 20 in housing and homelessness, 25 in art and music, 19 to do with drug abuse, 20 in the field of health, 14 in the area of business and enterprise, and 13 in the area of employment. That is absolutely fantastic. Just two days ago, in the Cholmondeley Room—I hope one day that someone will tell me why it is pronounced “Chumley”; I am sure that there is a reason—we had a reception for Action for Children, which is a charity that I have supported all my life. It used to be the National Children’s Home, a good Methodist charity. There were 92 volunteers receiving their annual Stephenson awards. As was said in one of the speeches, the monetary value of the voluntary work being done there amounts to £500,000. It would cost the organisation that amount to buy in those services.

We recognise all the good that is done and have no reason to boast about it, because if we were not doing it we would not be the people of faith that we claim to be. There is no need to make a song and dance about it; it is the essence of our very being that we translate what we believe into action of the kinds that we have been talking about.

I am a little bit dubious, too, about the proposals and recommendations that have been made in the ResPublica document. Who wants an office in the Cabinet Office to centre all of this stuff? The Department for Communities and Local Government already has a base there, and it has accomplished a great deal in bringing faith groups together as one means of helping to build an integrated society in Britain. In 2008 the Department for Communities and Local Government produced a report called *Face to Face, Side by Side*, offering a framework for partnership in our multifaith society. Those are the notes that we need to hear because, at the end of the day, people of good will, whether of faith or not, and those of us who are of faith, know that we must make allegiances and common cause against deprivation and need of every kind.

I offer these remarks not to sink anybody’s ship or rattle anybody’s skeleton cupboard but rather to honour the Church of England as the state church for all the work that it does and recognise that it has a historic role in British society to do just this. But I plead with its representatives to see, in an instinctual way, the existence of others out there not as people for whom

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to broker involvement in the provision of answers to social need but as partners ready and willing to do our bit as best we can.

I am very grateful to the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Leicester for bringing this subject to the Floor of the House. I know that our concentrated thinking on this will raise the profile of the work being done but, perhaps, also challenge us to go on doing it in a more imaginative and colourful way.



**3.17 pm**

**Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon (Lab):** My Lords, I rise to give my maiden speech with some anxiety and, I must admit, emotion, surrounded as I am by so many experienced Members of your Lordships' House and reminded, as I am, of the role of this establishment in my life's story.

Before I embark on the substance of my speech, which will be concerned with the importance and value of voluntary and community sector organisations, I must express the honour that I feel in joining this House. My journey has been a difficult one, and there are Members here who have walked part of that journey with me in solidarity. Their integrity, conviction and calibre assures me that I am among good company.

I have never taken for granted my public platform as someone who should be out there speaking. I do it because I think that there is something important that needs to be conveyed, and this is what drives me. I therefore pledge myself to contribute the knowledge and understanding that I have to offer, building on many years of experience in issues relevant to the decisions of this House and the nation as a whole.

In my short time here, I have been impressed by the commitment to causes in this Chamber. I should like to thank most sincerely Members on all sides of the House for their friendly and supportive welcome. It has been a warm, joyful, if slightly bewildering, experience. The staff and officials, too, have been most helpful. I should like to extend my thanks to my two supporters, the noble Lord, Lord Boateng, and the noble Baroness, Lady Benjamin, to my mentor, the noble Baroness, Lady Crawley, and to the noble Baroness, Lady Royall, the Leader of the Opposition.

I welcome today's debate in the name of the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Leicester on the ResPublica report but wish to focus my contribution on the value of community-based organisations in the broadest sense—mainstream, grassroots, youth-led, women's, BME and faith-based. My parents, like many of their generation, came here from the Caribbean in search of a better life for their family. Never would they have imagined the nightmare that was to engulf my family—my son Stephen's life was taken so brutally and so senselessly by racists—and the 20-year battle for justice which followed. The experience has taught me that power is often resistant to the claims of justice and basic human dignity. Those who demand these rights must be prepared to fight every single day for them, as they will come up against an establishment more interested in maintaining the status quo than it is in helping to foster a society where everyone has an equal claim to justice, no matter who they are or what they look like. I have to

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believe that in overcoming the hardships, we have contributed to a collective effort in



making this country a more fair and inclusive place to live.

The local church played a large role in my life growing up in south London. It was very much a social hub for community members to congregate. During some of my difficult times I sought solace from my friend the Reverend David Cruise who baptised my daughter and led the memorial for Stephen. My one belief that has remained firm despite being challenged time and time again is that of justice and fairness. That is my credo. Ensuring that every person in British society, particularly our young people, have access to the same opportunities to learn, work and succeed is the bedrock of a progressive democracy.

Following the death of my son I was touched and deeply moved by the number of people who reached out to me and my family. I was impressed by the number of people in this country who were moved to show the love and care they have for strangers who have suffered terrible pain and injustice. Some of the people who reached out to me were religious, but many were not. They were appalled by Stephen's murder and the injustices our family were made to suffer by the police and institutions. It was only because of the support of so many kind people that I was able to maintain any hope and affection for this country.

Over the past 20 years I have become increasingly aware of how many different groups, organisations and charities do great work within our society. I have had the privilege both of being helped by them and working alongside them with my own charity, the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust, which enables children from disadvantaged backgrounds to have the opportunity to have a career in architecture and the built environment, the career Stephen always wanted to pursue.

