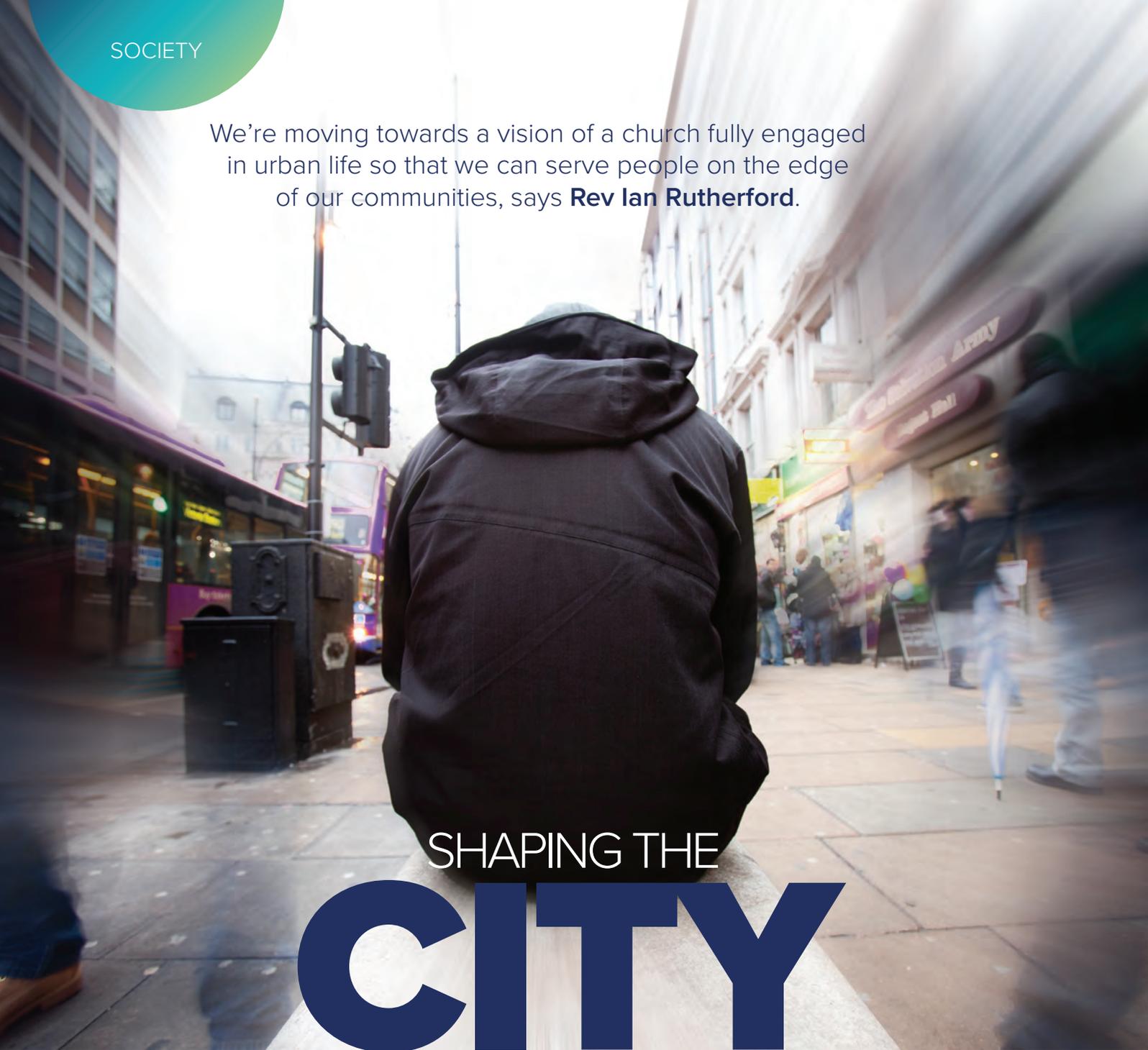


We're moving towards a vision of a church fully engaged in urban life so that we can serve people on the edge of our communities, says **Rev Ian Rutherford**.



SHAPING THE CITY

TO HELP THOSE ON THE MARGINS

In my work helping to combat homelessness and insecure housing in Greater Manchester I am constantly motivated by two scripture passages, Isaiah 58 and Matthew 25.

"...Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice..." (Isaiah 58:6). In Isaiah 58, we see a vision of community, which theologian Walter Brueggemann described as "ethically demanding", requiring "policies and actions of a neighbourly kind"; and he earnestly encouraged the church to be engaged in "worship and public ethics...otherwise there is a distortion of social relationships".

Similarly, Elaine Applebee, in her

“*We want to properly tackle homelessness. It's not enough for us to simply help a person in their current situation.*”

contribution to the 2003 edition of *Faithfulness in the City*, with reference to Isaiah 58, presented this same biblical picture of community – one that has securing justice for people at its heart.

She wrote that “healing for the people of God, both individual and communal, is tied up with being involved in the healing of others – the avoidance of injustice and meeting the needs of the poor”.

God's heart for justice is, of course, amplified in the gospels too. In Matthew 25:40 we read the words of Jesus: “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” According to biblical scholar Graham Stanton, Matthew 25 ought to be read on theological grounds “as a solemn exhortation to the church to give priority to the hungry, thirsty and needy of the world”. Jesus' faithful disciples' acts of mercy, which