MANIFESTO

FOR HOPE IN OUR CITY REGION



Introduction

The Faith in the City Report, which the Church of England published in 1985, was a landmark example of the Church speaking out on social justice. It argued that inner city deprivation was not inevitable but the result of political and economic choices and that both Church and State bore a responsibility to act. It made 60 recommendations, highlighting how certain government policies were exacerbating urban deprivation. It urged that ministry in deprived areas be prioritised with stronger support for voluntary groups, community organisations and interfaith initiatives. It condemned racism and all that militates against a united and peaceful British society.

Churches Together in Merseyside and Region (CTMR) celebrates the achievements of this Report. It was a watershed moment that gave the Church in the UK a voice for truth and justice and seeded thousands of local projects. However, 40 years later, as an ecumenical group representing churches across this Region, we are keenly aware that structural poverty remains entrenched, inequality remains high and, in some respects, has worsened, especially for those at the bottom relative to the median. For example, in 2020, the Office for National Statistics report 'Household total wealth in Great Britain: April 2018 to March 2020' stated that the richest 10% of households held 43% of all wealth; the poorest 50% held just 9%.

> Whatever you did for one of the least of these you did for me…whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me. Matt 25:40,45

Our responsibility to those in need is a key element of Christian faith. During his earthly life, Jesus clearly stated, in this respect "Whatever you did for one of the least of these you did for me… whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me." (Matt 25:40,45) Helping the poor is not just kindness; it's central to our human identity and to the flourishing of society as a whole.



This document has been created from the responses of numerous people in our city region as a reflection of our shared values and a collective commitment to walk alongside one another in compassion, service, and hope. Rooted in a spirit of unity and guided by a sense of higher purpose, it calls us to come together intentionally, to be present for one another in times of need, and to offer support grounded in love, dignity, and respect.

It stands as a reminder that when people join hands and hearts, side by side, we create the strength not only to lift each other up but to reach beyond ourselves and help others as well. In that unity, we find the courage to face challenges, the compassion to respond to obstacles, and the power to build something greater than any one of us can on our own.

Whilst significant change is possible, it will require a renewed commitment from all who hold positions of influence in our City Region. Society remains a place of disadvantage and disengagement for many people due to unjust structures and denial of opportunity. This Manifesto offers itself as a reminder not only of what can be achieved through a common endeavour to overcome these realities, but the responsibility we all have to build a better society. While it might sometimes feel easier to apportion blame, the change we need can only come about through working together in constructive partnership for the common good. We believe that this is both possible and a crucial imperative for our City Region and beyond. We recognise our own responsibility as a Church community, to model this reality through our own activities, and would highlight the many examples of this across our city Region. But we humbly embrace the role we also have to join with others in commending such attitudes and developing a narrative of hope that change is possible.

We accept the criticism of civic leaders that at times, we have not been as forthright as we might have in this respect and offer this manifesto as part of our response. Everyone has a part to play in pursuing the vision that we have outlined and as churches, we will play our part in promoting this reality. However, it has to be recognised that the broader political environment in which we operate can significantly influence people's commitment and success.

This in turn is largely generated by the choices that we all make when electing individuals to public office. We have framed this as a "manifesto" in the hope that the values, priorities and aspirations of any who seek our vote will be considered in the light of its priorities and concerns. We call upon any who seek public office in any sphere of our civic life, to consider the vision that is outlined, and to offer a clear response to its core principles.

In recent years, society has become increasingly aware of the power of influence. Social media platforms and

online influencers are recognised as having significant impact on behaviours and attitudes across our communities.

