

The Church of England and the 'Big Society'

Community Foundation Network
Conference 24th June 2011

Gavin Oldham

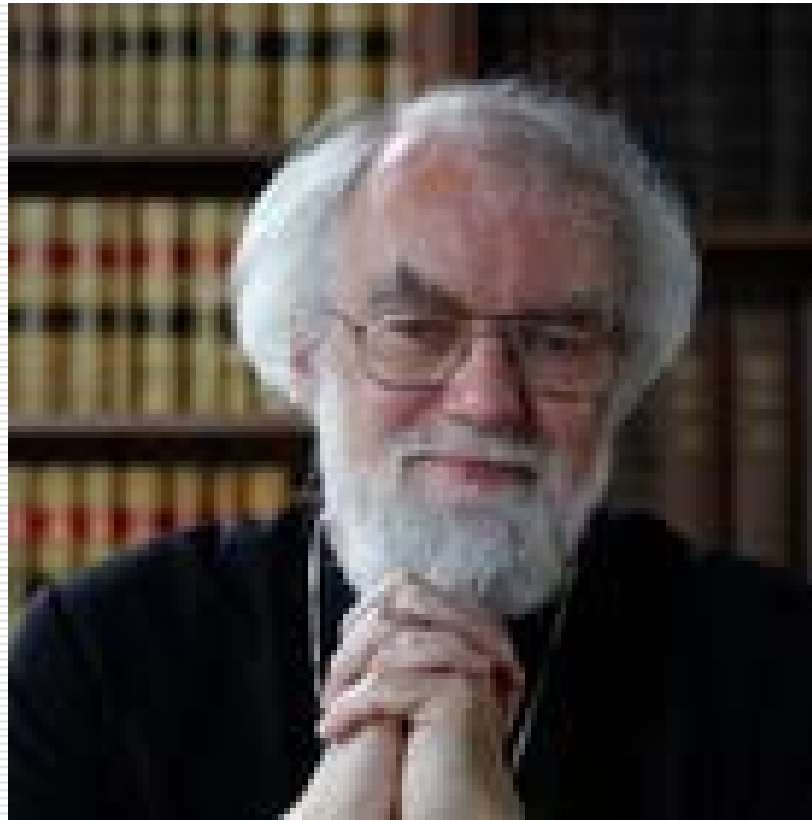
The human condition

all watched over by machines of
loving grace?

or ..

by a God of unconditional love?

The Archbishop of Canterbury



The Church's long heritage of community action

- ☐ Education
 - ☐ Visiting
 - ☐ Health
 - ☐ Focused on the poor
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The 'Big Society'

- ❑ Government recognising when to let go
 - ❑ More fairness in the treatment of the voluntary sector as a partner
 - ❑ More trust in the judgement and discretion of the voluntary sector
 - ❑ More long-term thinking
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Resourcing Christian community action

- ☐ Partnerships and parishes
 - ☐ Steering Group & Project Co-ordinator
 - ☐ Reviewing current activities
 - ☐ Resource Guide
 - ☐ Encouraging Growth
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Sources of Funding

- ❑ Church: Commissioners, Church & Community Fund, Church Urban Fund
 - ❑ Government: new matching arrangements
 - ❑ Private Sector
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Community Foundation Network Proposals

- ☐ Communication
 - ☐ Community First: Government matching
 - ☐ Philanthropic Benefactor support
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New funds to support initiatives

- ❑ Established within Community Foundations
 - ❑ Promoted by Churches and Community Foundations
 - ❑ Priority themes agreed locally
 - ❑ Also, a national enabling fund
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The Church of England and the Community Foundation Network

- Already a valuable partnership
 - Opportunity for further community action through innovation
 - Making care for others a reality
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Resourcing Christian Community Action - Partnerships and Parishes

Gavin Oldham, member of General Synod and Church Commissioner, explains how the Church and the Community Foundation Network are working together

In November 2010 the General Synod passed a following motion to the 'Big Society' debate which has resulted in a project called "Resourcing Christian Community Action - Partnerships and Parishes". Its Steering Group comprises Malcolm Brown, Director of Mission and Public Affairs, Tim Bissett, chief executive of the Church of Urban Fund, and myself, as proposer of the following motion. Our Project Co-ordinator is Professor Hilary Russell from Liverpool John Moores University.