Faith-based organisations are an important resource for many communities, providing volunteers, buildings and a stable network for those in need. But it is important to note that more than two-thirds of charities and voluntary organisations working in the UK today have no connection with a religion. An example of one of these charities is Stop Hate UK, of which I am a patron; it works with victims of hate crimes and encourages those who have been victims of or witnesses to hate crimes to report them.

Amazing work is being done on the ground by young people at the grassroots level, self-organising in their communities around the issues that they are affected by. It is important that we do not think just of those who want to volunteer—we must also think of those who are actually in need of help from the voluntary sector. A holistic approach must take these people into account.

Profit-driven privatisation has left what should be public services serving shareholders rather than citizens. Yet only by transferring power back into the hands of the people and away from private interests seeking profits under the veil of "efficiency" can the British Government regain the support and trust of the public. Voluntary organisations



representing every section of our rich and diverse society deserve to be listened to and supported in order to bolster their contribution to

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making Britain a safer, healthier and more prosperous country to live in. Only by remaining committed to these fundamental principles can we strive towards a future that is genuinely equal and fairer for all.

**3.26 pm**

**Baroness Berridge (Con):** My Lords, it is a great honour to welcome the noble Baroness, Lady Lawrence, to your Lordships' House after such a moving and considered speech. I can confidently say that all in your Lordships' House wish that the noble Baroness had not had to go through what she did after the murder of her son, Stephen. The tenacity, courage and boldness to stand up to such institutional injustice are inspirational. But the noble Baroness has not exhibited bitterness or the brittle anger that is often seen in today's media when responding to injustice. She has been gracious but righteously angry when, sadly, that was needed. Speaking truth to power has too often been required of her.

Few people know that the noble Baroness even had to sacrifice her career to give her time to the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust, which now offers architectural scholarships in his memory. I am sure that many noble Lords on all Benches will wish to help the noble Baroness use her voice, place and seat here to bring this charitable work to a whole new level. I applaud the Benches opposite for her appointment.

All of your Lordships, I am sure, long with the noble Baroness for a final resolution to the judicial proceedings that will bring some sense of peace to her family. But I look forward to her contributions to your Lordships' House ahead as life is different today for the British black community and our Metropolitan Police is radically improved due to the noble Baroness's contribution to our nation's life. Thank you so much Baroness Lawrence.

When it comes to the leadership of our great religious communities, we are living in a time of change. In Rome, Pope Francis has sent shockwaves through his own global community by choosing simple living over the alternatives. Closer to home, we have welcomed a new Chief Rabbi to succeed the noble Lord, Lord Sacks, who has done so much to inspire our diverse nation to live face to face and side by side. Just recently, the most reverend Primate the Archbishop of Canterbury has set a fresh tone for my own church's role in the public realm through his notable contribution to the banking reform Bill, his commitment to "compete out of existence" Wonga, and his forthcoming visits to all the Primates of the Anglican communion in their home provinces. All these actions are laudable. I welcome the opportunity that this report gives to highlight the social action work of Christians in the UK and how best the Government can engage with the church. The latter relates to my



previous work as the executive director of the Conservative Christian Fellowship.

One of the biggest changes we have seen in English Christianity is that it has come to reflect the wider world beyond our shores. We have witnessed the rise of new and energetic churches and denominations with a passionate commitment to serve across the localities. In urban areas many, although not all, of these game changers are rooted in diaspora communities,

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bringing to their mission a striking awareness of the pressing social needs of their members living in Britain today. Forward-thinking leaders such as the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Bernard Hogan-Howe—who needs to increase the diversity of his force—have been guests at the Festival of Life event where 35,000 Britons from a black-led denomination, the Redeemed Christian Church of God, gathered for an all-night prayer event.

I also had cause to reflect on the truth of the idea of the “dragon mother” when visiting the Chinese Church in London and seeing the many young people being so competent at playing their musical instruments. The Coptic Church’s cathedral in Stevenage is part-worship sanctuary and part-sports hall. Indeed, in many parts of the country, it is the Church of God of Prophecy, the Chinese Church, the New Testament Church of God and others like them which are saving the buildings of much older denominations that have become not significant community assets but distracting neighbourhood fundraising burdens.

This report, funded by an Anglican charity, analyses how the Anglican Church could restructure its social action work by creating social action teams in each diocese and having a social action unit in Church House. It is very laudable but the report’s gem is the tension at its heart, which has been outlined by other noble Lords. It emphasises repeatedly the uniqueness of the Anglican Church in terms of buildings, geographical spread of staff and connection to the state. The most reverend Primate the Archbishop of Canterbury said at the launch of a cross-denominational social action initiative, HOPE 2014, that he imagined looking back at 2013 and seeing that, “the churches put aside their differences and they chose to pray and work together”. Again and again, the initiatives relied on in the report are those of the churches working together. HOPE 2014 connects with more than 25,000 churches in the country. Sometimes it will be the Anglican priest who is the facilitator, but the Rutland Foodbank, of which I am patron, is run by churches together, and the local council first approached the Baptists. Sometimes the Anglican church is the best building but often it is not and purpose-built worship centres, such as the Birmingham Christian Centre, an Elim Pentecostal church, might be best.

However, this does not matter. Some of the best social action projects are done not by





the churches but by para-church organisations and charities such as Trussell Trust Foodbanks, Christians Against Poverty debt counselling, the Lighthouse Group's alternative educational provision, the Message Trust and Eden projects, which run youth work on difficult estates, Street Pastors, whose members do the long night shifts with the police in dozens of towns and cities, parish nurses, and the Messy Church, which is actually run by a little-known organisation called the Bible Reading Fellowship. However important the interfaith agenda—I note the comments of the noble Lord on the Benches opposite—is in multicultural Britain, I think it has masked the Christian diversity that needs to be recognised.