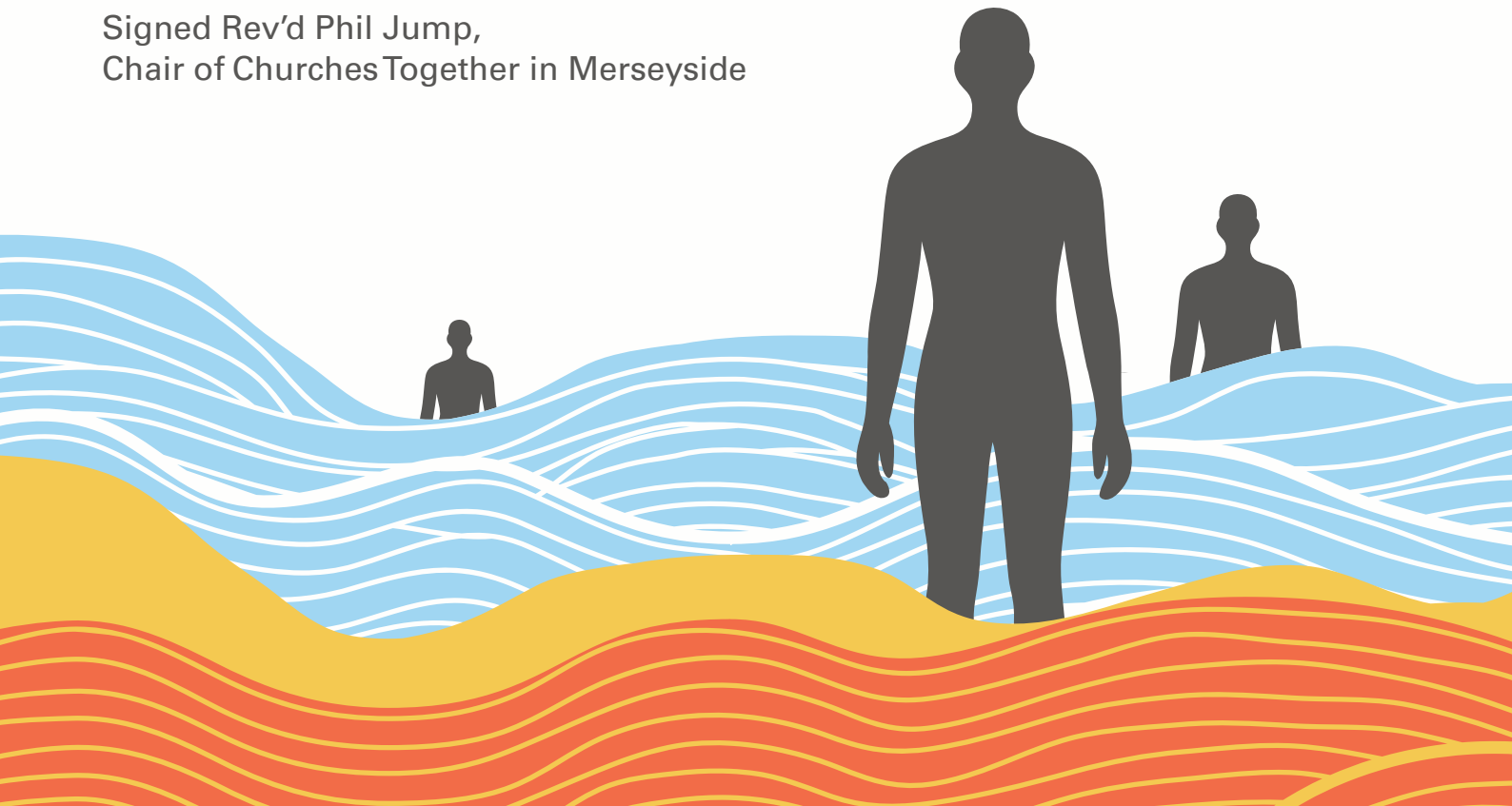
A number of individuals have been particularly identified as "bad actors" in this arena, and serious concerns have been expressed about how to challenge and curtail the negative narratives that they promote. It is easy to dismiss the Church as simply seeking to "get in on the act", and we have, in the past, faced criticism from various political sources for what is perceived as "interfering". We recognise that we are only one voice in society, but we are a voice that has been shaped by centuries of reflective practice and community engagement.

