

Church Growth Research Project:

# Church Planting

November 2013



Oxford Centre for Ecclesiology and Practical Theology  
Ripon College, Cuddesdon

David Dadswell and Cathy Ross



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# 20 Recommendations for Church Planters

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- 1] It is not clear exactly where the growth in church planting comes from. Is the growth coming from transfer growth, dechurched or unchurched? These questions apply both to the planting church and to the newly established plant. We recommend a longitudinal study to try to determine this.
- 2] A focus on numerical growth is important but it is not the only aspect of church growth to be acknowledged. We recommend a wider understanding of growth that takes into account more than just numbers.
- 3] The language of planting is confused and not shared. Although this can be frustrating, we recommend clarity about shared meaning along with a willingness to live with overlaps and blurred boundaries.
- 4] There is a variety of church planting models. We recommend that this variety be encouraged as there is not a one-size-fits-all model appropriate for every context.
- 5] It is appropriate to focus on a particular demographic. We recommend that planters are clear about who they are trying to reach.
- 6] Diocesan support for church planting is crucial. We recommend that the diocesan approach needs to strike a balance between encouraging entrepreneurial leadership and integrating any plant into the diocesan strategy, policies and vision as well as providing dedicated support for church planters.
- 7] If a diocese is encouraging church planting, there needs to be a clear strategy and accompanying policies. We recommend clear policies on staffing, buildings, housing, financial support, parish share, deanery decision making, training, Fresh Expressions, and approaches to inclusion.
- 8] Diocesan policies are sometimes not heard and understood. We recommend clear communication from the diocese and intentional listening from the planters.
- 9] Bishops and archdeacons have a crucial role in preparing the local churches, their clergy and their members, for a new plant in their locality. We recommend that this preparation be undertaken intentionally and in good time.
- 10] Planting will involve the planting church giving away its best people, both in terms of capability and financial giving. We recommend that they prepare a robust mission case and financial plan before beginning to plant.

11] Plants need to be able to risk and experiment. We recommend continued experimentation, and entrepreneurial and risky approaches.

12] Plants need to be able to accept failures as part of the journey. We recommend that this be considered as a normal part of the process.

13] Planting often benefits from entrepreneurial leaders. We recommend systems for identifying and nurturing leaders with church planting gifts and calling.

14] Plant leaders are usually white and male. We recommend intentional planning for leaders to be more representative in terms of gender and demographics.

15] Plant leaders need support and sometimes find it in networks outside the diocese. We recommend that plant leaders do find appropriate support for their ministry.

16] It appears that most church planting emerges out of an evangelical tradition. We recommend deliberate and focussed support for other traditions to encourage them to engage in church planting.

17] There are some areas and communities where it will never be possible to run a self-supporting plant. We recommend that dioceses work out how to support and sustain these plants financially on an on-going basis.

18] A system of small groups is essential for any plant – for nurturing new members, discipleship, pastoral care, social action and for delivering various activities and roles in the church. We recommend that all plants carefully develop, monitor and nurture their small groups.

19] Plants change over time as do their contexts. Regular evaluation of continued effectiveness is needed. We recommend regular reviews and careful monitoring of impact, change and transition.

20] There seems to be little systematic reflection and review of church planting either locally or nationally. We recommend systematic reflection – through on-going research, round table conversations and cross tradition sharing of ideas and examples.

# 1. Introduction

6 Church planting clearly demonstrates that church growth is possible. When a new church is planted, there is now either a new church community where there had been none before; or a stronger, larger church community than before the plant was started. Moreover, if a team arriving from a sending church initiated the plant, the sending church normally replaces those sent over time, thereby encouraging further growth. This may seem to be stating the obvious but it is important to be clear about this so we are not lulled into a belief that we are inevitably facing a culture of decline.

Initially the aim of this research was to visit a small number of plants in order to build an in-depth or thick picture of the plants. In negotiation with the Church Commissioners, it was decided that it would be more useful to expand the number of plants to twenty-four and eventually twenty-seven were visited. They were divided between the Diocese of London and the rest of England. The rationale for this was that the Diocese of London had done more church planting than anywhere else in England. The consequence of this decision has meant shorter visits, which gathered a larger amount of more diverse data.

The researchers investigated the twenty-seven church plants on the basis that church planting is a method by which the church can grow. The investigation undertaken in these visits and interviews was designed to probe just how churches are planted most effectively and what are the models, methods and approaches that are used. Put simply our research question was: what are the lessons that can be learned for church growth from a qualitative study of a selected number of church plants? The report offers a large range of qualitative material, using interviewees' words directly or indirectly and the researchers' accounts of what

they observed. This is arranged and categorised under themes arising from the visits and interviews. The visits and interviews took place between mid-May 2012 and mid-October 2013 and therefore constitute a snapshot of what was found in those seventeen months. The aim is to present the experience of plants, their leaders, members and others in a digestible, reflective way.

This is a report on research where we have attempted to provide an analytical, qualitative description of what we found against a set of appropriate missiological and organisational themes. The researchers' stance is neither for nor against church planting. However, we acknowledge that in qualitative research there is always a danger of unacknowledged bias, unreflective application of assumptions and undue weight being given to the loudest, most attractive or most negative voices. Therefore the research was regularly tested by careful research design, reflection in the team and reference to outside experts in research and practical theology to try to minimise this.

Finally we would like to thank all those we visited and interviewed for their attentiveness and generous hospitality. We met, in the vast majority of cases, kind, generous, hospitable people who gave us time and attention, who answered our questions frankly and reflectively and were keenly interested in this research. We believe that encountering so many committed and faithful people who are involved in church planting is a significant finding in itself. We have appreciated the regular encouragement we received from Mr Kevin Norris, Senior Strategy Analyst at Church House, Mr Andy Brookes, Diocesan Secretary of the Diocese of London, Revd Canon Professor Martyn Percy, Principal of Ripon College Cuddesdon and our Reference Group and Readers for this research.<sup>1</sup> We hope that this research may be of service to the church.

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1 Our Reference Group consisted of: Ann Morisy, Mr Jonny Baker, Dr Sarah Dunlop, Revd Dr Tim Naish, Rt Revd Colin Fletcher. Our readers were: Ann Morisy, Mr Jonny Baker, Dr Sarah Dunlop, Revd Dr Tim Naish, + Colin Fletcher, Revd Ric Thorpe, Professor Pete Ward, Professor Martyn Percy, Revd Angus Ritchie, Dr Angus Crichton, Fr Damian Feeney.



# 2. Methodology

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

## 2.1 Purpose

Our aim in this research is to look for the lessons that can be learned for church growth from a qualitative study of a number of church plants. Ultimately the aim of the research is to discover and evaluate the range of methods and models for planting new, numerically growing Kingdom communities that will worship God and engage in God's ministry and mission. Through observation, examination and evaluation across a sample of church plants the aim was to build a rich picture and thick description of plants from what people said and what we observed. We aim to draw patterns, analyses and principles, tell stories and case studies which will be useful for those who wish to understand church planting – both for practitioners and policy makers. This study is a snapshot of what is happening now in a number of examples.

## 2.2 A Qualitative Approach

In looking for lessons that could be learned for church growth from a study of church plants, our approach has been qualitative. That is, we have followed approaches and methods drawn from ethnography, participant observation and practical theology's discipline of theological reflection. Ethnography refers to a way of seeing<sup>2</sup> and is a method which embodies a number of values such as participation, immersion, reflection, reflexivity, and representation; thick description, ethics and understanding. Reflection and reflexivity mean that researchers are constantly reflecting on their fieldwork and methods, as qualitative research is not a static method that can be simply applied to all situations. It evolves and requires conversation, flexibility and sensitivity to the context. As Bishop Rowan Williams has reminded us, theological inquiry is 'always beginning in the middle of things,'<sup>3</sup> in the midst of a common life and language and practices that already exist. An ethnographic description of what is going on will attempt to draw out the details, the complexities, the nuances and the messiness of what is going on. It must, however, be modest in its claims, evaluations and conclusions. Congregations and faith communities

are complex places. The researcher may only hear dominant voices, meet certain people, observe particular worship styles or community practices and then the researcher himself or herself has to make certain choices in writing up the material. As Frances Ward notes, writing up the notes means imposing some sort of order on that which can be confused and messy and therefore involves 'deleting some voices, some perspectives in favour of others.'<sup>4</sup>

We are also aware of the differentiation between espoused and operant theology at work. Espoused theology is what people say they believe and what motivates their practice while operant theology is what the practice itself reveals about their theology and theological practices.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes there is a disjuncture or a disconnection between these. We also need to be aware of the hidden curriculum or implicit theology – many of the practices, forms, habits may have meanings that have long since been forgotten or remain unacknowledged. However, a purely inductive approach can leave us floating free from the insights of the Christian tradition. At its best, the discipline of theological reflection will help inform and interpret ethnographic observations so that theology can enable us to better understand the relation between beliefs and actions and so to achieve some consistency between our espoused and operant theologies. In other words, it will help us achieve some measure of reliability between what we say and what we do. In this research, we present summaries of our findings in the form of themes, analyses and critical conclusions to answer the research question.

## 2.3 Data Collection

### 2.3.1 The Researchers

The two researchers, Revd David Dadswell and Dr Cathy Ross, who undertook most of the research, provided a complementary set of skills,

2 H Wolcott, *Ethnography, A Way of Seeing*, (Plymouth:AltaMira, 2008)

3 R Williams, *On Christian Theology*, (Oxford:Blackwell, 2000), xii.

4 F Ward, 'The Messiness of Studying Congregations Using Ethnographic Methods' in *Congregational Studies in the UK*, eds M Guest, K Tusting, and L Woodhead, (Aldershot:Ashgate, 2004), 134.

5 See H Cameron et al, *Talking about God in Practice* (London:SCM, 2010)

knowledge and backgrounds. Cathy is female, lay, a missiologist, an evangelical, and a trainer of ordinands as well as pioneer ministers. David is male, ordained, of a liberal catholic tradition, and an organisational consultant. Both have expertise in practical theology and reflective practice and are Anglicans, though from different countries. Neither is involved in church planting and so we have tried to adopt a neutral posture towards the research question. However, we freely acknowledge that we ourselves are theologically, socially and culturally situated and that complete neutrality is not possible. A third researcher, Mrs Carolyn Nahajski, with expertise in statistics and organisational reporting was employed to work with the central records of the Diocese of London.

### 2.3.2 The Sample

The Church Commissioners, in consultation with the Diocese of London, decided that it would be helpful to look at twenty-four church plants. The Diocese of London has a reputation for outstanding church growth and church planting in the Church of England, so the sample was divided between the Diocese of London and the rest of the Church of England. We were to visit twelve church plants in the Diocese of London and twelve elsewhere in England. In fact, we visited twenty-seven church plants in all – thirteen within the Diocese of London and fourteen without.

The Joint Operations Team of the Diocese of London determined the list of sample plants for their Diocese. For the rest of the Church of England, the researchers used a variety of channels and people experienced in church planting to produce a list of churches to visit.<sup>6</sup> In this list, although small, there was an attempt to cover a range of features such as urban and rural, various ecclesiological traditions, led by men and led by women, recently established and long established, across a sociological and economic range, and covering the east, west, south and north of England. Both in London and in the rest of England, evangelical plants dominate the sample, as this seems to be the major tradition behind church planting. This is a key consideration in our

research generally and so will be treated at length in subsequent sections. We managed to see all but three of our original list of plants. Where appropriate we replaced those we could not get access to with another suitable plant, after consultation with the Church Commissioners.

We proposed visits of three days, two days and one day. The length of the visits in the Diocese of London was determined by their Joint Operations Team. In the rest of England we, as researchers made a judgement on the size, range of activities, geography, demographics and complexity of the church plants, to ensure we would have enough time to garner a suitable amount of data from each. Through our investigations, we have tried to build a thick picture of church planting in the plants we visited for the thirteen months over which our data gathering took place. Our approach was constrained by what it was possible to arrange and timetable, but we have had access to a rich store of data, stories and observation.

These are the church plants we visited from September 2012 - September 2013.

#### *In the Diocese of London*

What follows is the researchers' characterisation of the ecclesiastical tradition of the churches visited. This indicates where the energy for church planting is found in this sample.

- The Good Shepherd Tottenham, is an Anglo-Catholic plant in the parish by St Mary's, Tottenham in a set of church halls some distance from the parish church. It was planted in 2010.
- Grace Church is a conservative evangelical plant, which meets in St Anne's Hoxton in the London Borough of Hackney. It was planted in 2004 from St Helen's Bishopsgate (SHB) and is about to begin the process of getting a Bishop's Mission Order (BMO). This has been delayed by their having to change venue.
- Kings Cross Church is a charismatic evangelical network church, which meets in an Ethiopian church near Kings Cross Station. It has a BMO. It was planted in 2009.
- Oak Tree Anglican Fellowship is a charismatic evangelical network church which has its own building, a former fire station, in Acton town centre in west London. It was founded in 1993

6 Our thanks for recommendations go to: Rt Revd Graham Cray, Canon Dr George Lings, Revd Bob and Mary Hopkins, Ven Bob Jackson, and Canon Glyn Evans.

from St Barnabas Kensington. It has a BMO.

- St Ann's Tottenham is a charismatic evangelical parish with two plants, the Church@TheHut (Tiverton estate) and Church on The Farm (Broadwater Farm), both on estates with significant levels of deprivation in the London Borough of Haringey, in both of which there are black leaders.
- St Augustine's Queensgate is a mixture of Anglo-Catholic and charismatic evangelical traditions. It is one of the constituent churches of the parish of HTB and was planted in 2011.
- St Barnabas Kensington is a charismatic evangelical plant established in 1984, the first plant from HTB. It is a parish with a large church on a major route near Earls Court in Kensington.
- St James the Less is a central London parish in Pimlico. It has a charismatic evangelical tradition and was planted from St Michael's, Chester Square in 1991.
- St Paul's Hammersmith is a charismatic evangelical parish in the London Borough of Hammersmith in west London. It was planted from HTB in 2001.
- St Paul's Shadwell is a charismatic evangelical parish in the London borough of Tower Hamlets in the east end of London. It was planted in 2005 from HTB. We also visited two churches it planted in 2010 – All Hallows, Bow and St Peter's Bethnal Green, both of which have adapted their tradition to take account of local history and so exhibit some catholic and some charismatic evangelical styles.
- St Paul's Hounslow West is a charismatic evangelical church not far from Heathrow airport. Hounslow is a multicultural borough where more than a third of the Borough's 218,000 people come from minority ethnic communities. It has a BMO and was planted in 2012 from St Stephen's Twickenham. It is led by a woman.
- St Peter's Barge is a conservative evangelical church that meets in a converted Dutch barge moored in the docks at Canary Wharf in east London. It has a BMO and was planted as a partnership between SHB and St Ann's Limehouse in 2003.

#### *In the rest of England*

- Emmanuel Church Bicester is a charismatic evangelical parish (formerly of a liberal catholic

tradition) with its own new church building on a new housing estate. It is part of the Bicester Team Ministry in the Oxford Diocese. It was originally planted from St Aldates and St Ebbe's, Oxford in 2002.