The Anglican Church is a unique presence in every community, but perhaps not necessarily in the form of a building. It is people that should be resourced rather than excessive bricks and mortar—and I speak as a

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former member of an Anglican church in Manchester that used the little-known building material terracotta. Even Giles Fraser was lamenting in the

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recently how distracting from his core purpose the likely cost of repairs to his church was becoming. I dare say there is not a Bishop in your Lordships' House that cannot identify with him.

The report also focuses on geography, as it must do for a primarily parish-based system. However, for me, the report fails to address the fact that my generation and the generations below live networked lives more often than not rather than lives tied to a locality. Their neighbours are their friends on Facebook not the person living in the flat next door. That is a challenge that the Church of England is beginning to realise exists.

The report scopes a wonderful vision and I believe it can be delivered, just as I believe that Wonga can be out-competed. If the church—with a small "c"—wanted to marginalise the worst payday lenders, is it not possible that a coalition of the CCLA, the Salvation Army's Reliance Bank, the National Catholic Mutual, Stewardship, Epworth Investment Management, the larger religious orders, the pension funds of Anglican universities and the family trusts of high net-worth Christian families could start a social venture that might subvert current market patterns? I know that the noble Lord, Lord Kennedy, on the Benches opposite, is a fan of credit unions but I think that he would ask us to give this one a go.

Earlier this year, I was delighted to launch the Cathedral Innovation Centre in Portsmouth. It not only develops socially responsible managers, as the report suggests, but also facilitates the creation of new ventures across the social, private and public sectors. To



date, it has spun out a new disability charity, now based in Cambridge, and a management consultancy working in London and the north-west, and given businesses from the Isle of Wight their first space on the mainland, alongside 10 others creating jobs and apprenticeships locally. It will soon open its second centre in Southampton and is already supporting an innovative asset transfer initiative there. February will see the launch of a sister centre at St Peter's in the City in Derby, with others to follow.

This initiative is underpinned by a community share offer but it is the Treasury that helped to get things started from central government, and a widespread coalition of a social entrepreneur, the cathedral chapter, the Royal Society of Arts, the Roman Catholic diocese, the Rotary Club, Portsmouth Business School, Northampton University and tens of volunteers is making this happen. As I saw at the launch, the church had to have the confidence to be a partner and colleague rather than the social force that had to take all the credit, and the alchemy of change that it is supporting is commendable.

I hope that the Anglicans look at whether the proposals in the report will work but I wonder whether perhaps the Government do not adequately grasp the potential stored up in the Christian church as a whole. Of course, I have yet to mention that the Salvation Army is the largest provider of social services outside of the state. The report, due to this tension, slips

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between Church with a capital "C" and church with a small "c". If the Government set up a unit in the Cabinet Office, it is important that it engages with the church with a small "c". It was beyond the remit of this report to find out the views of the rest of the church in England but a Government must consult widely.

A recent presentation by Professor Linda Woodhead to parliamentarians focused on church attendance, which is only one measure. In England, of those who attend church, 28% are in the Anglican Church, 28% in the Catholic Church and 44% in others. So 72% of churchgoers in England are not Anglicans. Of course, the Government would also need to think about the engagement of the church in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The Church House social action unit would have one space at the Cabinet Office table, and the Catholics have a clear structure to engage with government.

This brings me back to my work at the Conservative Christian Fellowship. How can the Government engage with that 44% of others? Perhaps the challenge is to put a structure in place on a par with that of the Catholics and Anglicans. It will take time and thought to do so but it will also bring more women to the table. The Baptist Union has its first ever woman general secretary and I hope that someone in Her Majesty's Government has already had the pleasure of meeting her. Can the Government please outline how they are intending to—or do—engage with that 44% of others?



In an age of austerity, when Ministers long for fresh models and new approaches to making a little go further, we will break through only if powerful parts of all denominations and government are content to step back and bring on the innovators, the inspirers and those able to recombine a wide variety of skills, talent and assets in fresh forms. This means new relationships and serious time being invested in the task and, for the church, it means the confidence to give without asking anything in return.

**3.38 pm**

**Lord Elton (Con):** My Lords, it is my pleasant duty to start by congratulating the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Carlisle on speaking to us from the depths of history as well as the depths of theology to prove that the Anglican Church is well founded and likely to survive many storms, as it has survived many before.

I also warmly welcome the noble Baroness, Lady Lawrence, and congratulate her on a most moving speech, which revealed the new and valuable dimension that she brings to our collective knowledge. I welcome her commitment to sharing that experience with us whenever it is appropriate. If anything is valuable in a democratic Chamber, it is direct experience of the realities of life, however harsh, in which Parliament can take a hand. She is very welcome here.

This debate is principally about the welfare state, which is not what it was. I have two personal memories about what it was, or that are relevant to it. The first was at the age of 12, sitting with some 300 other of my schoolfellows in the school assembly hall listening to a very enthusiastic young man with horn-rimmed glasses

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and wild hair talking to us about something called the Beveridge report. I recall him telling us that, when it was implemented, the world, and particularly this country, would be a better place, that a new era would dawn and that everything would be lovely. There was no examination on the subject, so I apologise to your Lordships for not recollecting more of the talk than that.