Those who speak for us are accountable to each other and our broader structures. We acknowledge that we have at times neglected our role to speak more clearly into the public square but would also highlight that this has not always been made easy for us. We claim no monopoly or automatic right to be heard, but we hope that those with whom we seek to partner would recognise the value and necessity of balanced and considered contributors in the present climate. This manifesto seeks to express how we will seek to model its key elements in our own shared life, but also promote them across communities as a whole, irrespective of religious beliefs and allegiances.

Love serves as the foundation for our work, hope as its guiding light, and solidarity as the expression of our shared responsibility to one another. Together, they embody the enduring principles of a just and compassionate society.



Signed Rev'd Phil Jump,
Chair of Churches Together in Merseyside



Manifesto

We believe in a vision for our City Region that transcends mere political ideology and allegiances, that does not seek to blame so much as inspire and enable her citizens to work for the common good, that measures success in more than simply economics but rather against issues of human well-being and flourishing. We invite anyone with influence, whether that be through the casting of a vote or holding significant office, to consider the actions they can take to help this become reality.

Our vision is founded on the Christian values of the dignity and value of human life, the prioritisation of the most vulnerable and our collective call to service.

A renewed vision of human society

Against a culture of divisiveness and fear – we affirm a bigger vision of one, respectful society where all are equally valued and equally safe. Every religion upholds the values of showing compassion, upholding justice; all stand for the dignity of every person. We see this as vital for the wellbeing of every community and seek a society where personal agendas and political allegiances are secondary to this higher commitment. There is growing concern over negative attitudes to people who are 'not like us.' Fear of the stranger is breeding untruths and division. We are one humanity. We can work together for the common good irrespective of any party-political or other allegiances.

Our challenge:

People of influence can shape a culture in which every person is treated with dignity and respect, resisting scapegoating and division. We ask Civic Leaders not only to challenge narratives that perpetuate division, but to commit practical initiatives to building communities and a society that has its members best interests at heart.

Our commitment:

Churches will continue provide a clear and regular welcome through language support, friendship groups and shared activities that turn strangers into neighbours. We will play our part in creating communities where diversity is recognised as a strength and the interests of others are places above our own.

2

The rebuilding of trust

There is a crisis of trust because of perceived and sometimes real lack of integrity among leaders in many spheres. We can all play our part in restoring trust in each other and advocate for the common good at every level in civic life insisting on integrity, honesty and truthfulness.

We need to serve without being self-serving. We do not deny our own shortcomings in this respect but call upon all who seek any form of leadership or public office to demonstrate the highest levels of integrity and accountability. We all bear a responsibility to create a climate where mistakes can be admitted, success is properly recognised, people in public life are treated with respect, and genuine human failings can be met with realism and understanding.



Our challenge:

Trust is nurtured when those with power and influence explain decisions plainly, invite scrutiny, and are open about both progress and setbacks. We ask civic leadership to commit to radical transparency in decision-making—publishing rationales, evidencing outcomes, and welcoming independent challenge- even when disclosure feels uncomfortable.

Our commitment:

Churches will model the same transparency about what we do and who benefits. We will seek to facilitate open and constructive conversations across our communities, particularly seeking to give a voice to those who might not otherwise be heard.

3 Courageous Honesty

Too often half-truths and misinformation, exaggerated and popularised by social media and fake news, stir up prejudices and social envy. Yet alongside this, it has to be acknowledged that many in positions of influence and authority can make exaggerated claims for themselves and their opponents, while being less than open about their own shortcomings and failures. Not every problem in society can be easily solved, and unrealistic promises and solutions generate further frustration and hamper the opportunity for everyone to work together in addressing them.