- Exeter Network Church is a charismatic evangelical network of cells across the city of Exeter. It was planted from St Mary's Bryanston Square, London in 2005 and has a BMO. It is in the Exeter Diocese.
- Grange Park Church is a charismatic evangelical plant on Grange Park estate, a new estate of mixed housing just on the M1 near Northampton. It was planted from St Giles Northampton in 2002. It is an Anglican –Baptist Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP) and is in the Peterborough Diocese.
- Holy Trinity, Barnes is a parish in the Barnes Team Ministry, a charismatic evangelical plant in a liberal catholic team. It was planted from Holy Trinity Richmond in 2012. It is in the Southwark Diocese.
- St Francis & St Clare, Jennetts Park is a liberal Catholic plant into a new estate in the parish of Easthampstead, which planted it in 2011. It is in the Berkshire area of the Oxford Diocese.
- Oaks Skelmersdale is a network church on a 1960's urban estate in Lancashire. It was planted in 2004 from St John Burscough and is in the charismatic evangelical tradition. It is in the Liverpool Diocese.
- St Thomas Church Philadelphia, Sheffield is a network of missional communities across Sheffield. Its tradition is charismatic evangelical. It is an Anglican –Baptist partnership and was planted in 2003. It is in the Sheffield Diocese.
- St Catharine's Houghton is a rural village parish, planted from St Luke Thurnby in the nearest village in 2012, and is in the charismatic evangelical tradition. It is in the Leicester Diocese.
- St George's Deal is a charismatic evangelical parish with a network of missional communities in Deal, Kent. It has two co-leaders – a man and a woman. It is in the Canterbury Diocese.
- St Peter's Brighton is a parish within a parish in Brighton. It was planted by HTB in 2009. It is in the Diocese of Chichester.
- Springfield Church, Wallington is a network church, which has no buildings of its own in Sutton, south London in Southwark diocese. Its status is as an

extra parochial place and was planted from the local parish in 1992.

- Tas Valley Cell Church is part of the Tas Valley Team Ministry in rural Norfolk in the Diocese of Norwich. It sits alongside several village parishes in the team and was started by the present Team Rector in 2003. The Team Rector is a woman.
- Dundonald Church meets in converted print works in Raynes Park in south London. Its status is a church under the Proprietary chapel of Emmanuel Wimbledon and was started in 1990. It has planted many churches, which form the Co-Mission network.<sup>7</sup> It is in the Diocese of Southwark.
- Warfield is a parish just outside Bracknell in Berkshire in the Diocese of Oxford. It has been planting a range of churches from 1995 across Warfield and in Bracknell some of which it has closed. It is in a charismatic evangelical tradition.

### 2.3.3 The Material

A central source of data was interviews and conversations, listening to stories and the way people told them. We saw considerable numbers of people in formal interviews. These interviews were arranged for us by the leader(s) or their delegate at our request after we had specified the kinds of people we would like to interview. Most of these interviews were one to one but some ranged from groups of two or three to a group in a vicarage sitting room of a dozen or more. Other conversations and interviews happened during and around events that we visited, either with people that the local leaders encouraged in our direction or those with whom we engaged opportunistically. We were invited to meals with a consciously or unconsciously created mixture of invited guests. This material provided rich, oral and narrative accounts of life in these faith communities.

We also interviewed a range of other people to give us a fuller picture of the current landscape of church planting. These included recognised experts, trainers and national and diocesan officers

<sup>7</sup> Co-Mission is a network of conservative evangelical plants in London, originating from Dundonald Church in Raynes Park. At the time of writing they had 18 plants, 10 in Southwark Diocese, 7 in London Diocese and 1 in Guildford Diocese. Their Senior Pastor is Revd Richard Coekin. See [co-mission.org.uk](http://co-mission.org.uk).

in the area of church planting as well as leaders of major church planting churches such as Holy Trinity Brompton, St Helen's Bishopsgate and St Thomas Church Philadelphia Sheffield. Some of these we sought out for their complementary insights. Others asked to speak to us or were recommended by earlier interviewees. In order to explore how accurate the plants' self-perceptions were, we undertook a number of interviews with people from surrounding parishes, area/rural deans and people who held strongly opposing views to the church planting approach. We attended the Bishop of London's senior staff meeting on three occasions and undertook interviews with some bishops and archdeacons and diocesan officers whose area of work impacted on church planting.

Here is the list of interviews of senior church leaders, officers and experts from May 2012 – October 2013.

- The Bishop of London's Senior Staff meeting.
- Staff at London Diocesan Fund including
  - » the Diocesan Secretary
  - » the Diocesan Advisory Committee Secretary
  - » the Pastoral Measures Officer
  - » the Head of Finance and Operations
  - » the Head of Property.
- Leaders and Officers in London with a particular brief for church planting including
  - » the Bishop of Willesden
  - » the Bishop of Stepney and the Archdeacon of Hackney
  - » the Bishop of Kensington
  - » the Archdeacon of Hampstead
  - » Diocesan Advisors on Church Planting (Revd Ric Thorpe) and on Missional Communities (Revd Annie Kirke)
  - » the Vicar and church planting leaders at Holy Trinity, Brompton
  - » the Church Manager (Brian O'Donoghue) at St Helen's Bishopsgate and Revd Jeremy Hobson, leader of the SHB plant, Trinity Islington
  - » The Bishop of Croydon
- The Bishop of Dorchester's church planting group
- Revd Gillean Craig, Vicar of St Mary Abbotts
- Ven Bob Jackson
- Revd Dr Michael Moynagh

- Revd Bob and Mary Hopkins
- Revd Sally Gaze
- Fr Damian Feeney
- Revd Richard Coekin
- Revd Dr Graham Tomlin
- Dr Stuart Murray Williams
- Area Deans of Tower Hamlets, Kensington and Ealing
- Revd Ian Dyble, Vicar of St Thomas, Norwich
- Revd Christopher Landau, church placement student at St Augustine's Queensgate

Events we attended included: services of worship, staff meetings, youth groups, Messy Church, Alpha courses, a great variety of small groups, Open the Book, homeless and women's projects, toddler groups, children's church and after school clubs.

Visiting each plant meant that we had an opportunity to see and experience the buildings that were being used and how they were being developed and exploited. We were able to observe the visual and behavioural symbolism of these church plants. We asked for as much documentary evidence as they could provide as well as studying the church plant websites. The range and quality of documentation, statistical records, organisational paperwork and websites varied considerably.

#### **2.3.4 The Approach and Process of the Visits**

Once the list of plants had been finalised, the researcher emailed the leader directly or via their website contacts page. In the Diocese of London, this followed emails from the Diocesan Secretary to introduce us and forewarn the plants. The researcher's initial email explained briefly what the research envisaged and pointed them to the Church Commissioners' Church Growth website and to the OxCEPT website. If they responded, the researcher replied with a brief two-page document, devised by the researchers, entitled 'Introduction to Church/Congregational Plant Visits as part of the Church Commissioners' Church Growth Research.'<sup>8</sup> This provided details of our questions, the range of people it would be helpful to talk to, events it would be good to attend and documents it would be useful to have. This was followed by a phone conversation to explain further and to negotiate

the visits. Sometimes it was necessary to arrange accommodation for visits that lasted over several days. Most visits were done on a day-by-day basis. Multiple day visits were mostly split into separate rather than consecutive days to accommodate, for example, visits to activities or people during the week and involvement in Sunday services and events. The two researchers visited St Barnabas, Kensington together to ensure a common approach to the visits.

In the Diocese of London, when we had difficulty in accessing certain plants, area bishops sent encouraging emails, which resulted in helpful responses. Some first responses across both halves of the sample were caution and wariness, which diminished when the researchers talked about the purpose and style of the proposed visits. One impression we gained at this stage was that planters are very busy as it was difficult to contact and get responses from certain plant leaders. Most people were helpful, welcoming and courteous.

It was made clear to those being interviewed that they would see anything that referred identifiably to their person or plant and would be able to veto its inclusion in the final report. The researchers recorded what people said and their observations by taking notes during the visits. Mostly, the leaders of the plants offered warm hospitality, made available programmes of events and set up useful interviews for us. They also allowed us to check back with them for clarification and further exploration of what they had heard. Most leaders were also keen that the researchers met and talked with those who might have a negative view of the church plant, if such existed, in order to offer a fair and rounded picture.

At most of the plants we visited the welcome was warm, practical and helpful and many appeared to enjoy the opportunity to articulate and reflect on their journey and life in their faith community. We discovered a large variety of missiological and ecclesiological understandings, church planting methods, models, assumptions and approaches to their contexts. This means that, even within such a modest sample, any general conclusions need to be treated cautiously. Nomenclature and language, for example, are complex issues. Some people sit happily with the commonly used church

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix 1 for this document (pg.72).

planting terms. Others either understood the terms differently or were much happier not using the church planting language at all. In this report we have called the entities we visited *plants* and left the debate on typology to other researchers in this overall project.

The interviews took for their standard format the questions and topics as laid out in the document, 'Introduction to Church/Congregational Plant Visits as part of the Church Commissioners' Church Growth Research', which we had sent to the leaders:

#### a. Plants as part of the wider church

- What help and support do church/congregational plants need from the diocese? What helps and what gets in the way?
- What about money and buildings at the start and in the longer term?
- What about the impact on churches round about?

#### b. Plants and Mission

- How have you gone about church/congregational planting and why?
- What about leadership and how you make decisions?
- What are the definitions of success? Do they include numbers of members, those attending, the quality of discipleship, mission and social justice? Who define(s) the definitions, how and why? Are they held in common?
- If numbers are growing, where are those new people coming from – unchurched, dechurched, lapsed, from another church, etc.?
- Would your approach work elsewhere?

#### c. Plants and their Context

- Do plants reflect their setting? How does yours? Is there any transformative impact on the area?
- What about the longer term? Has your approach changed? What about financial viability, giving, turnover and numerical decline?
- What do plants become over time? When do they, or will they ever, stop being plants?

We also described the types of documents that would be helpful to our research. Not every plant was able to provide these. The documents we suggested were:

- Membership, electoral role, attendance statistics over the life of the plant
- Financial reports over the life of the plant
- Planning documents such as mission action plans, strategy documents, business plans, consultation documents
- Policies around growth, discipleship, leadership, community action
- Publicity literature and websites

In the interviews with national and diocesan experts and senior leaders, the same framework of topics was used but adapted appropriately for the role of the interviewee. We have also received a number of policy documents and studies from this group.

## 2.4 Analysis of the Material

During the research period we met three times with a reference group<sup>9</sup> set up to monitor our findings, as well as presenting three interim reports to a sub-committee of the Church Commissioners. We met members of the other research strands on two occasions to report back and compare findings.

The visits and interviews produced a series of documents. The documents included notes of interviews with people in plants and the range of senior church leaders, officers and planting experts described above as well as descriptions of the activities and events we witnessed in the plants. Other documents included papers on planting and diocesan policies. We also obtained membership, attendance and financial statistics on many of the plants. However, it was difficult to make comparisons and analyses over the whole set of plants as the information we gathered was of variable quality. Comparisons were also rare because we chose to look at plants that varied widely in size and age.

<sup>9</sup> This Reference Group consisted of: Ann Morisy, Mr Jonny Baker, Dr Sarah Dunlop, Revd Dr Tim Naish, Rt Revd Colin Fletcher. We thank them for their time, wisdom, expertise and advice.

We used a software programme called *Dedoose*, which provides online analytical capability for mixed-methods research.<sup>10</sup> This data was analysed into codes and descriptors around the themes we judged to be significant from our visits. This leads to the grouping of themes in the next sections where we discussed what we found. Our approach has been to allow those whom we interviewed and met to speak in the report.

So the discussion is made up largely of direct and indirect quotations from what people told us. The coded data was made available to the Church Commissioners under the conditions of confidentiality agreed with the participants.

The report was then given to a group of readers for their evaluation and comment.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See <http://app.dedoose.com/>

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<sup>11</sup> Our readers were: Ann Morisy, Mr Jonny Baker, Dr Sarah Dunlop, Revd Dr Tim Naish, + Colin Fletcher, Revd Ric Thorpe, Professor Pete Ward, Professor Martyn Percy, Revd Angus Ritchie, Dr Angus Crichton, Fr Damian Feeney. We thank them for their time and insights.

# 3. Church Plants: Meeting Places

## 3.1 Introduction

We discovered that church plants meet in a range of venues and locations, dependent on finance available, context and the missiological approach to buildings by the leadership team within that particular context. We visited twenty-seven churches and of those one is a plant in another parish (Oaks in Skelmersdale). Twelve are parishes. Seven are or are awaiting BMOs, one of which (Exeter Network Church) became regularised from an illegal position and one (Oak Tree) moved from being an extra parochial place to a BMO. One is an LEP. One (Dundonald) is a plant from a proprietary chapel with many associated plants. Five are plants within parishes, including two Catholic plants and St Augustine Queensgate, which moved from a parish to a site or congregation within a multi-site parish. There is one extra parochial place (Springfield Church).

Buildings matter and can be an appropriate and strategic sign of God's presence in a community. One church plant built a new building, some use existing church buildings, and some do not meet in church buildings at all. For every church plant, meeting places were significant in terms of what it communicated and of how it facilitated ministry and outreach.

## 3.2 New Church Buildings

Emmanuel church in Bicester had been meeting in a church school for eleven years. The developers of a new housing estate allocated some land for a place of worship for which the CoE paid £1. They laid the foundations, held off for five years, during which time the money came in to build a new church building in the middle of the local shopping centre. The church members raised half the money required, project management was offered gratis by a church member and the building now belongs to the diocese. They believe that the building's presence, along with its café and professional barista, has raised the profile of the church in the community.

Oak Tree Acton had been meeting for twenty years before the diocese eventually sold a vicarage to free up some money to buy an old fire station which they have converted into a church building with very good facilities. Although the plant has

existed for twenty years, they feel they have only now found the right place to be. People can find them more easily as they are in the town centre and they believe the facilities enable them to be doing what they want to do in this context. The building belongs to the diocese.

## 3.3 Existing Church Buildings

St Peter's Brighton, a plant from Holy Trinity Brompton, spent considerable time and money restoring their church building to make it safe and suitable for a worship space. Their largest chunk of funding came from English Heritage, which allowed them to then approach other Trusts for funding. The Church Renewal Trust owns the church building, which they have on a 125-year lease. This is a body set up to facilitate the use of church buildings. It is sublet to St Peter's, which is responsible for all costs. The patrons of the parish are the Bishop and the Vicar of HTB. The church building houses their offices and is used for worship, meals for homeless people, occasional night shelters and other activities. They do not limit their ministries to work within the church building. They are aware that there are many young people who are totally unchurched and that the church 'has no profile in their lives.'

St Paul's Hammersmith, a plant from HTB, is a large church building, recently refurbished with a big glass atrium with a café and several meeting rooms, which can be let out commercially. They explained that they had a vision for this church centre but had underestimated the drain of energy in repairing the church and building the centre. They feel that now the refurbishment is complete, they can grow again. The building is used as a hub for the many social transformation ministries that take place from there.

St Ann's Tottenham has three centres, one of which, the Church on the Farm, is a portakabin in the middle of a housing estate, which the church rents for £700 per month. This is a smallish, unpretentious building, which is comfortable for the local people on the estate. Another centre is Church@theHut, a two storey building on the Tiverton estate, next to the primary school. This church used to meet in a pub on Sundays but this was not a good venue for Muslims or for some Africans. The Hut also offers the opportunity to



have midweek involvement. They funded some of it themselves with additional funding from the Government's 'New Deal for Communities' scheme and from Church Urban Fund.

St Paul's Shadwell, a plant from HTB, restored their church building to a good condition and made it an attractive space. It is a parish of huge contrasts with 45% professional, 45% Bangladeshi Muslim and 10% other (including working class East Enders). Most of the congregation were white professionals. The Bishop's mandate on planting was to reach the professional groups specifically, at which other churches locally had been less successful. Hence, although planted into one of the poorest areas in the country, they have mainly attracted those in the wealthier area of the parish.

Dundonald church is based in an old factory near Raynes Park Station, SW London. They claim to plant into liberal parishes. They claim to have no diocesan support and state that the most useful diocesan support would be buildings. They believe it is a tragedy that the diocese sold St Philip Queenstown Rd to the Ethiopian Orthodox, as it was the nearest church to the Battersea Power Station and could have been at the centre of the new developments there. Dundonald churches have also used other venues such as *The Slug and Lettuce* and *David Lloyd Sports Centre* for meetings.