Some six years after that, I was walking with my father one evening in the fields near our house and he said to me, "I joined the Labour Party in order to achieve various things. With the passage on to the statute book of the National Health Act and the National Insurance Act, all those objectives have been achieved". I see the contented smiles on the Front Bench opposite, so I regret to say that he then said, "That being so, I see no purpose whatever in remaining in any political party and I'm going to sit on the Cross Benches". Those are my two memories; they are the sort of marker buoys for the start of a sailing race which brings us to where we are, and it is somewhere very different indeed.

I find it very difficult to unthread the tangled collection of ideas raised during this short



debate and in the report. The report I welcome warmly, because it has triggered this very badly needed discussion. It has some shortcomings. If I can be really petulant and elderly, I would say that the principal ones are the very small type, the use of white print on blue and the use of semi-colons instead of full stops practically throughout, which means that you never have a capital letter to go back to when you are sitting in an ill-lit passenger seat in a car trying to read the thing going up the M4. On a purely practical point, I ask ResPublica to revise its publishing criteria.

However, its research criteria are excellent. The research base for the report is pretty narrow. Nineteen parishes out of 43 dioceses do not amount to a great deal. It is not enough to come to conclusions on, but it is plenty to start the discussion. I think that we can all endorse, and everybody has endorsed, the extraordinary variety of the existing interventions of the Anglican community into social efforts to improve the life of all.

The noble Lord, Lord Roberts of Burry Port, hit the nail on its head when he pointed out that, actually, the Church of England is not the only church. That chimes in with one paragraph on page 8 of the report, on the social and spiritual mission of the church, where it was thought necessary to start with a little apologia about the necessity of the church taking social action at all. That rather took my breath away, because surely the duty of the church is not to run churches like a chain of theatres around the country trying to fill the house with suitable programmes; it is to be the body of Christ in the community. You cannot be the whole body of Christ if you are only one church when there are many churches. We must have a broad co-operation in this.

What puts the Church of England at centre field in this country is the existence of its organisation and its resources in the form of buildings. The report refers to the church in many communities being the only landmark at the moment. It seems to say that there were other

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landmarks—there were pubs and schools, which were of course the social landmarks. More and more villages and towns have lost most of their pubs and schools, and some have lost all of them. The church is the last visible central link; its spire puts it ahead of the chapel, which does not make it any better than the chapel, just more visible. It is also apt to be bigger and can house more people. However, the church is ultimately conservative with a small c, which means that it is full of pews. If churches are to diversify their activities, they need to make a clean sweep. I think I see agonised expressions on the faces of the right reverend Prelates to my left because if there is anything more divisive and difficult to do to a medieval church than remove the pews, I do not know what it is. But the fact is that it is done very successfully. The church ought to publish a brochure showing that, extolling the fact that the atmosphere of the place can still be spiritual, and explaining that far more members of the community can make use of the church. Incidentally,



members of the existing congregation, which may possibly grow, will also find that they are able to do new and inventive things. That is another spin-off of the report.

Like my noble friend Lady Berridge, who made a very good speech, I attended a meeting recently in the Jerusalem Chamber, where the final version of the authorised version of the bible was agreed, to hear Professor Linda Woodhead of Lancaster University give a PowerPoint presentation. She gave a most illuminating account of the position, outlook and membership of the Church of England. I strongly recommend that account to my episcopal friends and ask them to distribute it as it was a suitable forerunner to the great declamation by George Carey in Shropshire, which nobody has yet had the bad manners to mention, which warned of the end of the church unless something changed. We now have to look at whether what is being proposed is the right change. A good deal of reservation has been expressed about that, not merely because it puts everything in the hands of one church but because of its rather obscurely articulated union with government. The union of government and church is a very dangerous institution, indeed. If the church is seen to co-operate with the Government, de facto it is not co-operating with the Opposition and it is likely to get all the flak that the Government get for things that go wrong which are not the fault of either of them.

I turn to the practical difficulties of what is proposed. The subject of how the two organisations can co-operate and make use of their respective resources is a very fruitful one, and the Cabinet Office is possibly the right body to engage in it. However, what really matters is what happens at the bottom end in the parish. Parishes vary very much, as do churches. I lead a fragmented life which means that I worship in three churches regularly and in a fourth from time to time. One of the churches, in which I was for some years a licensed lay minister, and in which I now have the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Oxford's permission to serve, is a tiny chamber about four times the size of the Bishops' Bar. It has a thriving life but no room to expand. Apart from arousing great hostility, taking the pews out would not increase the congregation. I also worship fairly regularly in a church in south London, which I suppose is rather bigger than the

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Peers' Guest Room. I fear that this speech is going to read very badly in

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. That church's congregation is rather more black and ethnic minority in origin than it is white. It is a very harmonious congregation. Then we go to a very big church in west London, which is humming with activity and full of people, and which has a completely different ability to help. We do not want to think that one size fits all but we want to realise that it is not only the Anglican parishes that are there when there are all the denominations which your Lordships have just heard recapitulated. I will not run through



them.

So what is it that the Church of England has to offer? Because it is becoming increasingly ecumenically minded, it has the ability to focus the activities and interests of all the Christian family—the Kingdom of God on earth, as it strives to be—and to arrange the interlocution between the churches and the Government, not to be the only voice but to orchestrate it. I am warming to my theme and have just thought of all the clear principles that I should adduce, but the time stands at 12 minutes and I am grateful to your Lordships for your indulgence.

**Lord Griffiths of Burry Port:** Perhaps I might suggest, as the Lord Griffiths of Burry Port, that the Lord Roberts of Burry Port is a hybrid creature who is not yet a Member of your Lordships' House.