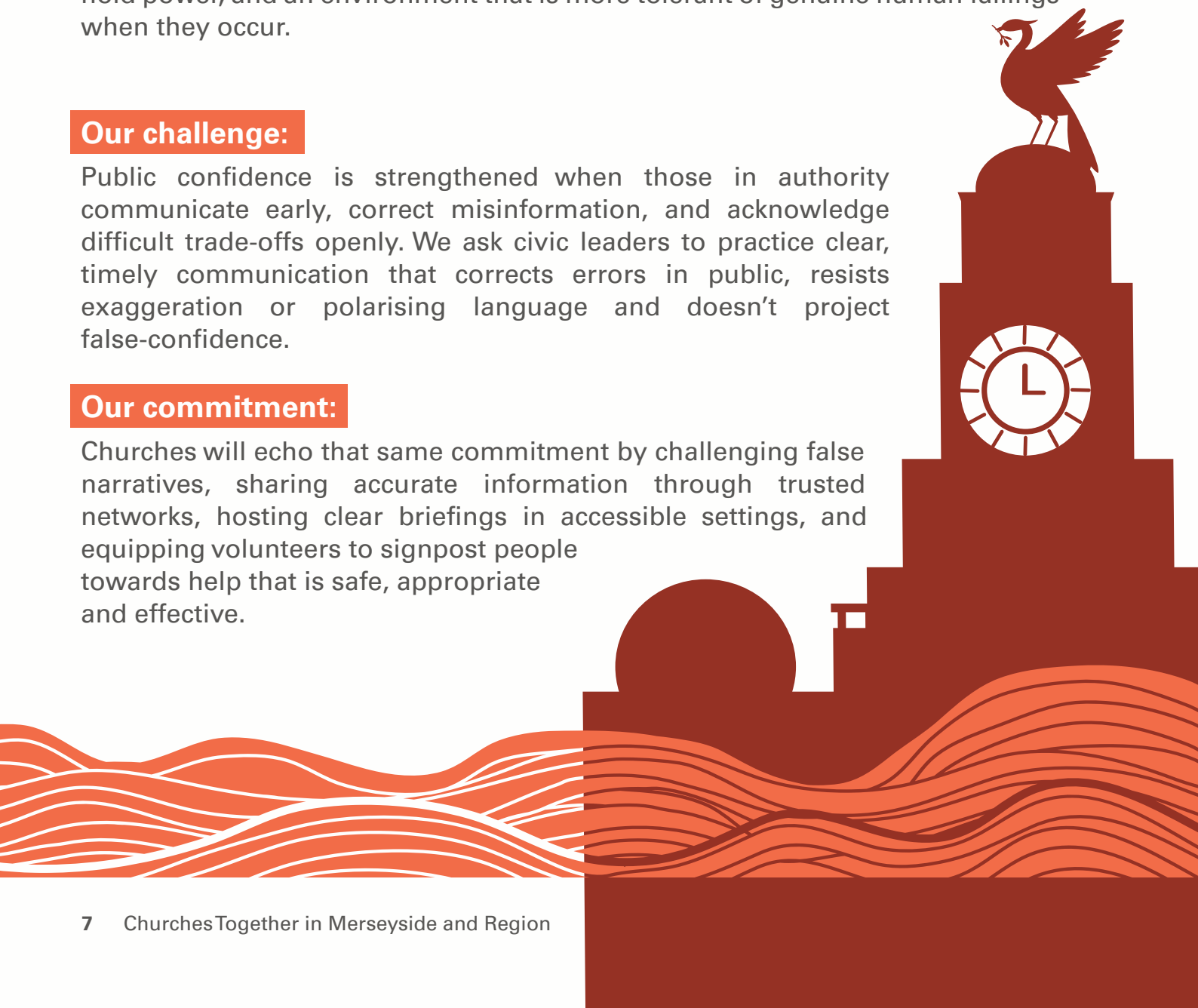
We affirm programmes like the 'Network of Kindness', the Gather Movement and Citizens groups that promote trust-building. We sense the need for an environment that fosters honesty, both through greater openness and accountability on the part of those who hold power, and an environment that is more tolerant of genuine human failings when they occur.