Kings Cross church, a plant from HTB, initially had no church building and now meets in a church owned by an Ethiopian church. They have the use of nearby York House, offered to them rent free, for further meeting and office space. However, they believe that creates some dependency so they 'invest in things that can come with us rather than the building.'

St Barnabas Kensington, a plant from HTB, believes that visibility is a problem for them as they estimate that only 300 people walk past their church building on a daily basis. Moreover, they are in an area with a lot of apartments only occupied for part of the year.

All Hallows Bow came to an existing church building with a small team. They have linked up with the

Eden team whose focus is on young people.<sup>12</sup> The church leaders and Eden team all live on the local estate and they ask volunteers to commit for four to five years. They have been influenced by the new monastic approach and the idea of going to 'abandoned places of Empire.'

The Tas Valley Team Ministry has seven medieval church buildings for six parish-based congregations. The Tas Valley Cell Church operates as a seventh church within the Team and will occasionally use one or other of the buildings for "celebrations" when all cells come together for worship or when members wish to be baptised or confirmed. However, regular cell meetings are held in people's homes or sometimes in a public space such as a pub. These kinds of venues were seen as more comfortable and more suitable for a church whose primary identity is found in the small group. A small minority of members who had come to faith through cell, found church buildings off-putting and the existence of a church without a building had enabled them to discover faith afresh or for the first time. Being without a permanent base was seen as offering a positive and complementary ministry to the small parish churches, allowing for greater flexibility and releasing funds for ministry.

Grace Church Hackney, a plant from St Helen's Bishopsgate meets in the parish church building of St Anne's Hoxton. It is an example of a number of SHB plants which are not given church buildings by the diocese and so have to rent other premises.

The Good Shepherd Tottenham is an example of the use of an existing church hall in the parish to plant a new congregation. This demonstrates the exploitation of existing resources for mission.

Warfield church's plants meet in a variety of community buildings that they rent. These venues are in their own parish as well as other

<sup>12</sup> Eden teams are part of the Eden Network, a series of church-linked youth and community projects located in some of Britain's most deprived neighbourhoods. They work in twenty-five locations across England. Their focus is on neighbourhoods that feature as being in the bottom 10% according to deprivation and child poverty data. See eden-network.org.

parishes. Currently this seems to be an amicable arrangement.

However, not all church plants meet in church buildings. Indeed, some prefer not to usually either for financial or missional reasons.

### 3.4 Other Meeting Spaces

St Peter's Barge, a plant from SHB, is housed on a Dutch barge on the West India Quay of Canary Wharf. The barge has been refurbished and provides a flexible space for around 100 people. Organisationally they are a Trust and charity that bought and refurbished the barge without any financial help from the diocese. They have been self-sufficient from the day they started. They were set up in the first place in 2003 to reach the Canary Wharf workers through a midweek lunchtime ministry. In 2004 they also started a Sunday church to reach young professionals living in the area.

Springfield Church describes itself as a non-geographical church that meets in two venues for Sunday worship – one in a church at Roundshaw and the other at Wallington Girls High School. They also use a variety of other community buildings for their other activities. A former churchwarden is convinced that it is a good idea not to meet in a church building. He thinks people come because it is not 'off-putting' although he admits that this way of running church requires many volunteers. They eventually achieved extra parochial place status.

Exeter Network Church started in Exeter as an independent charity without the Bishop's permission eight years ago. They meet on Sundays for worship in a school hall and have around twenty missional communities that meet regularly in homes, cafés and other community contexts. They see the networks as the heart of what they do. They aim to be apostolic and evangelistic – out in the community – 'more human in church and more Christian in the world.' They emphasise being on a journey, being inclusive and making disciples and focus on transformation of people and of the city. Initially they had difficulties with the diocese but in 2009 they became a BMO and now have a regular Bishop's visitor.

St Thomas Church Philadelphia, Sheffield meets in a large warehouse on Sundays and has around sixty missional communities that meet regularly in a range of local contexts. This is an Anglican, Baptist and Free Church mix and so is a unique combination of ecclesiologies and approach. They see this as a prophetic sign of unity.

St George's Deal meets in a nicely appointed Anglican church on Sundays for worship and also has a number of missional communities. While each of these churches encourages the missional communities to join in for Sunday worship, it is not required and some of the missional communities do not as it is not deemed appropriate. Missional communities meet in a variety of locations – homes, cafés, pubs, community centres, and parks. They see themselves as the church. 'Doing games in the park is church; it is just not what we are used to.'

Grange Park Church, Northampton is another Church of England/Baptist blend which believes it was a good decision not to have a church building. Sunday worship is in the local Community Centre. They started by meeting in the conservatory of the local Baptist minister's house and it slowly grew as they got to know their local context and decided to try to reach young families. They acquired what they call the Kairos Centre, the building that was supposed to have become the library, on a 99-year sub-lease from South Northamptonshire Council, raising £400,000 for the conversion. Although this is now their office base, it is explicitly not a church but has various rooms for use and hire, a counselling room, a room that is set up as a place for prayer and reflection and a café, which is open to the general public most days.

Oaks in Skelmersdale meets at Oak House on Tanhouse estate, a house that the church has bought as church and offices. It is a tastefully furnished, ex council house, used for drop in, a foodbank and the Sunday service as well as housing church offices upstairs. The church was planted ten years ago and they started with cell church. They have tried lots of experiments and try to listen to God and move 'into spaces God creates.' This has been a neglected area, had lots of money and

projects thrown at it but these stay only three years. 'We need to be here to stay. It takes longer than you think.' The vicar and his wife moved onto the estate five years ago to be in the context. He claims that it is important to be incarnational and that you cannot bring your own culture. 'We don't know yet how to do church in this culture.' Intriguingly, they are about to create a sacred space called 'The Upper Room' in Oak House. The catalyst for this is that people have nowhere to grieve in Skelmersdale as there is no local cemetery or crematorium and local people on the estate wanted something more than a living room type space which is where they currently worship in Oak House.

### 3.5 Concluding Thoughts

All of these examples demonstrate time, effort, entrepreneurial approaches and volunteerism to make the buildings or meeting venues work for each context. Sometimes it requires specialist expertise. Dioceses can help enormously by being sympathetic to such entrepreneurialism, where appropriate, and making resources available if possible. There is a perception that there is unevenness in funds made available. (SHB, Tas Valley) It may also require courage and a creative approach if old church buildings are becoming a burden and finances are just not there to restore them.

There is a contrast here between those who wish to meet in a building in a local (normally parish) context and those who wish to have more of a network approach such as the missional communities. It may be that missional communities work better in poorer areas initially as they are less resource heavy to set up and meet in locations that are seemingly more contextual. It was noticeable that large Anglican church buildings next to poorer housing estates such as St Paul's Hammersmith, St Paul's Shadwell, King's Cross church did not seem to be attracting people to Sunday worship from those estates.

Meeting spaces are important. They will reflect something of the nature of the church plant and its context. Some church plants have managed to think strategically about this and planned ahead (e.g. St Peter's Brighton, St Francis and St Clare, Jennetts Park). Some have been more opportunistic (e.g. Bicester where the land was made available to them for £1, Grange Park, Oak Tree Acton) some wish to start with no church building of their own (e.g. ENC, Tas Valley) but may end up using another facility for worship. Then there are others who would like their own church building such as SHB plants. Each approach communicates something about the nature of the church plant, the people who attend and their perceptions of the character of God.

# 4. Church Planting Models:

## 4.1 Introduction

Models are constructions; they are not mirrors of reality. It is important to take them seriously but not literally. Nothing in real life is quite like a model but models can give a particular emphasis so that one can notice and interpret particular aspects of reality and experience. All models are probably inadequate and will need to be supplemented by others. For the sake of clarity, we have tried to categorise a complex picture so the following categories are not entirely clean or discrete – there are overlaps and blurred boundaries between all of them.

## 4.2 Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB) Model

The classic HTB model has been to take a team of people into a small or nearly defunct congregation and revive it. Their most recent brochure entitled *Church Planting: A Strategy for Growth*, explains that ‘since 1985, HTB has planted teams of 10-200 people into a wide variety of churches throughout London and overseas.’

The first church plant in London was with St Barnabas Kensington in 1985 when one hundred people came from HTB to join the church. The model was clearly explained to us by Rebecca Stewart, Chief Operating Officer of HTB. They need three things: an invitation from the Bishop, a CoE church building into which to send their team and an area where there is a potential congregation. Rebecca explained that this is an ‘attractional market led model.’ HTB will not plant close to another ‘thriving church’ as they are not interested in transfer growth. They send a team of around fifty people and seed capital of around £50,000. The model has been modified slightly but still works along similar lines as Revd Miles Toulmin from HTB explained to us:

- 1) When a curate is planning to plant, he or she will announce it to the congregation and begin to recruit a fledgling congregation. We say no more than 50 should go. Sometimes it is 50 people, sometimes it is less. For example, when Archie Coates went to Brighton he took 50, when Jon March went to St Luke’s Kentish Town he took 30, when Jago Wynn went to Holy Trinity Clapham (as a ‘graft’, not a plant) he took 50. The diocese do raise a good point though, that we are increasingly sending teams out that

are more regularly around the 30 mark. Much fewer than this is tricky though and makes the plant much slower to get going.

- 2) Our plants continue to take a core team of five, however, they need not necessarily be all full time nor paid. Usually it is a mixture of full and part-time, paid and volunteer. As the plant grows, these positions are then more likely to become full time or paid over time.
- 3) We continue to give the plants £50k seed money. We have just done one to St Sepulchre’s in the city, with Revd David Ingall leading it. He has been given the seed money as usual. The way we do it is the £50k is ring-fenced within our bank account and then the plant can draw the money down as and when they need to spend it, which is usually pretty quickly! (Email from Revd Miles Toulmin, 30.08.2013)

Mr Toulmin believes that this model works well in certain contexts but that it needs to be tweaked for suburban or poorer areas. However, he believes that the model is transferable and that the general principles can be applied. HTB instructs their church plants to ‘honour the past, navigate change for the present and build for the future.’ They believe that speed is important and that it is helpful to see ‘early wins.’ They claim that they will plant into anywhere as they are committed to ‘the re-evangelisation of the country and the transformation of society.’ However, two London archdeacons reported that they could not attract any planters for two churches in poorer areas. HTB believes church planting is the most effective form of growing as the sending church soon replaces those it has lost and that all their church plants are planted with the DNA to carry on planting. This is evidenced by All Hallows Bow, Oak Tree Acton and St Peter’s Bethnal Green. This was reinforced by the Bishop of Croydon who stated that one of the aims of church planting is the redistribution of resources. HTB is convinced that their model is transferable anywhere in the country and said it was being tried elsewhere.

HTB claims to have church planting as part of its DNA. This can be seen both positively and negatively. Revd Richard Coekin from the Co-Mission Network observes, ‘the numbers in Co-Mission churches are quite small. If you implant large numbers - that determines the culture of the church

...It's only when you start from scratch that it starts new. The models of ministry come with you.' Revd John Wood of St Ann's Tottenham offers a different perspective in his comments on the DNA of larger churches,

However the problem of large churches 'going small' in mission and outreach is that their methodological DNA often goes with them. This may have clear and obvious implications for a new plant's services (lengthy, expository preaching, extended times of worship in a particular musical style, an absence of liturgical form), evangelism (largely based on 'branded' small group discussion material) and social engagement (transplanted models of social action being default mechanisms for appropriate and sustained community engagement).<sup>13</sup>

In contrast to this, Revd Nicky Gumbel gave the example of St Peter's Brighton, which he claimed was more like a marriage between HTB and St Peter's Brighton who then produced a new baby, which looks like its parent but is clearly not the parent. It may be that a challenge for this model is to allow the character of the local context to flourish and not be dominated by the genes of the incoming community. An Area Dean commented that second generation HTB plants are much more local and contextual. HTB encourage their plants to become independent while retaining 'bonds of affection.'

HTB has planted outside its own evangelical tradition. St Augustine Queensgate is historically an Anglo-Catholic church, which is now part of the HTB parish. HTB has respected the tradition of the morning service and one parishioner who had been there since 2005 said, 'HTB has been wonderful – they preach love and care. They have respected the tradition here, and are very inclusive. I can't speak highly enough of HTB.' The evening service follows the HTB worship style.

HTB church plants may look big, powerful and successful with large congregations, Alpha courses and social transformation ministries. However, we were told by one large church that 'everything

always feels fragile'. The classic HTB model requires a critical mass and a certain level of resources. The model has been challenged and critiqued as being expensive, inflexible and of a certain demographic. One interviewee said HTB is a 'franchise, young, white, educated, beautiful. The HTB model won't reach most of London.' Another said, 'you only need to look at leadership to see they are not contextual for London i.e. how many women and ethnic leaders do they have?' Another referred to it as 'the Empire model' using inherited models of church that are no longer appropriate. He asserts that HTB is mainly reaching lapsed or de-churched middle and upper middle class people and that this cannot be the main approach to reach a city as multi-cultural and diverse as London effectively. He believes that HTB is still following an inherited model of church that is not effective for our current context. Another interviewee commented that the theology at the centre of HTB is less contextual than what is happening around the edges and that a learning posture could be more readily expressed.

HTB planters follow a rough guide developed by Revd Ric Thorpe from demographics and experience. He divides London into three zones - city centre, inner city and suburbs. The city centre is characterised by fewer inhabitants and tends to have either small or large well-resourced attractional churches attracting people citywide. The inner city is populated by young professionals, urban poor and immigrants. Churches here tend to be small to medium size and attract locals. Missional communities work well in this context. The middle classes and families live in the third zone, the suburbs. Churches here are attractional, well-resourced and of all sizes. According to this model, city centre churches can plant effectively into the inner city and into other cities; the inner city can plant into the inner city and the suburbs into other suburbs. Clearly, there are exceptions but this has been the pattern in Ric Thorpe's experience.

A common theme among HTB church plants we visited is that the congregation rolls over every 3 years. We were told that this is because, as young families expand, they cannot afford the housing in London so they move further out. Despite this turnover, the congregation numbers remain steady. Revd Dr Graham Tomlin of St Mellitus questioned

13 Revd John Wood, 'Inner Urban Reflections on the 2009 London Diocesan Church Planting Congress.'

whether the model is actually church planting or rather church partnerships. If a definition of a church plant is to form a new Christian community where one did not exist before, then partnership rather than planting language may be more useful for this model.

There is evidence that the HTB model is evolving. St Peter's Brighton is an example of this. HTB provided excellent support for St Peter's Brighton. They managed the payroll for just over a year as well as offering IT support, advice, and contract templates. This meant that staff at St Peter's did not have to do everything from day one. St Peter's believe that paid staff should be minimal because paid staff are 'very expensive and what church can afford that? Secondly, it encourages people to become consumers.' A key value for them is that the church's work is done by volunteers. The HTB approach to their plants is to release them and to willingly share resources when appropriate. HTB has an annual weeklong event called Focus to which all their churches are invited. This serves as a bonding and networking event at which HTB members can feel connected.

HTB has also sent a church planter to Norwich, at the invitation of the Bishop. Again the model has evolved, as the only person to be sent was the vicar along with £50,000, which he has used to employ an associate and a worship leader. He lives in the vicarage and the diocese released the curate's house for the associate leader. Since the vicar's licencing in March, income has increased five-fold, congregation attendance has gone from thirty at three services to nearly three hundred across five services and they are now one of only nine benefices in the diocese that are paying their parish share. They are already involved in a special needs school and are keen to be involved with prison ministries. They intend to do this under the auspices of HTB's William Wilberforce Trust. The vicar explained that this was not a church plant but rather a church partnership. He firmly believes that the HTB model can work anywhere in the country.