### **3.51 pm**

**Lord Kennedy of Southwark (Lab):** My Lords, first, I join other noble Lords who have spoken in this debate and put on record my thanks to the right reverend prelate the Bishop of Leicester for putting his Motion down for debate today. I congratulate and pay tribute to the right reverend prelate the Bishop of Carlisle and my noble friend Lady Lawrence of Clarendon for making their excellent maiden speeches in this debate.

My noble friend Lady Lawrence is widely respected as a woman of great courage, a tireless campaigner for justice, race equality and better policing who works successfully at every level from Government and Parliament to town halls, communities and local schools. She is an extraordinary woman who will be a huge asset to your Lordships' House and will speak with profound authority on a range of issues on which she has quietly and with great determination become an expert, as she demonstrated here today. She will be a voice for many who feel that they have no stake in British society, and it is a privilege to serve in this noble House with her.

I also thank all noble Lords who have spoken in this debate, which has been excellent and shows the House at its best. The report produced by ResPublica is an interesting, well thought-out and well argued contribution to the debate, and we should warmly welcome it. That is not to say that I or these Benches agree with every word of it, but it is a timely contribution and we on this side of the House are grateful for the work of James Noyes, Phillip Blond and the other contributors who are too numerous to mention.

I should say that I was brought up in an Irish Catholic family, but born here in London, and that I have always had huge respect for the Church of England and its ability to raise the right issues, speak up for

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those who do not have a voice and provide a progressive leadership, which has never



been needed more than it is today. I am looking forward to the response to the debate from the noble Lord, Lord Wallace of Saltaire. I wonder if he will mention the big society. I accept that it was not in his party's manifesto at the last general election but it featured prominently in the first few months of the life of this Government. In recent years, however, it has been brushed aside, covered up and forgotten about.

The key findings of the report on the role that the church plays in communities up and down the country are that the Church of England has a dynamic presence reaching deep into neighbourhoods and transforming lives, along with being a well-established social service provider. The Church of England, as the established church, has a unique role to play that provides added value to communities up and down the country, and, as others have said, its parishes and congregations are at the heart of all it does. The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Carlisle gave an excellent example with the plans for Rose Castle, where the church can provide that added value.

Much of what I will say could, as the noble Lord, Lord Phillips of Sudbury, pointed out, be said of other faith groups who in their own communities provide direction, leadership, moral guidance, protection and caring services. My noble friend Lord Griffiths of Burry Port made an excellent point about interfaith work and how important it is to do that, because it is right and the essence of our very being.

The noble Baroness, Lady Berridge, highlighted the wide range of faith groups and interfaith groups and the excellent work that they do. I should perhaps also point out to my noble friend Lord Griffiths that I stand here as a Labour and Co-operative Member of your Lordships' House.

It is true that we always need to look at the institutions around us that deliver the services that we need as a country. It is also true that the solutions that were relevant and delivered at a particular time can become less relevant and unable to deliver for the future, so we must always be open to new ways of delivering services and providing new opportunities, underpinned by clear priorities and principles. With innovations and developments in technology, we can deliver services in a much more individual way, tailored to people's specific needs rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. We have seen this with NHS personal care plans and other developments at a local authority level, but it needs to go much further.

The report argues that the church has the potential, the experience and the capacity to become one of the foundational enabling and mediating institutions that the country needs. Whatever role it plays, its mission, its job, is not to become the social services department or any other department of the local authority or central government. I would go further and contend that if it took on those formal roles, we would lose what we are celebrating and cherishing in this debate today. I believe that the church has a unique role to play in our society.



As the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Leicester said, the report found that 79% of the congregations are involved in some sort of voluntary activity and

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90% in some sort of informal voluntary activity, as opposed to 40% and 54% of the general population respectively. Two-thirds of those doing voluntary action state that it is through the church, and one-fifth of those doing such work support those with disabilities.

The church certainly has a wealth of experience in a variety of fields. That can cover issues such as prisoner rehabilitation, helping people recover from drug addiction and dealing with homelessness and mental health issues. In addition to this, the report found that the church had a high level of education and managerial ability of its attendees and, as the report points out, there is a will and a genuine intention to do good from the congregations with their voluntary action.

I was delighted that the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Carlisle mentioned credit unions in his speech. I am very excited by the work that the church is beginning to do around credit unions and financial inclusion. As the noble Baroness, Lady Berridge, mentioned, I have championed this cause since I joined this House over three years ago because it is an unfortunate fact that in our country, if you are poor or struggling financially, you will pay the most for access to credit of any sort. Championing the cause of those who are less well off—and shining some light on those who, often through sharp practice, are making a lot of money—can bring about much needed change.

The noble Lord, Lord Phillips of Sudbury, spoke about the breakdown of community, and I agree with those comments very much. I have seen the Church of England at its very best, doing its best in the community that I grew up in. I grew up in Walworth in the London Borough of Southwark, and I was lucky enough to meet the new vicar of St Paul's Church, in Lorrimore Square, towards the end of 1979—or was it early 1980? I can assure noble Lords that I was a very young man then and my hair was a bright red colour; things have changed a bit since then. Until his retirement in April this year, Canon Graham Shaw was a central part of the community in Walworth for 34 years. My two brothers and my sister, along with many young people in the area, attended the Crossed Swords Youth Centre that he founded in the basement of the church.