Our challenge:

Public confidence is strengthened when those in authority communicate early, correct misinformation, and acknowledge difficult trade-offs openly. We ask civic leaders to practice clear, timely communication that corrects errors in public, resists exaggeration or polarising language and doesn't project false-confidence.

Our commitment:

Churches will echo that same commitment by challenging false narratives, sharing accurate information through trusted networks, hosting clear briefings in accessible settings, and equipping volunteers to signpost people towards help that is safe, appropriate and effective.





Constructive partnership

Very seldomly can any single group or individual effectively resolve society's challenges alone. Churches form a network across the whole city region with meeting places in every community - places for worship and for building communities of care. While we are by no means unique in this respect, we offer numerous examples of the positive benefit of this kind of working together. This is a valuable opportunity to form meaningful partnerships that combine our strengths to achieve shared goals and create lasting impact. We call for greater dialogue to identify those practices and attitudes that act as barriers to greater participation of this kind.

4

Our challenge:

We believe that leadership needs to be relational, recognising the value and benefit of those networks and initiatives that have developed in any local community. We call on our Civic leaders to embrace this approach keeping doors open, listening well, and aligning efforts so that people are not passed endlessly between services. Churches can and do play a key role in this, and we call for effective space to be created where faith groups and the communities they represent can be heard.

Our commitment:

We offer the longstanding and respected offices of CTMR in enabling this. We will continue to provide spaces where local people are supported, and we will share what we learn so that partnerships are honest, accountable and useful. We will maintain excellent relationships across our communities and will represent their interests and work together for the common good.

5

True equality

Inequality stirs up discontent, insecurity, discord and even violence. We call for a commitment to Section 1 of the Equality Act (2010) viz 'to reduce the inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage.' This is not about simply seeking to advantage any group or identity above any other, but to challenge any and every form of inequality wherever and however it is evidenced. It is also about addressing inequality that is evidenced in the lived experience of our communities, not simply achieving externally imposed targets.

Our challenge:

Equality is demonstrated when decisions begin with the people most affected by injustice or disadvantage to not just alleviate immediate hardship but address poverty's root causes. We invite our civic leaders to work with us to make this form of decision making a key priority.

Our commitment:

Churches will continue to reach those on the margins first and bring forward the stories and barriers we encounter. We will stand alongside people until solutions take root, and we will work with others to ensure fairness becomes the measure of success across our city region.





Harmony and cohesion

6

Principle of leadership: Build everyday trust across difference.

There is significant diversity across the Christian community. While we acknowledge historic differences, we offer ourselves as an example of a community that has been able to demonstrate that we have more in common and can work together in genuine love and partnership.

Christian charities together form a significant part of what is often described as "the Third Sector." Our work is founded on a common call to promote peace, build trust and bring healing to a troubled social context. We can offer numerous examples of peace-building in practice but recognise that such community building needs to be a recognised priority and not merely a by-product of community provision. We call for a strong commitment to cultivate the peace, trust and healing of which we speak, with a clear vision for how this can be pursued.

Our challenge:

Effective leadership needs to be calming, using language that is inclusive and positive. We must recognise that the words we use set the tone for how communities relate to one another. This is particularly true for those in significant positions of influence. Good leadership notices tension early, creates space for conversation, and brings people together before differences harden into division. We ask everyone, particularly those in positions of political influence, to weigh the power of their words and use them to bring together diverse communities. We invite those who hold political office to consider the degree to which their interactions with each other set the tone for attitudes and behaviours in wider society.

Our commitment:

We will continue to demonstrate and promote real and visible unity across our own community, both as a means of making us a credible partner, but also as an example to wider society. Churches will continue to offer hospitable spaces where neighbours can meet, eat, listen and serve together. We will promote dialogue that is patient, fair and practical, in order to help rebuild the everyday connections that hold communities together.



7

No one feels alone

Loneliness is a problem of our time manifested in high levels of poor mental and physical health. We sense too, that isolation can often be a key contributor to the development of what are often described as "radical" and harmful beliefs, resulting at times in significant acts of violence and harm. Its antidote is to strengthen community; and community, in turn, helps to build resilience.