Bishop Graham Cray believes that the replication of models for our current society is inappropriate. He writes, 'the complexity of contemporary society makes it even more important to recognise the

distinctiveness of each local context. It also makes the cloning of models, which work elsewhere, the least appropriate contemporary church planting strategy. One size cannot fit all.'<sup>14</sup>

The second (and third) generation plants are also different in form. All Hallows Bow (AHB) has significantly reshaped the HTB model. They refer to their approach as 'more of a replant.' The numbers were equal between the team and the people already here – about nine of each. It was planted from St Paul's Shadwell, which has been very supportive and pays the common fund and stipend. It is a small team of friends who are building slowly and are working tentatively with locals. Revd Ric Thorpe from St Paul's Shadwell line-manages Revd Cris Rogers, the vicar of All Hallows Bow, and the AHB staff attend St Paul's Shadwell staff meetings. If it had been just the local staff team of four, they believe that it probably would not have succeeded. They pay tribute to the Eden Team in the parish, which has been crucial to their success, as they are some of their most capable and committed church members. The link is really good and benefits those who are trying to be gathered church in a local parish particularly for the Lincoln estate. Cris and the team have been influenced by new monasticism – particularly the ideas of geographical proximity and retreating to 'abandoned places of empire.' They have no funds to pay people but they have a big rectory with space where they house ordinands and interns, some of whom are considering ordination.

### 4.3 Minster Model

In a minster model, a central church provides collegial support to a team of church leaders based in that church or in attached churches over a geographical area. Seeing the group of churches and leaders as a dispersed team, the centre offers resources, oversight, training, gatherings and companionship in order to encourage missional activity appropriate to that area. Revd John Wood claims that they operate a sort of minster model out of St Ann's Tottenham. There are three centres – one that is a church, one in a portakabin on an

<sup>14</sup> <http://themissionalnetwork.com/index.php/on-not-knowing-the-end-at-the-beginning>, accessed 26.10.2013.

estate and one that meets in a two-storey building. His vision is for a low cost, incarnational model that reaches people on the estates and remains local. He believes this is an effective model as it is local and self-supporting. Everybody walks to church. The idea is 'to make church as local as possible.' They have had a missionary from the London City Mission (LCM) working with them and paid for by LCM. His team's philosophy is to grow organically from among the local people rather than to import a group of people. The most important feature of the way they work is relational and their evangelistic work follows on from that. Their detached youth work also operates with this ethos. They note that 'issues of leadership and funding for poorer urban deprived areas are complicated.' They suggest that money could be offered from wealthier churches but it has to be based on being used in a relational way to support relational, community-based work.

A staff member believes that more and more curates are going to churches which have money rather than going to churches which are good places to train – he claims that HTB offer to pay curates off the Common Fund so they therefore attract more curates. Revd John Wood challenges resource-rich churches 'to reassess the level of external, sent resources required to change and grow a local situation in a healthy and sustainable way'. He also believes that leadership training is needed which focuses more on 'ministerial competencies' and character and less on methodology and processes.

#### **4.4 St Helen's Bishopsgate (SHB) Model**

St Helen's Bishopsgate (SHB) has a similar approach to HTB as they send a leader (often a curate) and around fifty people after months of preparation and planning. They train and equip people to deal with turnover and change. One of their straplines is 'reach, build, send.' Once a church is planted, SHB will cover any financial shortfall on a decreasing basis over three years so the plant will become self-supporting. However, this is flexible depending on the area and other levels of partnership funding. For the leadership of each plant SHB is available and supportive. They can provide mentoring and help with setting up the church council, treasurer, and other posts. SHB claims that what they would like from the diocese is a level playing field. They

say that their congregations expect the diocesan leadership not to ring fence churches for one tradition where the tradition has not been effective.

Grace Church Hackney describes itself as a network church with a sense of place.

They are working to attract dechurched and those with no experience of church. They are a community with an arty, creative flavour. They work locally with organisations – both Christian and not and many of those involved are local. In terms of finance, they are completely self-supporting. In the first three years SHB paid the rent on the house and their New York supporting church paid for a part-time music minister three years. They also pay rent for diocesan houses. Grace Church Hackney Trust pays the pension and stipend. They express a sense of vulnerability around finances. They have planted another church, St Barnabas, and say they are open to a range of models.

The establishment of St Peter's Barge provided a permanent space in which an already existing lunchtime ministry to the Canary Wharf workers could be based and grow. It also saw the planting of a Sunday church with a core group of about thirty coming from SHB to reach young professionals in the area. They have been self-sufficient from day one. They have no support from the diocese but have the blessing of a well off demographic. The diocese pays for nothing. They pay, house and resource the four staff themselves. Organisationally they are a charity.

The Barge was bought by the Trust with loans from the Great St Helen's Trust and others – now mostly paid back. They have just got a BMO. They pay their direct costs plus a little more to the diocese. They are a kind a hybrid. The Trustees, not the diocese, own the plant. The Trustees include the Rectors of St Anne's Limehouse and SHB and the Vicar of Emmanuel, Wimbledon. They may, at some point, look to plant into areas where some of their congregation live e.g. Woolwich and Charlton.

One of our interviewees told us that SHB plants into new areas while HTB plants into existing churches. We were also told that SHB tend to be more separatist.

SHB has an annual Summer School of Bible teaching to help people grow, be encouraged and have a holiday. Again, this is a good way for people to remain connected with the ethos and approach of SHB churches.

#### 4.5 Co-Mission

Revd Richard Coekin founded Co-Mission as a network in 2005. They have nineteen church plants, many of which are serviced by Co-Mission's apprentice-training scheme – the 9:38 network. They produce networks and, within that, clusters so that the poorer churches can be supported by ones with more resources. Their planting model is based on lay leadership with mature families. The plant group consists of around twenty-five adults with up to twenty children. Growth can be slow at first. The sending church normally does not have a problem refilling quickly. Co-Mission is a relation-based network of people who trust each other and share the same theology – both Free Church and Anglican. The numbers in Co-Mission churches are quite small. As has already been mentioned, their approach is that, if you implant large numbers, that determines the culture of the church. They affirm that it is only when you start from scratch that something genuinely new can start.

Many of their leaders are young, men in their mid twenties, so they attract young congregations. They believe that in time Co-Mission plants will have a healthy spread of ages. They have a weekend in June each year called Revive for the entire network. They are likely to get about 900 attending this year (2013). They have what they call the 'Antioch Plan', to put thirty to forty plants across London. They put in young trainee male ministers –

#### 4.6 Network Churches/Missional Communities (MCs) Model

We found missional communities in both network churches and parish churches. St Thomas Church Philadelphia, Sheffield has forty-eight missional communities involving around six hundred adults as well as children. This is their preferred approach to mission and discipleship. They consider that all their MCs are church plants operating with the church's values of 'freedom to fail and have a go.' MCs mean people will gather around a mission vision and are committed to discipleship. MCs

are either neighbourhood or network and they allow for flexibility. They may have a limited life span so some will come and go. Members may be part of the Sunday worship of the larger church or they may not. In a twelve-month period, sixty people came to Christ and were being discipled in MCs. This was their most successful figure in the last six years. Some examples of MCs are: one modelled around a monastic rhythm, one based in a local street focussing on neighbours, one in a poorer estate where the MC leaders lived and led worship in their home. Both these last two had taken ten and seven years respectively to begin to develop any substantial relationships. The church has an advisor who resources MCs and provides nurture and support for the MC leaders. There is a long established programme of coaching and mentoring for the MC leaders. They are well organised and strategic. They believe that MCs are most effective when they partner with a ministry and have an outward focus. They believe in high accountability and low control combined with a readiness to experiment and to give it time. There is an assumption of change, accountability, and heightened expectations along with a lightweight, low maintenance approach. According to Revd Bob and Mary Hopkins, this means 'a complete culture change.'

St Thomas Church Philadelphia, Sheffield also hosts 3DM ministries. This runs gatherings of Learning Communities for participating churches. They learn how to build a discipleship culture, how to raise up leaders and how to launch MCs. They had quite a well-organised and sophisticated system of supervision and mentoring. St George's Deal has been a part of this programme and has found it very helpful as it gave them time and space to reflect.

Exeter Network Church began as an independent charity in 2005 and became a BMO in 2009. They see the networks as the heart of what they do. They aim to be apostolic and evangelistic – out in the community – 'more human in church and more Christian in the world.' They emphasise being on a journey, being inclusive and focus on transformation of people and of the city. They have seven paid staff, a self-financing curate and the church pays the vicar's pension and the mortgage on the vicar's house. They have two Sunday gatherings



at a local school. Once per term they have Edge Sunday where they have no service but go out into community and serve. They claim to have become more diverse socio-economically over the seven years. Their orientation is outwards looking. People are driven by community transformation. The recent report by the Church Visitor, the former Bishop of Crediton, commented on their model:

No network is regarded as permanent and all contain the possibility of inviting friends who are currently outside church experience. This way of shaping church life is not complicated and clearly many traditional models of church contain some of these elements already especially in rural areas where the church is at the centre of village life. However what is relevant in this model of church is the intentional use of networks that are easy to join, and growth is almost inevitable with few barriers in the way of someone journeying towards another network with a more spiritual focus. (Rt Revd Bob Evens, 16 July 2012)

St George's Deal is a hybrid of a parish church and a church with a number of MCs, which it is hoping to increase. The co-vicars state their vision as: 'how to transform a parish church into MC.' Indeed the church website now expresses it thus: 'We are a church made up of missional communities (clusters) meeting out in various places in Christ, growing together in love and growing out in witness to others.' The vicars believe that MCs are helping us to embody biblical values and to be a healthy Christian community. They assert that this is a big mind change on how church normally operates. They estimate that about 40% of the church is in MCs. They have instituted a MC Development Team. They also see the church building as mission because it is a presence in the community. They want to become a church of MCs resourced by a central church base so they are trying to reshape parish church.

Some believe that MCs are not church plants and Helen Askew from St George's Deal sent us this list:

Missional Communities and Church Plants - what is the difference?

- \* Unlike church plants, MCs remain integral to the sending church.
- \* Unlike church plants, the overall vision for the MCs

is set by the sending church. The specific outworking of that vision is of course the responsibility of the MC leadership team.

\* Unlike church plants, MCs are not independent, autonomous congregations; they are communities that belong to the overall family of the sending church.

\* Unlike church plants, MCs are highly mobile, able to uproot from the places where they meet at a moment's notice.

\* Unlike church plants, the leaders of MCs are not paid but entirely voluntary.

\* Unlike church plants, MCs are not financially independent but give their tithes to the sending church for them to re-distribute as appropriate.

\* Unlike church plants, MCs are called to reproduce new missional communities.

\* Unlike church plants, MCs do not necessarily meet every Sunday in the central church building.

\* Unlike church plants MCs are resourced primarily by the sending church, not by themselves.

Some in the church believe that MCs are 'the way forward for church growth' while others have mixed feelings about them saying they are 'hard work and exhausting for families.' There was also a feeling that there can be 'too much focus on mission and not enough on discipleship.'

We were told that MCs can have a natural life cycle or may evolve into a different forms or groups. This is not to be considered as failure.

Dr Stuart Murray Williams said 'Missional communities take their point of reference from the notion of missio Dei and tend to emphasise the significance of being organic, incarnational, long term, relatively powerless, and catalytic.' Here MCs are smaller groups, who live in a particular context to witness to God's presence. He believes that 'the church of future needs to be simpler and that MCs are way of the future.' This resonates with Revd Annie Kirke's (from the Diocese of London) understanding of MCs. She believes that when Missional Communities focus on being authentic followers of Jesus' teaching and co-partners in his commission to make disciples in every neighbourhood and across spheres and networks, then the reality of the kingdom is seen to be believed and 'newborns' of church emerge.

She also commented that for those wishing to embark on a MC approach in London, housing is a huge issue as it is so expensive to live there. Revd Angus Ritchie believes that the non-Anglican missional communities in his area (E1 Community Church and Stepney Salvation Army) are important signs of the kingdom – ‘The CoE’s commitment to being present and engaged in every neighbourhood is vital, if we are to be a church for the whole nation. We have much to learn from these communities about how to be a church of, as well as for, the poorest.’

#### 4.7 Anglo-Catholic and Catholic Models

The Anglo-Catholic approach to church planting is very different from the evangelical approaches we have surveyed so far. Moreover, we struggled to find many examples of Anglo-Catholic church plants.

Fr Damian Feeney explains that the community is formed around the sacraments, as these are the foundation and cornerstone. He believes there are few Anglo-Catholic church plants for the following reasons: a loss of confidence, a salami slicing of Anglo-Catholic constituency, an attractional model of mission, the sacramental can be seen as an obstacle to more creative thinking, a mistrust of innovation, a persecution complex as they see themselves on the edge of the institution, a model of ministry where the priest does everything and a network mentality which differs from evangelical models. He believes they have lost their impetus to go to poor and that they are weak in understanding context. He also believes that the prevailing culture militates against an Anglo-Catholic view of culture and society. The Anglo-Catholics need to learn to see church planting as mission. He explained that only one diocese has a Catholic missionary.

An Area Dean expressed the following opinion:

If we want to help Anglo Catholics, we might need new strategies. My idea is to join two Anglo Catholic congregations together with two priests and put them in one building. Church planting fits with a business type model of ministry, which suits evangelicals. Anglo Catholics are wedded to a pastoral model. The real issue is that evangelicals believe in the conversion of the individual person. Anglo Catholics have not embraced that methodology. They are into getting people in round the table and building community. They have no

understanding of salvation in the same way as evangelicals and its direct lead into mission.

Whilst the model of mission may be different in different traditions, it is worth emphasising that views of salvation are simply expressed differently, and that salvation in a Catholic understanding is wedded to incorporation into the ecclesial community – hence the difference in approach. Another priest talked about the difference in tradition leading to different approaches and that the liberal catholic approach is a much slower approach. He prefers to talk of the community of the world of which the church is a part and so the CoE will take on signs and structures of the community it is located in.

Another commented that the catholic wing of the church had been eviscerated and that Catholics are not affirmed in church planting. He finds it very difficult to get ordinands or pioneer ministers who are not evangelical. He feels isolated in his deanery. He insists on wearing full vestments and believes that you must start where you mean to end up.

Fr Simon Morris at the church of the Good Shepherd, an Anglo-Catholic church plant explains that the primary purpose of the church is the worship of God. A team of people did not go into this church, nor was any money injected into it. Fr Simon claims that the church soon developed its own sense of identity. They are still paying off loans to the diocese but gain income from letting the building. This model starts with full-blown church from the start. The model is similar to Revd John Wood’s in that you go in with a small number of people. It differs in that John thinks the pattern should be to start with listening and building relationships before starting meetings and worship. However, it shows that it is possible to do church much more cheaply. The plant church is not set up as a separate church aiming to be self-sufficient but there are rotas, guilds of servers, etc. The parish is therefore seen as a parish with two centres. In terms of leadership, they try to generate indigenous leaders.<sup>15</sup>

15 See also the Tottenham Hale ‘Engine Room’ Project at <https://www.london.anglican.org/news/ministry-matters/story/1214>. This is staffed by Fr Michael Bailey, an Anglo Catholic Priest.

Revd Ric Thorpe has convened a group of ten to fifteen Anglo-Catholic clergy in the London Diocese to work on how church planting might be undertaken in their tradition.