As part of the Faith in the City initiative, following the publication of that report in autumn 1985, Canon Shaw set up a mental health drop-in centre at St Paul's Church. He did that because of his experience and work in the parish and the problems, stresses and strains that he saw every day. People with long-term mental health problems are one of the most excluded groups in society, and social exclusion and discrimination in turn sustains poor mental health. He understood that the role of a good mental health service was to ensure social inclusion. For many of the people who used the service, it represented their first





step towards recovery, helping them to regain a sense of belonging to a community and to gain stability, safety and acceptance. For some people, this can then lead to an emerging sense of possibility about their future, hope and personal confidence in their ability to take the next step on the road to recovery.

The centre closed in 2008 after 23 years of service to the local community when the services were transferred to a larger charity, Certitude, following a negotiated

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shift in services with more opportunities for co-dependence between staff and members, and growing links with the wider community. The Lorrimore drop-in centre did fantastic work in a deprived part of the borough that I grew up in.

St Paul's in Lorrimore Square was also for many years the home of the London Ecumenical Aids Trust, which worked with communities right across London. When it initially started its work as the London Churches HIV/AIDS Unit, the reaction of many in society was not as enlightened as it is today, with talk of gay plagues and other equally ill informed opinions. In each of those three examples, the church never sought to become, replicate or replace the services provided by the NHS or the local authority. However, what it did do in each case was provide essential, cost-effective support for the community, without which there would have been further cost to individuals and to the community, more prejudice, and more costs and additional problems for the institutions of the state to deal with. For me, that is the strength of the church and it is what needs to be built upon.

So when the report talks about the church having to make itself fit for purpose, I disagree. I think that the church is fit for purpose in the important work that it does and that it is an example to civil society of what can be achieved and what is possible. As I said earlier, I do not believe that it is for the church or any faith group to replace the local authority or any government department in delivering services, but they have an essential role to play in the communities in which they are active.

In my opening remarks, I referred to the big society and how it very quickly seems to have gone out of fashion within government circles. Many in the Church of England were initially very receptive to the notion of the big society, and I think that at one level we, on all sides of the House, can support it. However, like many other parts of civil society, we have all been disappointed and have begun to worry about the political motive behind this agenda.

It was reported in the *Observer* that the former Archbishop of Canterbury, the noble and right reverend Lord, Lord Williams of Oystermouth, said:

"Big society rhetoric is all too often heard by many ... as aspirational waffle designed to conceal a deeply damaging withdrawal of the state from its responsibilities to the most



vulnerable ... if the big society is anything better than a slogan looking increasingly threadbare as we look at our society reeling under the impact of public spending cuts, then discussion on this subject has got to take on board some of those issues about what it is to be a citizen and where it is that we most deeply and helpfully acquire the resources of civic identity and dignity”.

In particular, I hope that the noble Lord, Lord Wallace, will be able to update your Lordships on the government response to the recommendations in this report that have been specifically directed towards the Government—I think they are Recommendations 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 and part of Recommendation 10. If he is not able to respond fully today, I hope that he will assure the House that he will write in detail to all Members who have spoken in this debate addressing those points and that he will place a copy of his letter in the Library of the House.

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In concluding my remarks, I again congratulate the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Carlisle and my noble friend Lady Lawrence on their excellent maiden speeches. I place on record my thanks to the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Leicester for initiating this debate and to the Church of England and other faith groups for all they do to provide leadership, guidance, protection and services to some of the most vulnerable people in our society, as well as the work they do with the agencies of the state and wider civil society in delivering that.

**4.02 pm**

**Lord Wallace of Saltaire (LD):** My Lords, this has been an excellent debate. I particularly enjoyed the two maiden speeches, with the noble Baroness, Lady Lawrence, talking in particular about the role of churches in the inner city and the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Carlisle talking about the role of churches in distant and sometimes very remote communities, around some of which I have walked with great pleasure over the years.

Perhaps I may start not by talking on behalf of the Government but by being a little personal. I grew up in the middle of the Church of England and part of my mixed response to this report comes from my personal experience. My mother was part of that great volunteer army of middle-class women who held civil society together. They had enormous energy, they were not allowed to have jobs and they threw themselves into working to support their locality.

The church that we went to when I was a boy had pews which, if I remember correctly, were allocated in a sort of hierarchical fashion. The bank manager’s pew—my father was the local bank manager in this small town—was third from the front on the right. I was slightly relieved when I went back into that church in north Northamptonshire with my



sisters a few years ago and discovered that they had removed all the pews and put in a really good new floor. It is now very much a social and community centre. Once one got over the shock of seeing this medieval church with its very beautiful floor, one realised that it was real progress.

In the 1950s, the Church of England was a little too close to the idea that it was there to enforce morality and social order, and was not enough about the social message. It is a problem that the Roman Catholic Church has retained for a rather longer time than the Church of England. I partly escaped by becoming a chorister at Westminster Abbey where I therefore had to listen to two sermons every Sunday. Since one of our canons held very firmly to the view that the church had a clear social message, which is probably why he never became a bishop, I certainly picked up the idea that the church had a strong social mission. I married into a nonconformist family. Indeed, the Wyke Gospel Temperance Mission tea urn still has a place in our dining room. Like many other things in our cities, the mission was demolished 30 or 40 years ago, as most of the Wyke community was demolished. That is part of why our communities have been getting weaker. Much of the physical environment which held things together has gone, and great new estates have been put in place.