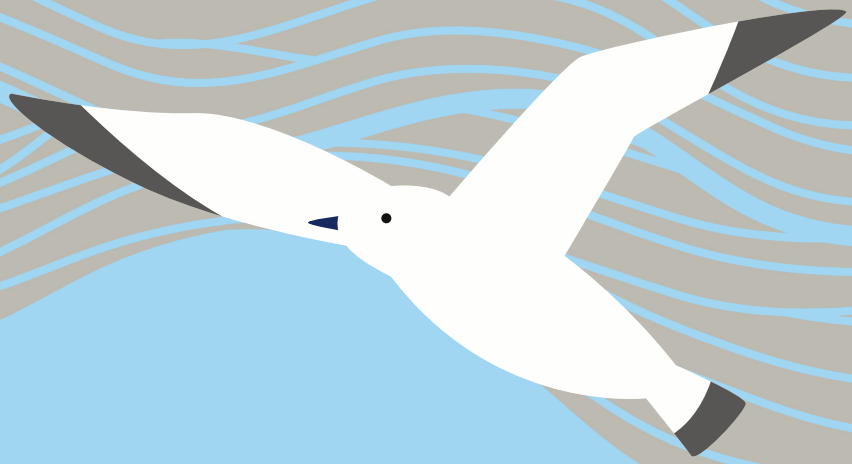
Our challenge:

Wellbeing is nurtured by noticing and supporting local groups and protecting regular meeting spaces where people find belonging. We ask Civic Leaders to prioritise the provision of essential community spaces, especially in deprived communities. This will require listening to local communities, partnership building and funding.

Our commitment:

Churches will continue to deliver projects and offer places of welcome not only as a vital opportunity to promote friendship and support, but as a platform to promote neighbourliness and an culture of care across our communities. We will seek to understand patterns of need and opportunity so that services and support can reach those who need them most.





8 Faith in business

The world of business and commerce can sometimes be instinctively portrayed in a negative light, and while we recognise that this at times is not unjustified, we also affirm the positive benefits of participation in employment. Unjustified negativity can serve to exclude the business community from recognising its crucial and necessary role in creating a healthy society.

In business, as in life, we reap what we sow. When integrity, fairness and service are planted at the core of our work, they yield dignity, trust, loyalty, and long-term success. Good business is not built on short-term gain, but on the consistent cultivation of values that serve society. We affirm the Blueprint for Better Business and call for clear strategies for how this can be promoted and implemented.

Our challenge:

Businesses should be encouraged to see prosperity and fairness as shared goals and celebrated when this is the case. We ask Civic Leaders to speak out against unjust employment practices that perpetuate in-work poverty. Leadership that values purpose, good work and ethical practice creates long-term benefit for the whole community. We call upon the business community to recognise the importance of faith to their employees and the contribution it can make to a wholesome workplace environment.

Our commitment:

As key contributors to the economy and employers within our City Region, churches will play their part by being good employers. This means we will pay the Real Living Wage, embrace ethical business practice, ensure that no-one is disadvantaged because of any protected characteristic and speak up where we see these being challenged. We will advocate an understanding of work that is expressed in more than economics alone, but which recognises its potential to be a source of vocation and wellbeing. We offer ourselves to the business community as a “critical friend” to help develop ethical and wholesome working practices.

A Vision of Hope

9

We can transform a culture of negativism by taking pride in and responsibility for our city and its region. The people of Merseyside have come through many struggles and tragedies together and we sense an urgent need to maintain and in places re-kindle this spirit. No single individual or entity can accomplish this in isolation, and we seek to resist such narratives. We call instead for a clear commitment and strategy to work with all relevant partners to build and promote a positive vision for our city's future. This can never be achieved through exaggerated claims or unrealistic promises, but by building on those positives that already exist. We can work together.