#### 4.8 Cell Model

The Tas Valley Cell Church describes itself as a church plant within the Tas Valley Team Ministry, which also has six parish-based congregations. The Cell Church was started in 2003 in order to disciple new Christians who had come to faith through Alpha. It currently has about sixty members including twenty teenagers, which makes it larger than any of the other congregations in this rural Team. The Cell Church seeks to work in a way that complements the ministry of the parish churches and a proportion of members attend both. However, many of those who have come to faith through the Cell church see this as their only or main church and the Cell Church has a district leadership within the wider Team Ministry. The Cell Church has been working towards a Bishops Mission Order since 2007 and expects this to be granted soon. It sees its values, outworked in the weekly meeting of individual cell groups, as essential to its life, growth and ecclesial identity: All Involved, Becoming Disciples, Creating Community, Doing Evangelism, Encountering God. The cells within the Cell Church seek to invest time in people who are seeking God and are expectant of God to do transforming work in people's lives.

#### 4.9 Giving Away the Best

Revd John Wood has written, 'The larger churches in London are to be genuinely congratulated for being prepared to 'give themselves away' in helping form new church communities in fresh localities. This has almost always been the fruit of real faith, risk, generosity and vision.' We have noticed various relational links between the various London churches and subsequent church plants. ENC, Kings Cross Church, St Paul's Hammersmith, St Peter's Brighton all have leaders who were nurtured at two large London evangelical churches and who were greatly influenced by 'key leaders.' No doubt, there are other links we have missed. This can mean exporting a particular methodology and DNA. It also means relational networks, support, encouragement, new ideas and experimentation. Freedom to fail, a willingness to take risks,

experiment, seeing it as an adventure were a refrain from many church planters – in particular from those who were in supportive networks. This may reflect part of their personal make-up but it may also be reflective of a permission giving environment, deep friendships, and a generous disposition and posture that encourages experimentation for the sake of the gospel.

The annual events hosted by HTB, SHB and Co-Mission are also powerful tools to keep people within their networks. These create community and relationships, shape values and help promote the distinctive ethos of each of these networks.

#### 4.10 Experimentation and Failure

Entrepreneurial and innovative approaches were also evident. Concepts such as 'freedom to fail and have a go', permission giving, 'experimentation', 'low control and high accountability' 'being on a journey', 'inclusivity', generosity and creative ways of funding appointments are evident. The risk-taking and permission to fail are all part of a mind-set that allows for experimenting with current models and imagining and developing new ones.

Failure can be devastating and costly for those involved. St James the Less, Pimlico has had a difficult history but according to a current parishioner there are now renewed signs of life and hope. The 'fringe is beginning to come again' and the parish centre is being redeveloped. We were told that this was an 'accidental church plant' when the younger congregation from St Michael's Chester Square were looking for a temporary home while their church was being refurbished. This temporary relocation became permanent and the congregation continued to grow. There had been no prior planning or expectation that this would be a church plant so this may explain why it did not end well but despite that, there are seeds of hope and new life now.

St Barnabas Kensington also has a smaller congregation than it did during its initial planting years. The current vicar there believes there is a natural cycle of growth and decline of around seven years. A current staff member who has been there since the original church plant believes it is much better now. It is 'more real; lives are being

transformed, - healthier relationships, more family feel. I used to feel drained by church.' It appears that the congregation is more involved than in the early days when there was a bigger staff team.

A constant refrain was that it is about adventure, experimentation and failing. One planter said, 'if we're not failing, we are not doing it right.' Permission is given to fail and risk taking is encouraged. This attitude is important to imagine and develop new models for church planting.

#### **4.11 Concluding Thoughts**

There are a variety of models around which there is discussion and disagreement. A variety of approaches is healthy for the future of church planting as varied approaches and models will be needed for different contexts. We are heartened by the willingness to experiment and take risks, the levels of commitment expressed and demonstrated and the beginnings of reflection on experience. We think more could be done in terms of reflection, learning and sharing of experiences. We would encourage a variety of approaches and not being wedded to any particular model.

In the church plants that we visited, evangelical approaches dominate so this is a challenge for other traditions. It is also a challenge for the evangelicals to mine the riches of other traditions to enrich their own approaches and models. It is important to review the models and approaches regularly. This is beginning to happen but not systematically enough.

Diocesan support and understanding is crucial. Planters experience a range of emotions concerning their relationship with the diocese from 'mostly our relationship with the diocese is pain' to support and encouragement. Clearly, diocesan officers need to understand the importance of church planting, and which models and approaches will work best in their varied contexts. For the London based planters, housing is clearly an issue so creative approaches are needed to ensure support for those wishing to start up in London. London churches may also wish to consider how best to prepare those who leave London to move to the outer suburbs or into other counties. It may be that they can transform a village if two or three families become involved in the church of their local community rather than simply going to the nearest large equivalent to what they are used to in their nearest town.

# 5. Missiological Approaches

## 5.1 Church Planting DNA

Most churches in our sample see church planting as essential to the health and sustainability of a plant, ‘to stop people getting fat’ as the leader of a plant put it. Some like the HTB family look for churches to plant into, graft onto or partner with. Some who have a cell structure plant by the multiplication of cells. Some look for opportunities in the community centres, schools, cafés and homes of their area. A constant refrain is that church planting is in their DNA – if they are not planting, then they are not being true to themselves.

## 5.2 Clear Vision, Purpose and Structure

During our visits, a strong feature was how important having a clear vision was for many of the plants. The leaders were typically able to articulate cogently what the vision was. During visits to two plants, the Sunday visit coincidentally took place on a Vision Sunday. At all the services, the plant leader preached on the vision for the plant in general terms and for that year. At these plants, Vision Sundays seem to be annual events. At St Paul’s Shadwell, where our visit coincided with their Vision Sunday, the vision was based around three points: making disciples, transforming communities and planting churches.

At Kings Cross Church, where our visit also coincided with their Vision Sunday there were three principles for the year: celebrate the Story, surrender to the moment and keep the end in sight which were built through four disciplines: Come - get into the rhythm of weekly church, Belong - find a hub, Serve - create a culture where everyone serves, and Give - give money. Behind these is the plant’s self-understanding as a ‘network church with a local vision’ working out of their values, expressed as ‘it is safe enough here for people to heal and dangerous enough for people to grow’. Tas Valley has ‘five Values: all involved, becoming disciples, creating community, doing evangelism, and encountering God. Most cell members can remember these.’

We met examples of plants that had a very clear idea of who they were meant to be working with, whether the initiative for that had come from the planter or from the diocese. Grace Church Hackney is based in a parish church at the heart of an area where many people work in the arts and IT. So, their

worship music ranges from a folk style to radical modern classical music rather than the quasi-stadium rock that is more common in many plants. St Peter’s Brighton acknowledges that it is catering for a population strong in the arts and students and this flavours their approach and the activities they provide. Kings Cross Church meets in an Ethiopian church very near Kings Cross station. They are a network church, drawing people from all over London. They were established with the support of the diocese to work with the massive new developments, the arts and media businesses and the students newly arrived in the area behind Kings Cross station. However, the focus of their social work is the social housing estates in the same area. This is in danger of overlapping with the work of the two local, traditional Anglican churches in whose parish the estates lie. Although Kings Cross’s principle is to work in partnership with and in support of local ventures, there is the risk of confusion and conflict here.

Clarity around a missional focus also affects the style and range of activities a plant will establish. Grange Park and Springfield churches described their ministries using the image of a river. One told us; ‘the focus is on building a wide church rather than a big one. The waterfall is a key image. Many little messy streams – some might dry up from time to time – but it spreads and has an impact and will become one awesome waterfall. This might be messy or start and then stop.’ This provides a framework for decisions about strategy and ministry.

For church plants their structure is integral to their missiological approach. Exeter Network Church sees the networks as the heart of their ministry. They insist that their networks be missional. They aim to see changed lives and to be able to tell a story about how God is changing lives. They have twenty networks with a significant range of foci, e.g., CAP (Christians against Poverty), Diners, Cricket, Book Club, Prison, YMCA, Essence, Advance, Healing on the Streets, Global, Alpha, Detox (post Alpha), Foyer (vulnerable Young People). In another plant that has chosen a cell approach, Springfield Church, principle, structure and activity are integrated. The leader told us, ‘we’ve gone down the cell church route trying to be holistic. It’s not just about me. Every cell group

has an outlet. Each group chooses a charity they support and does fundraising for it. Like missional communities – go off, have fun, and invite friends – thus, good conversations happen.’

### 5.3 Ecclesiology

This sensitivity to context characterises many of the plants we visited and influenced the choices they made as to how they engaged in mission – sometimes expressed as an ecclesiological question. As Bob Jackson put it to us, many planters are ‘Christians who are fed up with traditional churches and ways of doing church’. They are trying to develop themes of what church is and should be – ‘can we find a way we like?’ This means that the approach is likely to be ‘missional – looking at unreached groups of people – how can we be church in a different way to get to these people?’ At Springfield Church, the imagery articulating the same point was more dramatic: ‘The reason we exist is to be on the bleeding edge – we’ve got to try new things.’ St Thomas Church Philadelphia, Sheffield says they ‘need to get away from a Sunday and event centred approach.’ The missional approach is seen as more effective even by larger churches such as St Paul’s Shadwell where the leader says they ‘have been exposed to missional thinking. An attractional [approach] will only reach 15% of the population. We need to go to them. Every group in the church has to have a missional focus [but it will be a] long struggle to work out what that means.’

In some plants, these basic principles determine the type of missiological activity the plant becomes involved in. At Oak Tree Church the leader said that amongst the ‘various principles that helped us plant’ a key one is the ‘priesthood of all believers. We want to release everyone’s ministries’ along the lines of an Ephesians 4 model. ‘This has meant that members’ passions here have determined [the plant’s] direction, for example, with homelessness. It was not my thing when I came. Young people are keen, for example, on CAP.’ One of the clergy at St Ann’s Tottenham told us that:

a key philosophy is growing organically from local people rather than importing large groups of people. ... You can get quick results with fifty imports but in urban settings people may become resentful, having

to share their building with another group who are doing their own thing at another time. People say we’ve come to help you but we don’t need your help. We don’t want your middle class values. We’re quite clever and capable ourselves. The challenge is however that you need some skills that might not be there. At St Ann’s we do this with a light touch.

Therefore involving lay and local people is an important focus.

At Grange Park Church a key aim was facilitating community. ‘People started up conversations with each other and met. Community was starting to take place. We thought we were there for evangelism but something more was happening – trying to be good news in the community. Even if they didn’t come to church, they say we’re glad Grange Park Church is there.’

Visits to services, groups and other events in plants certainly provided a stark contrast to what is a more typical experience of CoE churches. Many of the plants were full of young adults with large numbers of children. For plants, particularly in urban settings it was possible to define specific groups as the target for membership and bringing into faith. At one new estate plant we were told that they ‘wanted to target younger families, especially because they had young children themselves. Traditional Anglicans or Baptists could go the older churches around about’. For some this may be seen as a denial of the traditional Anglican approach that everyone is catered for in this church. However, the success of church plants in attracting young adults and families appears to have been the result of an uncompromising approach to the changes necessary to attract newcomers. One member of the pre-existing congregation in a rural church plant said, ‘we couldn’t have done it in the old way. It has a greater welcome and less formality. We have made things more child friendly; we’re more explicitly accessible to people who are unsure/ on the way... was crucial to have a Sunday school and we have all age worship once a month.’ This demands a tenacity, resilience and perseverance on the part of the incoming team, as sometimes existing members may not understand very clearly the extent of the change required in worship, for example, that the plant will bring. In the same

plant, some of the existing congregation felt they were ‘woefully unprepared.’ They knew that it was going to be a change, but were not ready for change in Bibles, in books and services. Everything to them became less Anglican. They said there could have been more preparation and consultation and that the word evangelical could have been mentioned. People in the planting team said that they had been told that people were more prepared, and so they tried hard to be sensitive in their approach. This clearly raises issues of differing styles of worship, different ecclesiologies and a need for compromise on both sides.

#### 5.4 Relational & Incarnational

Two words which were often used to express both a theological principle and a missiological approach were *relational* and *incarnational*. The overall impression was that incarnational meant becoming involved with the local context in a systemic way, waiting and watching and listening to the culture. It also captured the way people gained understanding, what constrained, empowered and defined them and what they aspired to. This means that people were introduced to the gospel in an appropriate way and that the plant could seriously engage in understanding the needs, identify with the local community and work effectively to help build God’s kingdom.

Two of our interviewees contrasted this with an approach that communicated the Gospel in a way experienced as inappropriate, insensitive, sometimes patronising and colonial. Furthermore, the HTB model was seen as an ‘Empire’ approach and unaware of context using an inherited model of church. Another comment was that a church plant was an ‘alien intrusion’ where the model being used would not reach poorer people. Sometimes the HTB rhetoric is expressed in terms of coming in and wanting to bless. However, there is a growing awareness that they are being blessed by the communities among whom they are serving.

At Oaks in Skelmersdale the leaders told us that ‘for the first five years we lived in a house fifty yards from estate but realised we needed to be incarnational – now live on estate in ex-Council house.’ On our visits to plants we met significant numbers of people who had moved into the plant’s

area with their families or as part of, for example, an Eden team. This emphasis on being incarnational connects many of the plants to the geography of England in a classical CoE way, however different from its traditional manifestation they appeared. As we were told at St George’s Deal, ‘It is important to be Anglican to bring the gospel to the nation’.

Another important principle is being relational. This meant that the way the Gospel is shared and the Kingdom built depends on simply getting to know people, in a basic, human-to-human process. This assumes principles such as welcome and hospitality, the ability to relate successfully to people who might be quite different in culture or background. It included getting involved in local bodies and groups such as schools, businesses, community and social work projects and hanging around in pubs, bars and cafés, place where local people meet. From the evidence we were given this was seen as a different style and missional approach for many church planters who are used to an attractational model. At the Church@TheHut in Tottenham we were told that:

the most important feature of the way that we work is that we build relations. The evangelistic work follows from that. We get to know people as friends not as contacts. We provide groups and activities for people to build relationships. We make links with whatever or whoever we can locally. This is the principle behind the detached youth work. [The leader] tries to walk past the school at home time to meet the parents and carers he knows.

There is an emphasis on ‘localism. Everybody walks to church. The idea is to make the church as local as possible. They don’t want people to be driving in.’ Such an approach, although valuable is seen as hard and long-term work. At the Shire Missional Community in Sheffield, two couples moved into houses in the community they were to serve. They live there in adjacent houses with the aim of making friends in the community, amongst the poor, urban deprived. They are there for the long haul. They explained that ‘it takes a long time to get to know people and build up trust.’ In another area of Sheffield, The Street missional community said, ‘we try to live very counter cultural lives – open lives in a wealthy area. It has taken ten years to build up

good relationships. But how to take the next step to bring folk to Jesus Christ?’

InnerCHANGE, which has links with St Paul’s Shadwell is a movement that has two couples living in the neighbouring estate in an attempt to live alongside and to be more relational. We observed that many church plants have a project-focused approach, which is easier to manage and quantify than a relational approach.

### 5.5 Healing

A principle that came up a number of times was an explicit desire to make the plants places of healing. This could be in general terms such as Kings Cross Church, where life for young professionals in London is full of pressures that lead to problems. We were told:

In hubs or in the community we help to process and redeem pain (Richard Rohr) - growth in numbers in those who feel they can breathe - talk about addiction, broken marriages is critical in mission and discipleship to 20s and 30s - levels of addiction amongst 20s and 30s - self-administered pain relief.

At St George’s Deal, they identified a need to work with those who have broken lives. There believed there was no outreach to them and therefore a huge potential for growth. The leader at Grace Church, Hackney talked about ‘cultivating a spirit of generosity, welcoming. I like to talk about the historic Christian ethic with endless patience. We give space for people to be a mess. People are often very complicated’. A less typical principle articulated to us was raised by one of the officers of the London Diocesan Fund: ‘There is the problem of the dechurched who have a bad experience. One of the issues with mission efforts is there seems to be no space for the church saying sorry for the bad things it has done to people’.