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The role of Methodism in evangelising the working class and providing working class communities with a clear sense of where they belonged was enormously important. Part of the historical tragedy of the Church of England has been the split of Methodism, which I firmly hope will be resolved by reunification of the churches in the not too distant future. I live in the village of Saltaire. At one point it was suggested that it might be demolished because it had lots of old-fashioned terraced houses and was dominated by a Congregational church—one of only two churches in England that I know has a full peal of bells. The Congregationalist mill owner who built the entire village clearly had some tendencies towards respectability, which meant Anglicanism. The full peal of bells in the Congregational church was his gesture in that direction.

I am very conscious that everyone is talking about rebuilding communities—not just the Church of England by any means but a whole range of other faith networks. On occasion, they can create an enormous difference. I once spent a long morning in east London with a Baptist minister from Bradford who showed me what he had achieved, starting with a semi-derelict Baptist church. I am referring to the noble Lord, Lord Mawson. We have to work together in everything we do. I am also a Liberal. The Liberal Party, as a nonconformist party, has always been doubtful about established churches, particularly state churches. The long battle over who controlled the schools is part of what defined the Liberal Party against the Conservative Party all those years ago.

I remember the Church of England publishing *Faith in the City* as a major step forward. I



also remember the very hesitant acceptance of *Faith in the City* by many of the rural parishes in the diocese of Bradford and elsewhere, because they were not quite sure that they wanted to be too concerned with the inner city. It was a hard battle in the church to get that through, but it was part of the turn towards social action.

All of us who have lived through the past 60 to 70 years are conscious that the decline of communities, above all in our cities, has followed from a range of other activities. It was partly due to the slum clearance and demolition of those old, tightly knit communities. As the noble Lord, Lord Phillips, remarked, market towns retain the built environment and the sense of tradition and community which in some of our big cities we sadly have entirely lost. The decline of communities was also due partly to cars, TV and middle-class housing developments—those dreadful suburban places without any centre—as well as children moving away to college, and the internet. Let us face it, the downside of the liberation of women has been the loss of that great volunteer army who used to hold local communities together. It has been partly replaced by the emergence of fit, retired people of both sexes who now do some of that job—but in some areas there is a bit of a gap.

The question really is: can faith communities help rebuild the sense of community? After all, churches and families build communities. People with children are most concerned about local schools and streets and how safe they are. Binding the young, and particularly teenagers, into their local communities is so important for us in rebuilding a strong society.

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The wider issue raised in the ResPublica report about the relationship between state, society and the market is one that we all have to address. None of our parties has the complete answer at the present time. The noble Lord, Lord Elton, remarked on our learning bitterly that the welfare state cannot provide everything. We are now up against rising life expectancy, rising spending on health and pensions, and the need to spend more on education and training, with a population that nevertheless wants tax cuts—or certainly does not want to have a much higher rate of tax imposed.

So the model of public provision and services by the state is under deep challenge. The model of provision of public services entirely by paid professionals to passive recipients—the model of the 1990s and early 2000s—is neither affordable nor desirable. We have seen the dangers of producer capture in too many of these public services—whether from doctors, bus drivers or others.

We have also lost, in the reorganisation of local government, the sense of really local democracy. In our big cities, we have wards with 10,000 to 15,000 voters where it is almost impossible for even a good local councillor to know most of the people in most of the communities. That is a real problem. I therefore strongly believe, as does my party, in recreating what we have to call urban parish councils, because the parish is the sense of



the local. That is very much part of the way that we will reinvolve people in communities.

Going round some of the large housing estates in Bradford and Leeds, I am struck by the extent to which many people there feel totally alienated from public institutions, and regard the local authority as part of the public institutions from which they are alienated. They do not vote. They want to take their benefits, but they certainly do not think that it is part of their job actively to contribute to them. Incidentally, I say to the noble Lord, Lord Kennedy of Southwark, that that is part of what the big society initiative is trying to resolve.

So what is the role of the church in this? I strongly agree with the noble Lord, Lord Phillips of Sudbury, that the church should not be too close to the state. The church should be in healthy and dynamic tension with the state. We have an established church. It is not a state church. It is a church that I am happy to say now works very closely with other churches and across faiths. It has, as the Church of England rightly says, physical bases in the sense of churches within most of our local communities, from which one can provide public services—be they food banks, the basis for credit unions or all sorts of other community initiatives.

The noble Baroness, Lady Lawrence, and others talked about the role of some of the newer churches, particularly the black churches, in the inner cities, in galvanising people to recognise what we can all do for others. Going around a large housing association in Bradford in the early summer, I was struck by the importance of the faith of two or three of the senior executives in making sure that they were committed to regenerating a very troubled city.

I am happy that the Church of England has transformed itself from the rather exclusive church that I remember as a choirboy. At the Coronation in

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1953, the only ordained priest who took part in the service who was not from the Church of England was the Moderator of the Church of Scotland. I attended the 50th anniversary service for the Coronation, when the Cardinal Archbishop read the first lesson, with officers of the Salvation Army visible behind him as he spoke. Down in the lantern were representatives of Britain's other faiths—Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, Zoroastrian, Baha'i, and probably one or two others—demonstrating that we are part of a national church that stands for all of Britain's national faiths in all sorts of ways.

We obviously have to answer the question raised by the report: what contribution should the state make and how can the state develop alongside society to help to strengthen it? I say to the noble Lord, Lord Kennedy, that I am one of the greatest enthusiasts in the Government for the big society. Those of us who work in the Cabinet Office and therefore go out to see what is happening on the ground can see how much difference some of the



Government's initiatives are making.