Our challenge:

Confidence in the future can be renewed by celebrating everyday acts of service, creativity and courage. Hope is sustained when it leads to visible change and a shared pride in place. We call upon our civic leaders to embrace a holistic view of our local communities and neighbourhoods, to work to remove those barriers that undermine neighbourliness and to recognise and encourage those who work for the good of others.

Our commitment:

Churches will embrace their responsibility to foster hope and positive aspiration particularly when circumstances prove difficult and challenging. We will celebrate the difference being made in our communities and seek to work proactively with our civic leaders to highlight the good that their endeavours achieve. We will amplify the stories of communities being transformed through the principles we have commended and seek to remind everyone that goodness and generosity are still alive. We will work with others to develop and pursue a positive vision for our City Region and offer this manifesto as a step towards that goal.





We pray for our city
A place of home
Where the waters of the Mersey
Have brought many to our shores
And been a gateway to countless horizons

May she be a place where every citizen
Finds worth and belonging

Where our faith in each other is never overcome
By narratives of division and deceit

Where truth and understanding prevail
Against interests that are served by silence and deception.

Where all can work together
Releasing the potential of our shared desire for good.

Where every voice is heard and heeded,
Injustice is exposed and never finds its root

Where differences are embraced
Strengthening bonds forged through all we have in common.

Where hearts and eyes are open
To notice those left lonely and forgotten

Where creativity and enterprise
Are harnessed to serve the good of all

Where hope will always prevail
Because of who we are
And what we believe.

Amen

Revd Phil Jump, Regional Minister for the North West Baptist Association
"No one can doubt that our city region and our nations face significant challenges at the present time. It is easy in such circumstances to be overcome by despair and be swept along by narratives of blame. We hope this manifesto will inspire everyone across our city region, irrespective of their faith background, to recognise what can be accomplished when communities work together and to see those things that are wrong in society as opportunities to strive for better."

Steve Rotheram, Mayor of the Liverpool City Region
"Forty years ago, Faith in the City exposed the deep social and economic inequalities facing areas like ours that were written off for 'managed decline'. Fortunately, those days are far behind us, and we now have something that we didn't have back then: devolution. From helping hundreds of people into safe, secure homes through Housing First to supporting disadvantaged young people through Cradle to Career, we're investing in people-focused, compassion-driven projects that are transforming people's lives. Because the measure of any decent society should be how it treats its most vulnerable citizens – and at a time when the threads that bind our communities are under strain, how we choose to respond matters more than ever. That's why I welcome this Manifesto for Hope – it's a powerful reaffirmation of our shared commitment to compassion, dignity and justice."

Rt Revd Ruth Worsley, Interim Bishop of Liverpool
"Forty years on from 'Faith in the City', today saw a renewed commitment to work together as church and faith communities with local councillors and political leaders. We want to have honest, courageous conversations to bring about change so that everyone can be treated equally, receive justice and respect, and recognise God's love lived out."

The Very Revd Dr Sue Jones, Dean of Liverpool
"Everyone has a role to play in realising the objectives outlined in the Manifesto for Hope. By coming together, we can drive meaningful change. Liverpool Cathedral's essence of being built by the people for the people, also reflects the very ethos of this manifesto and what it represents. United side by side, our combined strength can therefore unite communities and create opportunities for a better life for thousands of people."

Rev James Green, CEO of Together Liverpool, which delivered the Faith in the City 40th anniversary with CTMR
"Forty years on from the original Faith in the City report, rising poverty, food insecurity, loneliness, and increasingly fractured communities show our systems are failing. Faith communities are working tirelessly to support those in the greatest need across our City Region but they need more support. The manifesto is a call to action for civic leaders, faith groups, and local communities to work in closer partnership to build a fairer and more just city region, where everyone can thrive."

CHURCHES TOGETHER in Merseyside

40th Anniversary Faith in the City

This project has been delivered
in partnership with Together Liverpool

TOGETHER LIVERPOOL

togetherliverpool.org.uk

Scan for more information and to download
your copy of the Manifesto of Hope in our City Region