This substantive project is built on the basis that Christian community action is no less than the practical outworking of the second commandment: to love our neighbours as ourselves. Whatever opinions there may be of the political motive behind the 'Big Society', there is no doubt that we have a Government which positively wants voluntary organisations with vocation to work in partnership with it. It wants this to be a reality at the local level, and appears to be well-tuned to the risks and challenges of such partnerships, both for the Government and the voluntary organisations themselves.

This represents a significant opportunity to restore Church involvement in many areas of welfare, as with hindsight we can now see that, if services are to serve people and communities well, it is not a case of State versus voluntary action – but the understanding that both need each other in a new compact.

The project has been running now for nearly five months. We've explored the major areas of community action within the Church of England currently; Hilary has charted a reference directory of over

250 different existing initiatives throughout the country, and this is only scratching the surface.

The project's main purpose is to act as a catalyst in bringing together current good practice in Christian care in local communities – not restricted to the Church of England - with the resources and knowledge base needed to multiply that work across the country over the coming years.

We are constructing a menu of 20 or so major areas of activity from which volunteers can consider and decide what is most appropriate for them and their area; these areas of activity include working with families, children and young people; with older people, asylum seekers and migrant workers; in counselling and social care, in health support activities – the list goes on.

Our plan is to develop a resource guide to help people to get started, or to grow initiatives which are already underway. There'll be examples of the various areas of activity and the benefits arising from these initiatives; also the resources needed, in the way of people, types of premises, funding, and where that funding may be found.

The Church Urban Fund has already developed a brief “Directory of Ready-to-Go Church Community Projects”, which has given us a running start. We'll be developing our guide both as a printed document and on the web, and it will include guidance on how to set up and administer charitable activities, together with reflections on volunteering.

In terms of timing, we're approaching the point where the huge amount of information gathered by Hilary can be brought together into the guide itself. This will hopefully be completed by the end of the summer so that we can start taking it out to the dioceses and parishes during the autumn. By the time the General Synod meets in February 2012 we should be able to report progress in the field as well as the completed resource guide.

How does the Community Foundation Network come into this?

I approached chief executive Stephen Hammersley to request the assistance of the Community Foundations throughout the country. It struck me that, whereas businesses might find it difficult to donate to a particular faith-based initiative, if the money could be channelled through the local Community Foundation it might enable an important new source of funding for Christian community action.

Government partnership is very important in all this, and CFN expects to be appointed as a key partner in a consortium that will manage the major government initiative to strengthen communities through local social action: the “Community First” program.

Community Foundation Network will therefore integrate the “resourcing Christian action” work with this program, and would expect to be able to match long term benefactor donations with a 50% uplift from Government and signpost parishes to the Government small grants program.

But philanthropic benefactor support is perhaps the key contribution.

Community Foundation Network will establish funds for each area with a local Community Foundation, quality-accredited to standards endorsed by the Charity Commission, to which philanthropic benefactors could donate.

These funds will have outcomes agreed with the church that are generic to delivering social change through groups of local people motivated to take social action. Each fund will have an endowed option - investments for long term change - and a flow through option - investment for immediate action.

Community Foundation Network will also establish a national enabling fund that will be managed within its books.

Community Foundation Network expects to be able to offer donations into the endowed elements of the funds - and the central enabling fund - a 50% uplift over the next 4 years as a consequence of its appointment in managing the government’s Community First Endowment Challenge.

Stephen has confirmed that Community Foundation Network is able to move quickly to implement and pilot test these proposals: so our project would report in 2012 with its plan informed by how Community Foundation enabling pilots have performed.

Gavin Oldham
June 2011