A number of graduates came to talk to the Cabinet this week about what difference going through the National Citizen Service scheme had made to them. I started out as a great sceptic of the scheme until I went to see one of them in Bradford and was made to work with the teenagers. In my instance, I was teaching them how to make a public speech. I saw how teenagers who did not think that they could do anything were slowly learning what they were capable of and what they could do within their communities. That was an extremely invigorating experience. Community organisers, also within the big society programme, are trained precisely to work within big estates in big cities and to help people understand how they can help themselves and work within their communities—where, often, there are no churches or chapels to provide such leadership.

The big society programme, although now a little out of the public eye, continues and, I think, makes considerable progress. Through the social action fund, we have supported church-based initiatives such as the Cathedral Archer project, and have given more than £1 million to Tearfund's Cinnamon network to deliver social action projects.

The Community Organisers programme has helped organisations such as Southwater Community Methodist Church to act as hosts for the organisers, as they seek to make changes in their local community. The Community First programme has examples where government, the church and local communities have worked together. In Swindon, for example, the Gorse Hill and Pinehurst Community First panel funded the Pinehurst initiative forum for a project to support local residents in piloting a set of activities to engage children and young people in creating music. Few local children have access to musical instruments at home and the school provision was poor. This project got in-kind match-funding from the Church of England in the form of staffing support, which was invaluable to its success. We continue to support faith-based organisations through new funds that we have made available, such as the Centre for Social Action Innovation Fund, which will work with the Youth Social Action Fund—so a range of activities are well under way.

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To answer the questions of the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Leicester at the end of his speech, Big Society Capital was launched in April 2012 with up to £600 million to build the social investment market. In its first year, it committed a total of £56 million across 20 investments. In 2013, it intends to commit another £75 million to £100 million of investment. It works with all sorts of organisations at a lower than market rate.

The right reverend Prelate asked about advice to commissioners on how to commission the church in faith-based action. We launched the academy to train public service commissioners, local and central, in development and best emerging practice. We work



with all others outside, not just faith-based organisations.

This has been an excellent debate. Speaking on behalf of the Government, we welcome all churches as partners in building a stronger society in Britain and in rebuilding our weakened communities. We see the Church of England as an important partner, but not as a privileged partner. We see it as a major element in rebuilding a strong society and as a necessary balance to a limited state and an open but regulated market.

**Lord Kennedy of Southwark:** Before the Minister sits down, he has not addressed a number of points noble Lords made—nor the points in the report to which I drew his attention. Do I take it that he will be writing to me and other noble Lords and will place a copy in the Library?

**Lord Wallace of Saltaire:** I have read the report and I noted the noble Lord's questions about how we will respond to its recommendations. I think it is much better that I write on that since they are, as he well knows, rather complex recommendations, and rattling off my answers in two minutes would probably be less valuable than the letter that I promise to send to all noble Lords who have taken part in this debate.

**The Lord Bishop of Leicester:** My Lords, yesterday at a question and answer session in the Jubilee Room, the most reverend Primate the Archbishop of Canterbury made the bold claim that there was probably more faith-based social action going on in this country than at any time since the Second World War. Whether or not it is possible to measure the accuracy of that claim, it is very clear from this debate that there is a high level of interest in this subject and a high level of support for faith-based social action—the social action of the churches in general and of the Church of England in particular.

I am very grateful to all noble Lords who contributed to this discussion. I shall not rehearse the points made by noble Lords, but will take firmly to heart a point that many made: the Church of England is but one player on this field. We heard so powerfully about the Methodist tradition of Lord Soper and John Wesley. It is impossible to be the Bishop of Leicester without being only too aware of the enormous variety of faiths and the enormous proportion of the population of the city who on a Friday, Saturday or Sunday are in places of worship and who are giving expression to their

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beliefs and their motives during the rest of the week in a variety of ways—without which, quite frankly, our common life in the city would be quite impossible.

As other noble Lords have done, I will pay particular tribute to the noble Baroness, Lady Lawrence, for her moving and telling speech and for the way in which her life is indeed a speech in itself about the need for constant attention to justice. She knows she has friends, support and enormous respect on all sides of this House. I want to pay tribute to



the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Carlisle for opening our eyes to what is now possible in Rose Castle. Some of us looked with envy on successive Bishops of Carlisle for living there, but those days are now over and the Church of England is putting not only that building but so many of its buildings to new uses in practical ways for the contemporary needs of our contemporary society. That is why the noble Lord, Lord Elton, will be pleased to know that there is much more support from here for the removal of the pews than he might suspect. I invite the churches in my diocese to invite me to pew-burning parties on a regular basis.

I think we have had a really useful debate. I am sure that the Minister will take note of what has been raised—as, indeed, will colleagues in ResPublica and elsewhere, who will continue to stimulate and challenge us on these matters. It is now some 43 years, I think, since I was a civil servant in Whitehall, working as a Second Secretary in the Foreign Office. I used to walk up Whitehall to Trafalgar Square and St Martin in the Fields. The experience of seeing one church attending to the needs of the homeless and destitute while also ministering to the occupants of Buckingham Palace, engaging in the campaign for the ending of apartheid in South Africa and involving itself heavily in the Covent Garden community projects and a whole range of other things inspired me to think that this was a way of life that really could transform life at the heart of one of the world's great cities, and set me on the path to ordination. That vision has shaped so much of my work and is why I care passionately about the matters we have raised today. I am very grateful to all those who have contributed to this debate, and I commend this report to the further attention of the House.

*Motion agreed.*