

# Church Growth: CHURCH PLANTING

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 THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

 Church Growth  
RESEARCH PROGRAMME

# Research Question

What are the lessons that can be learned for church growth from a qualitative study of a selected number of church plants?

# Final Report

- a large range of qualitative material, using interviewees' words directly or indirectly and the researchers' accounts of what we observed
- an analytical, qualitative description of what we found against a set of appropriate missiological and organisational themes

# Plant Visits and Interviews

- May 2012 – October 2013
- 27 plants visited
- Half London Diocese, half rest of England
- 47 days of visits (3, 2, 1, 0.5 day)
- 242 people interviewed
- Supplementary interviews with senior leaders, experts, planting churches

# Plant Visits and Interviews



Story... Inspiration... Challenge... from the heart of the missional communities movement



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# Meeting Places & Spaces

- Many were intentional about shaping and designing their space to enhance and communicate their understanding of mission
- Where plants meet is an important factor to consider when planning a church plant.

# Models

- Top down or bottom up
- Liturgical or free-form
- Parochial or network
- Missional or attractional
- Presence or activism
- Not a one-size-fits-all model

# Key Values

- Relational
- Incarnational
- Importance of welcome and hospitality
- Involvement of lay people
- Inclusion of local people
- Volunteerism
- Importance of groups
- Involvement with youth and families
- Attempting to be a healing presence



# Key Values

- Flexibility
- Variety
- Innovation and creativity
- Risk-taking, experimentation and entrepreneurial
- Accept failure as part of the process

# Diocesan Support

- Diocesan support is vital
- Permission giving at structural and diocesan level is important
- Planters need to appreciate that good relationships with structures can enhance mission
- Many planters find support outside the diocese

# Finance

- Variety of approaches - overseas funding, sacrificial and generous giving, diocesan support, volunteering and self-supporting ministry
- Need a robust mission case and financial plan before planting
- Some areas where it will never be possible to run a self-supporting plant

# Leaders

- Plant leaders do need to be able to read and understand their context and this takes time, patience and intentional listening
- Plant leaders are very busy
- Need to take time for reflection

# Vocations

- How do we recognise this vocation?
- Most plant leaders are white, middle-class, male (cf CoE generally)
- Most plants emerge from evangelical tradition

# Community Engagement

- Impressive and puzzling
- Why are we doing this?
- Is it a means to an end?
- Doing for v. being with

# Growth

- What constitutes growth?
- Transfer? Dechurched? Unchurched?
- Serial advance and vulnerability
- Decline is not inevitable