Healing on the Streets was also a regular practice of at least three of the church plants we visited.

### 5.6 Presence

When investigating Anglo-Catholic and Liberal Catholic approaches to planting, a central principle was presence. This starts from the notion that ‘what must be borne in mind is that the primary purpose

of the church is the worship of God’ as an urban, Anglo-Catholic church planter told us. The principle is to establish a worshipping, Eucharistic community at the heart of a community to which people are invited. Although the tone of the worship may be targeted at those who are invited, it is still what the present leader of that plant called ‘full fat religion’. In another Anglo-Catholic plant into a new housing estate, we were told they

cloned their messy church Eucharist from [the parish church] but held it in the morning on a Sunday (2nd and 4th Sunday at 11am). This depends on a priest being there. This is not always possible so then we have a service of the word. But people said they missed having the Eucharist. We wear full vestments. You’ve got to start where you mean to end up. If you start watered down, you’ll end up watered down.

In the first plant, the church is based in a set of church halls at some distance from the parish church, which is used by a range of community and commercial groups. It would have been possible to put away all the furniture and fittings of church but the leader told us, ‘I wanted the space to look like church all the time even though it is for multiple use. There is a natural part of the church hall, which forms a sanctuary. It is open all the time. The tabernacle could be stolen and the brass candlesticks are left out all the time. Nothing has been stolen in two years.’

Fr Damian Feeney, explained this principle as:

forming community around sacraments. They are the foundation and cornerstone - three non-negotiables: baptism, eucharist and preaching. Church is an outworking of the Christ event – church formed in the sacramental image of Jesus Christ. The eucharist is church and the church is eucharist ... imperatives from eucharist for living – self-sacrifice, self-giving, service – live like this and make the whole world your eucharist. Eucharist is not the problem but rather the answer.

### 5.7 Quality or Inclusion

An important principle for some was the balance between quality or excellence and inclusion. From the freshly brewed coffee to the attractive websites, skilled and well-practised worship bands and high



design values of the leaflets and hand-outs in many of the well-resourced plants, especially in London, it was obvious that attention to quality was important. A senior London cleric told us that churches had to take account of the London context with expectations of high quality presentation across many spheres of activity. Such quality in presentation also depends on the size of the plant. One leader outside London said that this area:

is full of musical people. The music/worship standard is very high to attract the best musicians. If you're a large congregation, the music (and the readers) has to be of highest standard. When you're a small church, people will know the readers and musicians and will give them more leeway. In a large church they won't know them and will wonder why a poor musician/reader has been allowed to perform.

One of the clergy in a multiple church plant in the Home Counties told us, 'Inclusivity is more important than quality. We have non-singers in the band. We need to be vulnerable. Quality doesn't matter. We're building community. People are welcome whatever. We will help people to sing in tune over time.' In a rural cell church they told us they were 'more about inclusion here. For the leaders it is more about the quality and character of their lives. The issue of involvement is a constant question. Quality is more of an issue on outward facing events.'

In a small urban estate plant, we were told that the:

issue is keeping the balance. Quality is key in some activities such as the youth work. However, it's more important, say, in the worship that people are included so if a child or someone who isn't good at reading or well versed in Christianity wants to contribute, we will do all they can to make it possible. ... One example of quality was the food that youth club members make. They have been learning how to cook and it has got better and better. It also means that some of the young men who are living in their own flats from the age of 16 get a decent meal from time to time.

Again, in a suburban plant, the approach was that 'quality needs to be sufficient but the kicker is relational. We're here about making Jesus'

disciples. If you're obsessed with quality, it can be consumerist. [We are] not naff – get quality up, but relational crucial.'

## 5.8 Worship

For many of the plants we visited the style of worship was very much characterised by their theological tradition. We visited more Charismatic Evangelical plants than any other tradition. The worship in these followed a typical Charismatic Evangelical pattern of worship songs, prayer, notices and testimonies, Bible reading, lengthy sermon and a final song with a call to come forward if you wanted prayer ministry. It was a surprise for the researchers how often there was no Lord's Prayer and on one occasion no Bible reading. There was little variation in worship style in the London HTB church plants.

In many of the plants one of the initial pieces of work the plants engaged in was to adapt the worship space, taking out pews, laying carpets, installing television screens and sound systems and ensuring there was space for a worship band at the front. In one large 19<sup>th</sup> century church where planning permission for taking furnishing out and installing equipment would take considerable time and effort through the faculty process, lighting and speakers had been installed on scaffolding and poles, which were effective, safe and removable.

Formats varied where the traditions were different. At one London plant, in a multicultural area with significant deprivation, different services are laid on to cater for different groups that live side by side in the capital. They were described thus:

The morning is a mishmash of families. It's a real mix. The idea is to reach different people. We have many Bangladeshi people roundabout. They are not our focus. There are first and second generation immigrants. There are white working class people and some young professionals who work in the City or Canary Wharf. The evening service is targeted at young professionals.

The morning service was more traditional in form to honour the local history as well as to provide what was suitable for the target group. The evening was much more the standard charismatic informal

worship that appeals to the young professional. The leader of one of the Co-Mission plants which meets in a boathouse on the Thames said they 'are trying to produce a relaxed atmosphere – subtle lighting – drinks before the service. Aimed at 20s/30s.'

In one of the plants in Tottenham we were told, 'church on Sunday can be all sorts of things. We have two or three formats.' In the Liberal Catholic tradition, one plant's twice-monthly Sunday service takes an hour or so. It starts with twenty minutes of craft activities, and then the cross comes in. The colour of the vestments is explained and there is the ministry of the Word. A screen is used to add visual stimulation and a short talk is given which is aimed at learning. They use one of the interactive Eucharistic prayers.

A number of the plants use Messy Church. In the words of one of the staff at St Paul's, Hounslow it offers 'access, building friendship, fun in the church building'. In a multi cultural setting such as West Hounslow, it appears to be a welcome, enjoyable and non-threatening way of connecting with large numbers of people particularly children and mothers.

### 5.9 Welcome Systems

Church plant leaders and members appreciated the importance of welcome. One leader said, 'Hospitality and welcome has always been big here. I always do a lot of training on hospitality as ministry .... I have a gift from God at welcoming and connecting.'

In some plants there were elaborate welcome systems with welcome teams, welcome packs, welcome lunches, welcome staff and carefully designed processes to get newcomers quickly into groups. One leader said, 'we count the welcome for newcomers - eighty or ninety over the last eight months. We have a specific newcomers' policy. We always note newcomers – red/amber/green system. Hospitality is important because we want to do community. Clusters are always open to newcomers.' We found some evidence of rigorous systems of monitoring. For example, one leader told us that in '2011 sixty-four people came to welcome lunches of which 80% stayed on. We gave out 109 welcome packs in last eight months.' In another plant they said they had a 'good welcome

pack. We visit every new Christian. There have been nine new people since September – four are new Christians.' We found evidence at two churches of paid, dedicated, welcome staff, of whom one said she 'sees her job as welcoming at the door – getting people in and helping them to take up an active role in the church'. As we were explicitly told by one church and as is obvious by their quality and availability, websites are used and seen as important parts of the work of entry and welcoming.

The use of Alpha as an introductory course which leads to joining the church or a group is common and is seen as effective. A number of the plants preferred other approaches, as the leader of an evangelical plant said, 'we don't do introductory courses and off the peg courses, as they don't work for contextual reasons.'

### 5.10 Groups

Groups of various kinds and with different titles were a notable feature of the church plants we visited. Plant leaders believe that their plants will be much more effective in outreach, growth in numbers, depth of faith and community engagement where they have a strong group system where every member of the church is in a group.

There are many different names for the groups, which may or may not be significant. In plants that see themselves as cell churches or MCs such as ENC or Tas Valley, the basic philosophy is that the cell or MC is church. There may be Sunday worship where people from cells gather in the bigger group but this is secondary. In other plants the groups are called home groups, pastorates, hubs, clusters, connect groups and teams. They vary in function from inwardly focussed groups to outwardly focussed missional groups. We encountered in some plants a strong desire for the groups to be much more than comfortable, weekly prayer or Bible study groups. One leader told us,

we're trying to turn our midweek groups into missional groups. They have to have evangelism and mission at the centre - based on the idea of Peter Farmer's 'Simple Church'. There is bible study but the focus is on how do you reach our streets. How would we learn by being and doing rather than study?

In one multiple plant church we were told, 'home groups are crucial so that we can build the community, Bible, prayer and healing.' At Springfield Church in South London, the Cell Coordinator told us,

cell groups are fundamental... The church has five values, which determine whether anything they do fits with where they want to go as a church: A All involved; B Becoming Disciples; C Creative Community; D Doing Mission and E Encountering God. We want all five to happen in a cell group.

The aspiration is that all the cell groups demonstrate these five values.

In Tas Valley Cell Church one of the cell leaders described the common design of each cell's meetings: 'We follow the four W's – Welcome, Word, Worship, and Witness, which is the format for all the cell groups – to be a cell you have to follow that pattern.' The researcher visited three cells and they all followed the prescribed pattern carefully but with a style and flexibility appropriate to their membership.

In terms of content, there is normally a good degree of delegation of authority to the group leaders to manage the process and material. One plant leader said:

the small groups are different from each other - high accountability and low control. [Our ordinand] takes material and adapts it mostly into notes. Sometimes they just use a book; sometimes they write a course. Some groups have a meal. It's about building a community and prayer and the Bible - need to keep the balance. The impact of groups is to support, to build community, to build discipleship and bible teaching all of the above. They don't work if it's just one of these.

The person in charge of pastoral care at another plant said: 'The basic unit of pastoral care is the cell group.' In a new estate plant, their groups were described as 'where we aim for people to have a sense of belonging – to encourage practice – praying, leading discussions, Bible study – share food – share lives.' Thus, it becomes clear that groups can be expected to fulfil a series of functions

in an integrated, complex way, according to the context.

Normally there is a regular cycle of weekly groups sometimes meeting separately, sometimes all together. There is also evidence of a wide range of other sorts of groups that meet for a limited time for a variety of reasons. For example, one London plant told us:

we have done Table Talk in a pub every Tuesday from 8 to 11.30 - any topic can be raised - recently we did Table Talk 2 - it was five weeks in [the leader's house]. The group set the agenda and it's now meeting every month. Our gatherings can't be defined as for Christians or for non-Christians.

Courses around specific issues such as HTB's Marriage Course are used over a limited number of weeks for a particular clientele. Some plants put on courses that are nothing to do with faith development and are seen as a valuable service in themselves. Yet, they may still produce people who take at least some steps on a journey of faith. An urban plant leader told us, 'Christians against Poverty (CAP) has produced three Christians in the last five weeks. We put a lot of effort into CAP ... There're no strings attached - we are just here to serve different people.'

### 5.11 Alpha

A widely used resource is the Alpha course. It is seen as effective, practical and reliable. For a number of plants, running Alpha courses regularly enabled them to continue to have an evangelistic culture. One church leader commented that the use of Alpha in HTB churches has helped HTB to maintain its evangelistic focus. Often there is a link between an Alpha course and the plant's group structure. In some, the natural outcome of an Alpha course is the formation of those who have made some sort of faith commitment to create a group. In others, the intention is for Alpha to lead people into membership of one of the already existing groups. The creation of new groups for new Christians allows for rapid integration into the church community. One woman in a cell church said about her group, 'this is a family for me. They love me, care for me, look out for me.' A husband and wife who led a group said,

we start at 8pm with a social bit, coffee. From 8.30 there is a mixture of Bible study, lots of prayer for what people do out there. The focus is outward rather than a holy huddle. As we had a new Christian, we changed the Bible study to Luke/Acts as introductory to the basic story – good for everyone.

Although Alpha is widely used and is a central tool in many plants' evangelistic strategy, there were varying views on whether it was good to use it in all contexts. One leader said, 'Alpha is still a key way in but it is becoming more and more difficult to get people on Alpha'. For a couple who have moved into social housing to witness to a mostly Muslim community the problem is that 'Alpha is good for the dechurched but our people are from a completely non-church background.'

### 5.12 Groups for Different Constituencies

Groups differ either in who they cater for or what their missional aim or function is. We visited or were given evidence of a wide range of such groups. One plant in a town setting had 'action groups – examples: prayer, men's cooking groups, swimming group, women's pudding club - mix it up to cater for the range.'

Groups were often defined by practical considerations such as members' availability in the day or the evening, sometimes by cultural and theological considerations as in cells for men and cells for women. There was a group for teenage girls and youth cells through the age range. In the large attractional and network churches, for example, in London, there were groups in neighbourhoods where people lived which were some distance from where the plant met. In one London plant which identified itself as having a strong need to transform the local community, even groups which met a long way away, were expected to come to the area where the plant is based to paint a flat for a pensioner, conduct a prayer walk or cook meals for the community. In a rural plant, some groups were constituted mostly of people from the village in which they met. This was for ease of travel and witness to the locality. The couple who led a group in east London said, 'we intentionally live on a council estate. We moved our Connect Group to connect better with our neighbours.'

The Tas Valley Cell Church shapes its groups around the needs of individuals and families. One multi-generational cell spent some time preparing a teenager with Downs Syndrome for confirmation. This inspired the teenager's family to start "Special Me" - a cell-like meeting for people with Special Educational Needs and their families. Wayne the leader said:

It is an intro course of fifteen sessions for people with special needs – whole range of disabilities. We see it as an Alpha for people with special needs – for non-churched and dechurched and then helping the churches to be inclusive of people with disabilities.

### 5.13 Groups and Growth

For many planters we met, their groups are important tools in promoting growth in numbers. Groups are where new Christians are nurtured. They are where people who are less confident in one to one evangelism can gain skills and encouragement. One group a researcher attended involved half an hour of working out your testimony and how to communicate it in two or three minutes. A principle that was preached and discussed in a number of the settings we visited was that 'one of the marks of being a disciple is discipling others and that this can be done through [the] groups.' This is particularly the case when the groups are relatively open. In one plant, a staff member told us that he had 'three Bangladeshis in his group who don't ever come to [church]'

Groups both grow and wither. In one plant the leader said:

We do not hang on to cell groups whatever. If a group is failing, we are happy to stop it. If a group is getting too big, we encourage it to split. One of the jobs of the cell leaders is to identify and encourage new leaders. So a split will result in two groups – one led by a new leader and the old leader and one led by a new leader and the old co-leader.

Once groups get over a certain number, it is necessary to work out a system for the supervision of their activities and their leaders. A common response is to appoint an overall coordinator or to see the role of supervision as part of the work of a leadership team member. An example is a plant where

group leaders meet regularly with the associate pastor and discuss what they are going to do in the groups. [The associate pastor] goes round, visits, and checks on them. Each Group has a leadership team so the new leaders come generally from that team. The senior pastor says yes to most suggestions about leaders.

The principle of high accountability and low control was often quoted in our visits and, even in plants with large numbers of groups and complicated systems, the aim seems to be to support rather than constrain. This is the case in this description by a couple who led a group in a big plant:

The supervision of the cell leaders happens via the cell pastors. They meet three cell leaders. The cell pastor reports to the overall cell pastor. The cell pastors visit the cells every now and then. The cell leaders get together every 2 months and the cell pastors every 2 months. There is no central control of the cells do but there is support and advice.

#### 5.14 Children's, Youth and Family Work

A frequent feature of the plants we visited was their concentration on and concern for work with young people and children. This was a feature to be found in the times of worship on Sundays and in groups such as mother and toddler groups, Messy Church, after school drop-ins, youth clubs and detached youth work. A number of plants employed youth and children's workers. Volunteers sometimes in large numbers devoted significant amounts of time and energy in making this work happen. Some had enough room on site with crypts, church rooms, and halls but for some it was necessary to borrow or hire space in local buildings such as a closed down church, a school, a museum or a coffee shop. In smaller plants there was an issue of having enough people of the right type to run children's' and youth work. One rural plant leader who was the Vicar's wife told us 'how hard it was with just her three children and one other family. No Sunday School helpers came [in the planting team]. The age range, because not large numbers, is difficult to handle.' Groups for preschool children and their carers were a feature of most of the plants we visited.

One young adults' pastor in another plant told us that 'Youth are a major mission opportunity.'

As with the structural discussion above, the plant's ecclesiological self-understanding and its missiological approach will influence how the youth work is designed. Forge Youth in Sheffield constitutes a 'large youth ministry – 600 kids. Meet all over the city – partner with other churches who have buildings. Eight to ten self-supporting youth workers.' The approach is explained in the vision statement on their website:

The vision for the youth work here at Forge is to enable teenagers to have a real relationship with Jesus. We believe that the best way for this to happen is for them to belong to a thriving Jesus-focused community that isn't too big for them to get lost in. Because of this we plant multiple communities all over Sheffield either with local churches or start one from scratch.<sup>16</sup>

It seems that youth ministry has a more contextual approach and builds its missiological approach on an understanding of the issues that particularly affect youth. In one plant the leader of the youth work told us:

Young people really feel unlistened to. They have got a bad reputation. They are not angry, just placid. No one wants to get alongside them. The people here have a real heart to get alongside. The issues young people bring are: low self-esteem; no guidance; Family life not championed – no strong guidance; big drugs problem.

They tend to 'give up at the size of issues – cannot do anything – out of our hands. Church kids are more idealistic and up for changing the world. They infect the non-church kids.' They are willing to go to where the young people are and so run a youth drop-in café, every day after school, which is hosted at a venue where the school buses stop. In one plant which had decided to concentrate on young people as a mission priority, the leader of the Eden team told us, 'There aren't that many old people. The decision has been to concentrate on children.' The estate has quite a young population. Partnerships with Eden teams enable plants like this one to have a permanent presence on the

16 [http://www.forgeyouth.com/What\\_is\\_Forge/Our\\_Vision](http://www.forgeyouth.com/What_is_Forge/Our_Vision). Accessed 14.10.2013

estates to engage in work with young people. From another plant there was ‘intentional hanging around on the estate and we have extended that work to other estates. We get to know the young people. Some of them come to the youth club.’ In addition to working with issues such as drugs, gangs and violence, a number of plants provide support in getting into employment. The parish ‘as a whole runs a mentoring project to support unemployed youth, especially young men. They help them present themselves to prospective employers, connect them with opportunities, mentor them if they get into a job.’

Schools work is a key part of many plants’ strategy. A number of the plants employed schools workers or dedicated part of their children’s and youth workers or other paid workers’ roles to working in schools.

In at least two of the plants visited there were questions about running holiday clubs. These seemed to be successful in terms of numbers attending - in one case ‘up to 270 kids’ and in another ‘sixty-five people on day one and similar numbers the following days. Numbers got up to 500-600 in subsequent years.’ In the first although ‘good conversations’ happened with people, it did not result in anyone coming to church after the school holidays were over. So, this plant is considering stopping its Holiday Club. In the second, their thinking about what the holiday clubs were for changed:

We facilitated community. People started up conversations with each other and met. Community was starting to take place. We thought we were there for evangelism but something more was happening - trying to be good news in the community. Even if they didn’t come to church, they say we’re glad [our church] is there.

An interesting approach to work with families was run at St Peter’s Brighton by their Family Life department, which is separate from their children’s

and youth work. The Family Life worker, aware of Brighton’s social context, told us ‘Brighton does not have a high marriage rate. [I] would like marriage to be held in higher esteem. Brighton has the highest divorce rate in the country. [I] would like to have an impact on that.’ So, she saw her role as generally supporting couples and families through courses such as the Marriage Course, the Marriage Preparation course, and Tots and Toddlers (about parenting). ‘We have started bring and share picnics. It is broader than just church families. We want to bring people in from outside. Anyone is accepted on [our relationship courses] ... Gay people are welcome as this is about relationships.’ She would like to expand the work, for example, through parenting and bereavement courses. In all this success would obviously be shown by numbers attending but also by ‘less tangible measures like evidence of supportive relationships’.

### 5.15 Concluding Thoughts

It is apparent that church plants are clear on their focus, vision and purpose. With this in mind, they attempt to design their structure and approach accordingly. Ecclesiological questions influence their approaches, activities, governance and leadership, planning and worship. There are some key values that all hold dear: 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. With all this in mind, we wonder if these values and approaches are particular to church planting or are they just what traditional parish ministry should be engaged in anyway? However, it may be that the lighter structures, the new start of a church plant and the more creative approaches allow for radical change more readily. This then means that these principles can flourish in ways that traditional parish ministry struggles to deliver.

# 6. The Role of the Diocese and Other Bodies

## 6.1 Introduction

The leadership of the diocese in which church planting takes place can have a significant impact on the ease and success of the planting. In our interviews, we heard a range of feelings about the dioceses from ‘most of our relationship with the diocese is pain’, as already cited, to ‘it is great that the diocese is so keen on plants’ and ‘the diocese has been incredibly supportive’. Some planters felt that they were isolated from the diocese or that the diocese did not quite understand who or what they were.

We offer a caveat here. Most of our findings concerning the role of the diocese emerge from the Diocese of London. Church plants in this diocese made up half our sample of plants and with whose bishops, archdeacons and officers we had many more interviews than in the rest of the sample. Therefore, we have to be careful about extrapolating too heavily for the rest of the country from this limited sample. However, the London Diocese does have more church planting experience than other dioceses so there are lessons to be learned from it. Moreover, a number of people talked about how important Bishop Richard Chartres, the Bishop of London’s support for church planting is. He is experienced as giving ‘positive senior leadership of the diocese’ as one bishop put it. He went on to say that, ‘you have to have a good relationship with those who have energy ... Relationships are key’.

## 6.2 Policy and Strategy

Leadership of a large institution like a diocese is enacted through a combination of leaders’ behaviour and their use of policy and systems, strategy and structure, and symbolism. These need to reinforce one another and be applied consistently so that those affected see them as fair and helping to achieve the purpose of the organisation. The Bishop of Stepney is of the opinion that:

policy is still at early stages. The people who tend to be at the helm are the sort of people who want to get something done. The process is held to very lightly. They’ve gone with the energy. That’s great but can build up issues. So, they need to develop policies, procedures and process as quickly as possible and as well prepared as possible and to stick to them.

Policy and leader behaviour need to cohere across the organisation. From our observation, church planting is dominated by white men as plant leaders. Only three of the plants we visited were led by women. Here we see a difference between espoused and operant theologies. Each of these dioceses believes in women in leadership so this inconsistency between stated policy (espoused theology) and what actually happens in practice (operant theology) may lead to confusion, ineffectiveness and unfairness. Perceived inequalities in funding and ratios of allocation of clergy between plants and traditional parishes have led to suspicion and the potential for conflict. Diocesan leaders need not only to ensure a consistency between policy and implementation but also to manage how the rest of the organisation perceives this. Diocesan leadership also needs to encourage imaginative thinking. Bishop Graham Cray writes, ‘Good leadership cultivates an environment where that imagination can emerge. ... If empowerment for witness beyond one’s comfort zone is of the essence of the Pentecostal gift, then missional imagination is the key to discernment.’<sup>17</sup> Revd John Wood claims:

This is a critical time for church planting strategy in the London Diocese. The energy for growth is there, but the willingness to engage with more culturally inclusive models sensitive and responsive to individual situations has to be more clearly demonstrated if the next decade is to produce new church plants/restarts which are sustainable, relevant and representative of their local communities.

The Bishop of Willesden, as bishop with oversight for church planting in the London Diocese, wrote two policy documents to guide thinking in the diocese. The first, *The missional mixed economy church for C21 London* (2011) sets a framework where the parish church is the core structure for the way the diocese works. This parish structure is to be complemented by other forms of church such as networks, ethnically based churches, youth churches, schools, and chaplaincies. The document supports the Fresh Expressions of Church

17 <http://themissionalnetwork.com/index.php/on-not-knowing-the-end-at-the-beginning>, accessed 27.10.2013.

movement, but London diocese has a reputation, which was confirmed in interviews, that Fresh Expressions are just what active parishes normally do anyway. Their preferred model of initiating new forms of church is church planting. This was seen as differentiated from Fresh Expressions so the language, concepts, understandings of Fresh Expressions and church planting are blurred. This can lead to some confusion in communication, understanding and approaches, which may need some clarification or may just need to be lived with and negotiated accordingly.

The second policy document is *Church Planting* (2011). This includes a policy for church planting, procedures, definitions and a framework in which to make planting proposals, both from a planting church and a church that is making its building available for planting. It ends with a statement that church planting across the diocese needs to be reviewed regularly both at diocesan level and by the areas and deaneries. Over the last twenty-five years during which this phase of church planting has occurred in London there has been no strategy or plan.

The approach seems to have been purely reactive by responding to proposals from planters or struggling churches. Our interviews with the Bishops of Stepney and the Archdeacon of Hackney, and with the Bishop of Kensington, as well as with diocesan officers, indicated that there is a desire for a more active strategy, which will carefully and intentionally identify needs in a diocesan and area context. The Bishop of Stepney has set up a church planting strategy group for the Stepney area. It consists of a mixture of planters and people from across the traditions to ensure there is a 'sceptical' eye on the discussions. The Bishop said, 'this may take longer but the benefits are clear. We need the opportunity to think more strategically.' The Diocese's new 2020 Vision with its intention of creating or renewing 100 new churches in the Diocese by 2020 may be the basis of a strategy.

The Diocese of Southwark has recently produced a policy, *Guidelines for Church Planting and Grafting* (April 2013) written by Canon Stephen Hance, the Canon Missioner. It offers definitions, models, principles, process and questions for planters.

It suggest a proactive approach be taken by diocesan senior staff, 'the Diocese, through Bishops, Archdeacons, and the Canon Missioner, should also be pro-active in identifying and working parishes [sic] which may have the ability to plant.' It places the responsibility for initiating church planting squarely on the Senior Leadership Team, 'Bishops, Archdeacons, and Bishop's Staff Meeting should be alert to possibilities for planting, and initiate discussions where opportunities are identified.' The policy reflects its troubled history with church planting, partly attributed to the influence and approach of Co-Mission. It emphasises how church planting must fit in, however broadly, with the diocese and its understanding of what it is to be Anglican. Southwark has also set up a church planting working party, the membership of which is entirely evangelical. It is chaired by the Bishop of Croydon who is the lead bishop in Southwark for Fresh Expressions and church planting. In some other dioceses such as Liverpool, church planting is seen as part of Fresh Expressions.

One of the functions of the diocese is to monitor the health of individual plants and to understand the patterns of growth and failure. This can be difficult. Helen Simmons, Director of Finance and Operations in the London Diocese, explained that she would like to gather knowledge on church planting based on evidence and analysis. However, in her experience, when people start a church planting project they are not concerned with tracking data, which means that the picture is grey, unclear and lacking in data.

The leadership of the dioceses have to hold the balance between the CoE structures and rules and allowing the entrepreneurial talent and energy of planters to be expressed. We heard a number of times that for planters 'Anglican structures are a problem' as a Sheffield planter said. One archdeacon said that they had three main roles:

First, to calm down the normal planters. There is plenty of headroom. They do not want a land-grab sort of church planting; second, to encourage those who do not do planting to see it as something they can do; and third, – to develop a strategy. Is it possible to plant in a place where we cannot afford it?



An officer said, 'It's about getting people to work with a protocol – to ideate the process and get together with locals. Where it fails, it's normally a failure of understanding.' In a telling comment another archdeacon said that their role was to promote 'shared vision and adult conversations' and that sadly, this is not as easy as it sounds. As one Area Dean said, 'as Area Dean, I have tried to facilitate a conversation between the churches but it only seems to happen when I am there.'

Diocesan policies for growth may include church planting in its own right or as part of the Fresh Expressions of Church movement, as in Liverpool Diocese. London Diocese has a plan for 100 new churches by 2020 and is encouraging the use of different methods (MCs, new congregations in churches, building new churches, planting into schools, estate work, network churches around special interest, planting into closed churches). The Southwark policy document encourages creative use of the Diocese's Pastoral and Mission Measure of 2007. It wants to support mission initiatives through a 'light touch' structure. It also affirms the use of BMOs:

The Bishop is seen as leader in mission in his diocese, the focus of unity, and the key broker of new initiatives, consulting widely but with authority to override local opposition when he sees fit. BMOs particularly offer opportunities to establish fresh expressions and plants across parish boundaries.

We came across no evidence of anyone understanding that there might be a strategy or policy framework for church planting in the Church of England nationally. Is this an area for further consideration?

### **6.3 Planting Churches' Relationship with the Diocese**

The diocese has a crucial role in identifying churches that are capable of planting new congregations. In Grange Park, the developers approached the local churches to start a new congregation but they were small village churches and said it was too big for them. The local vicar told us that he kept 'bugging the senior staff of the diocese to do something with Grange Park but they were puzzled what to do' with this big, new estate. The diocese approached

St Giles, the big evangelical church in Northampton who had attempted a plant before. Their curate took on the job and the plant has been growing for a decade. A key, strategic function of the diocese is to identify, encourage and use churches that might plant. The Bishop of Kensington said that, as the window is small and the narrative can move on quickly, he needs to know who might be willing and able to move in order to plant a church quickly. So, he needs to have a good knowledge of the churches which have curates and which are likely to be able to contribute a good number of their mature members to form the planting team.

At a diocesan level, the optimum relationship with churches that will and can plant appears to be a partnership. HTB is a huge, international entity yet it works hard to maintain a smooth, harmonious relationship with the Bishop and Diocese of London. HTB has established partnering relationships with dioceses such as Southwark, Chichester and Norwich. St Helen's Bishopsgate has seen the diocese as unsupportive and has had a reputation for operating in an independent and uncollegial manner. Now they are playing a much greater part in diocese, taking up places on diocesan synod and on Bishop's council.

A conservative evangelical church planting organisation like Co-Mission has been characterised as separatist - doing their own thing and then asking for it to be retrospectively 'blessed'. Co-Mission claim to see themselves as more properly the Anglican Church than the Diocese of Southwark, where they declare themselves to be in 'impaired communion' with the Bishop because of theological disagreements.

Levels of trust in this relationship with the diocese vary. At St Peter's Brighton, the Church Renewal Trust owns the church building. This is a body set up by HTB to facilitate the use of church buildings. The Trust has the church building on a 125-year lease. It is subtle to St Peter's, who are responsible for all its costs. The patrons of the parish are the Bishop and the Vicar of HTB. We were told this arrangement was introduced because in the past HTB plants have invested considerably in a building and then when the HTB planting vicar left, the diocese took the parish back to its former tradition. This begs

obvious questions of power, control, ecclesiology and tradition.

### **6.4 Support at the Start, Consultation and Settling In**

The church planting policies already quoted attempt to lay out careful procedures for the initial stages of a plant. A robust mission case and financial plan have to be developed. Legal structures and the context have to be taken into consideration. Consultation with all the stakeholders is also vital. A clear process to which all parties adhere will minimise the mess that setting up plants can get into, although it is unlikely, from the evidence we saw, that it will ever be completely avoided.

We saw a number of plants for which the preparation work had not been well done. Their status was uncertain and, in two cases, it took a long time for their BMOs to be finalised. In others, the bishop and archdeacon followed the process carefully and did not allow the plant to start operating until there had been full consultation with the other local churches and legal requirements had been met.

One bishop talked about the work that only he or the archdeacon could do in working with the local parishes to ensure their comments and feelings had been heard. One planter said, ‘bishops and archdeacons have to be supportive and have to challenge those making it difficult for planters.’ Although this is expressed rather forcefully, it indicates there is work that only bishops and archdeacons can do in talking and listening to people locally. There is no doubt that this work is demanding. One bishop, said, ‘with my diary being so squeezed, it is difficult to contemplate the amount of input/time needed’. They also need to mentor and coach planters, who, as we were told by a number of interviewees, are sometimes unaware of the impact they are having in terms of their ability to listen, learn and cooperate.

Learning has been gleaned from a number of plants in the East End of London, where there are generations of church plants. The plants are now much more carefully introduced and there is less friction. All Hallows Bow, St Peter’s Bethnal Green and a plant from Grace Church are all examples of this.

Some bishops take a more direct approach. One area dean said;

In terms of consultation, the Bishop decided it would happen and the parishes had to lump it. This is fair enough but the downside is that this has left a legacy and it is still talked about now. It’s not part of deanery strategy. It puts people’s backs up and cause suspicion.

An issue for ‘clumsy’ consultation, as one area dean called it, is that it subjects the plant leaders to significant levels of stress, animosity and conflict at a time when they are working hard to establish a functioning church from nothing. We met leaders who were still struggling with building trusting relationships after several years.

### **6.5 Continuing Support**

Perceptions vary as to how supportive dioceses are in the long term. A general impression from our visits is that dioceses are supportive and relatively flexible even if they do not quite understand how plants work. One plant leader made sure that the diocese understands what is going on by arranging regular meetings with his suffragan bishop and with the diocesan secretary. He had easy access to the bishop by phone. A plant with a BMO said that their visitor, who was the suffragan bishop, was an important connector for them and that his twice yearly visits were encouraging and challenging. Another plant said that the diocese was very helpful when their church ceiling fell in. In two plants we found evidence that the diocese had done work in expanding the parsonage house with an extension or conservatory to allow ministry to happen effectively. Two ministers said that the diocesan CMD officers were not very helpful while another said that a morning’s training on legal issues, contracts, hiring halls, set up by the archdeacon, was really helpful.

In some plants, there was an issue around leadership succession and staffing. At one ‘failed’ plant, the diocese was held responsible for not finding the right person to succeed the original planter. One bishop explained that church planters are by nature entrepreneurial and so often not skilled in doing the relational work. One leader who started a plant in this bishop’s area was a

great entrepreneur but had the potential to cause the situation to blow up. So they put in a curate with complementary skills who has now become the plant leader. Therefore providing the right staff and reviewing the leadership structures and relationships is important.

### 6.6 Canon Law, Rules and Structures

Dr Stuart Murray Williams is of the opinion that restrictions relating to the parish system have been problematic for Anglicans with regard to church planting. He believes this is one of the attractions of Fresh Expressions, as it offers a way of taking similar initiatives without falling foul of these restrictions. Other planters have also expressed doubts about the appropriateness of the parish system for reaching into current English society. Church planters also benefit from recent innovations such as the BMO.

One plant leader we met said that the diocese had been supportive and flexible and so he ‘had been able to sit light to normal expectations’. However, not all church planters feel this way. In a cell church when the leader was asked whether lay presidency of communion was appropriate, she said, ‘absolutely not. If you have not got a priest doing it, is it communion? This is the Church of England.’ One plant, which is an extra parochial place, told us they are anxious about relating to parishes around and are very respectful, using Canon B5 language. They did not want to buck the parish system.

In St Peter’s Brighton the biggest issue was the pastoral scheme, as previously it had been one parish with two churches and one PCC. They had to have public consultations to split the parish. The parish boundary of St Peter’s is the footprint of the church building, which means they are an island completely within another parish. They have a special agreement that allows them to work across the city.

BMOs were invented to allow the flexibility to work in and across parish boundaries. BMOs manage the historical assumptions about one church-one parish where a plant has been established. They also allow plants to operate across a number of parishes if the target is a particular section of the population. They give certain legal advantages and

security. One cell church was keen to have its BMO more quickly than was happening in order to have the status to claim Gift Aid tax back on its giving and to ensure the cell church does not disappear when the present leader moves on. Although the process of establishing a BMO is faster than some other pastoral reorganisations, it still involves consultation with local interested parties. There is no need to go through the Church Commissioners, as authority rests with the diocese. There may be some dangers as this avoids normal consultation but it does allow greater speed in setting up plants.

One northern plant told us that they plant and then worry about the rules later. They started under the radar and did not want to rock the boat. They now have a BMO. In another network cell church which planted from one city to another, the Bishop initially turned down their proposal to plant and told them not to come, but they came anyway and started up an independent charity with the purpose of ‘propagating the Christian gospel and alleviating suffering.’ After four years the Bishop legitimised them by offering them a BMO.

There is also evidence of flexibility in governance structures. One plant said they had been given ‘some leeway in setting up parish structures’. They selected their own churchwardens from the planting group. They were permitted not to have a PCC for six months. They held an APCM, which elected a PCC that the leader and the staff had selected. Another plant, which has no buildings and is not a parish, chose to have churchwardens even though they do not need to. They also chose to have them sworn in by, as well as reporting to, the Archdeacon.

Plants’ flexibility in governance may provide lessons for the CoE generally. Exeter Network Church’s Visitor, the Bishop of Crediton, said in his report:

The leadership structure at ENC has much to teach other churches in being sufficiently flexible and ‘light touch’ to respond easily to changed circumstances whilst holding on to core values and the priority of mission. I recommend the Diocesan Missioner explores how lessons from these structures might be applied in traditional models of Church elsewhere.

Plants set themselves up in a variety of ways – charities, trusts, limited companies, parishes, and a mixture of these forms as well as parishes. They looked for and received help and advice in doing this from their planting churches, other networks and the diocese. One plant said that it would have been helpful if the diocese had helped them at the start in setting up the charity.

Pastoral schemes and legal forms can only go so far. We heard of several examples where plants and local parishes had working agreements about whether the plant could put leaflets through local doors or how to deal with pastoral issues and occasional offices. St Peter's Brighton is an interesting example because St Peter's is a parish within another parish. Their leaders and the local parish priest had to agree, for example, whether it was acceptable for the plant to do a leaflet drop in local letter boxes advertising forthcoming events.

### 6.7 Buildings

Most plants we visited wanted a building to meet in and operate from. HTB's strategy is always to plant into a church that the diocese owns. Others rent churches from CoE parishes or other denominations. Other plants chose to buy, rent or use secular buildings. If they owned the church as a parish, some plants we visited had spent large sums, in one case £8,000,000, on repairing, adapting and extending the building. In such cases, the diocese is benefitting massively from the entrepreneurial approach of the planters in improving their building stock. At times, the business style approach of some plants and planting churches did mean that they put pressure on diocesan officers to deliver quickly on pastoral plans and faculty administration. In London Diocese, the officers have been instructed to treat such demands as favourably as possible.

In the London Diocese, there is a perceived inconsistency in the approach to buildings, which was a cause of disappointment for some churches. Historically plants out of SHB have not been given churches or parsonages by the diocese which means they have had to find considerable sums to rent spaces for worship and meetings as well as to rent accommodation for their leaders. Seeing other plants given free churches and vicarages has led to feelings of unfair treatment. There

was criticism of dioceses' decisions to sell off or rent buildings to other churches, denominations and businesses. Such disagreements have led to unfortunate occurrences such as a diocese and one of its parishes facing each other across a secular hearing for planning permission. A suggestion from a planter was that the dioceses should review such rental agreements periodically to see if the church buildings could be brought back into use for mission.

Some plants had rental agreements in churches where the parish is still working well. The plant used the building at a time other than Sunday morning. Agreements are drawn up about how to treat and leave the building. The rent is a useful source of income for the parish which is sometimes less strong in numbers and wealth than the plant.

Outside the wealthier areas of the cities, buildings can be a mixed blessing. One rural plant told us that the problem in the rural church is that they are trying to be less about buildings. The way clergy jobs are shaped tends to be based on buildings and services rather than church.

### 6.8 Impact on Other Churches

The impact of church plants on neighbouring churches has been both positive and negative. Many had experienced difficult times when planting into a new area. Parishes have tended to be suspicious of plants arriving on their patch but have responded more warmly when there has been planning, preparation and consultation. From our conversations with church planters, it seems to be the diocese that is most often accused of not preparing the ground adequately. One London church planter explained that the BMO should have been part of the setting-up process rather than sorting it out retrospectively. He maintains that the diocese needs a better process to prepare the ground and thinks that a consequence of this is that tensions are then played out locally because of a lack of clear policy.

One local vicar, in the parish of a HTB plant, claimed that the plant happened with no consultation. This vicar claimed that the plant pays less to the diocese than the parish church even though the plant is larger and financially better off. This has created hard feelings.

Another London planter commented how important it is to get the relationships and roles sorted from the beginning. It may be that parish church and planting churches will understand roles quite differently so this can understandably cause tensions. One Bishop commented that some plants have caused friction, and another that every church plant is contentious so a process clearly needs to be developed to help both planters and parishes.

Emotive words such as ‘colonise’, ‘invasion’ and ‘intrusion’ were used to express how some felt about the incoming plants. An older parishioner of a now thriving plant said sadly, ‘The brutal thing was the way it was done’ and described the plant as a ‘takeover.’ He asked for full consultation and partnership to be the correct approach. One London plant that had sent a team of forty to a struggling church said that they would probably not do that again. Next time they would be more likely to send a Pioneer Minister or a group of lay people. Several London plants reported having difficult relations with the parish churches around them.

Another issue that creates tensions is how resources are allocated and shared. A phrase we heard several times was ‘a level playing field.’ There is a perception that this does not exist and that planters may receive favourable treatment or at least do not play by the rules.

It may be that church planters are generally entrepreneurial people and less concerned about and skilled in the pastoral or relational side of planting. At least two church planters we interviewed spoke of going to every vicar or deanery event to try to explain what they were about and why they were planting there. This gave an opportunity for hostility to be voiced. Several commented on the key role of the archdeacon and Bishop in paving the way for planters. Despite the *Diocese of London Policy Paper on Church Planting* (September 2011) and the *Diocese of Southwark’s Guidelines for Church Planting and Grafting* (April 2013), which accept church planting as diocesan policy and provide clear guidance for church planters, it appears that there are still strong feelings and emotions when some church plants start up.

However, there are also positive examples. Parishioners at both St Barnabas Kensington and St Augustine’s Queensgate were generally positive about the planting experience and welcomed the incomers, although we were firmly told by a longstanding parishioner at St Augustine’s that this was not a church plant but a partnership. St Peter’s Brighton worked hard in advance to ensure their planting went as smoothly as possible. However, they too have found relationships with other parishes to be difficult at times. In a rural context the cell churches have actually helped two of the parish churches to grow. However, the vicar said that there is an anxiety about treading on the toes of other benefices and when they get enquiries from outside the benefice, they tell people to go to their local church. This vicar would be keen to extend the cell model into a neighbouring benefice which has eight buildings and one congregation of twenty-five.

### 6.9 Tradition and Tribalism

There are clearly differences of tradition, which influence the approach to and models of church planting. The evangelical tradition predominates. Traditions outside the evangelical wing of the church need to consider their attitude towards and theologies of church planting. This is clearly sensitive and a deeper understanding of the various ecclesiological traditions throughout the church and how they might approach planting is needed.

It is hard to say why evangelicals dominate. We have already quoted Fr Damian Feeney who explained that there is a loss of confidence in the Anglo-Catholic constituency and that their models of ministry militate against a more inclusive approach. One priest claimed that there is no support for catholic initiatives in church planting and that it is very difficult to recruit ordinands or pioneer ministers who are not evangelical. Another speculated that evangelicals are more in tune with a business approach to ministry while Anglo-Catholics are more wedded to a pastoral/evangelistic model. Pastoral/evangelistic and entrepreneurial approaches do seem to be associated with different theological traditions. However, as an area dean suggested, it may also be that there are differing theologies of ministry across the generations. Fr Damian Feeney believes that the younger Anglo-Catholics in training are now receiving more

training in mission generally, and in church planting specifically.

Others speculate that the evangelical approach is more pragmatic and activist and that they encourage a greater sense of energy and commitment. A non-evangelical claimed that evangelicals see success in church planting in terms of numbers. We were told that the liberal catholic approach is a slower approach which focuses less on the church community but more on the world in which the church is a part. He claimed that this is an incarnational approach in which the CoE takes on the signs and structures of the world in which it is located. Another from this tradition claimed that church planting is not in their DNA, that church planters still tend to be seen as the 'lunatic fringe' and a threat.

There are clearly significant and important differences between the various church traditions but there seems no forum in which to discuss these openly with one another. It seems that humility and listening are required. One area dean explained that the evangelical church planters want to help the Anglo-Catholics to church plant but, he said, 'it's not as simple as that.' We were told that church planting has a bad name in one diocese because of a particular approach and tradition that had 'poisoned the wells' for other traditions to engage in church planting. This brings to a head the issue of suitable networks of support and accompaniment. When an Anglo Catholic parish wishes to church plant, does it find sympathy and support from the diocesan structures, where much missional expertise comes from other traditions?

Moreover, it is obvious that tradition gets transplanted. Church plants bring with them both spoken and unspoken expectations about worship, style, leadership and governance that may make it difficult to allow a more contextual approach to take root and become embedded. A clear example of this is the worship in HTB church plants, which is very similar across the London plants we visited.

Several church planters expressed a desire for clearer diocesan policy, which they believe, would help alleviate tensions in this area. There seems

to be some confusion as to who exactly is driving the process. In the Diocese of London we heard that it is important to go where the energy is. This energy normally seems to come from the grassroots. This may be a pragmatic and practical approach but it seems to have created frictions and tensions in certain deaneries. There is also a perception of unfairness of resourcing and a certain lack of transparency. It may well be that a 'mixed-methods' approach is the most practical i.e. a blend of those on the ground spotting the opportunities for planting and those in positions of responsibility both authorising these as well as suggesting new ones. However, if this is to be the approach, it needs to be articulated clearly.

At their worst, these different approaches and traditions are in danger of generating tribalism, jealousy and competitiveness. Some comments and attitudes certainly reflect and promote this. At its best, this could be seen as a 'mixed economy' with a rich variety of approaches, models, theologies and ecclesiologies. It was our impression that this is what most church planters want. However, it is clear that diocesan policies, procedures and processes can help this enormously. Where there is perceived unfairness, a lack of transparency, and no 'level playing field' emotions tend to rise quite quickly. There needs to be an acknowledgement of the richness, variety and depth of traditions in the Anglican church, an intention to learn across the traditions, a commitment to respect one another's traditions and an arena in which ideas from the various traditions can be shared regularly.

Interestingly most church plants we visited were happy to partner with local groups. As one church leader expressed it, 'we want to transform the city and will partner with anyone going in the same direction.' This kind of sentiment or similar was expressed in most of those we visited. Sometimes it seemed that plants were happier to partner with local community groups than with other churches in their area.

## **6.10 The Role of Networks and Other Bodies**

We were interested to see where plants and their leaders found support. Big planting churches like St Thomas Crookes, HTB, SHB, St Mary's Bryanston

Square, and Co-Mission provided financial help, people for the planting teams, technical advice on a range of matters and a supportive network. Planting churches send their plants out with staff, a large sum of money, and access to the wisdom they have gained as well as deep relationships formed. Several leaders mentioned the key relationships developed at formative times in their lives. Another handled the payroll for their plant's initial period. HTB has a bank of templates that cover policies, role descriptions, processes and contracts, which are available to their planters. One church processed all of their plant's finances while the plant was waiting for a legal status as charity and BMO under which it could establish its own accounts. Some planting churches provided loans to cover the start up on the condition that they were passed on to the next generation of plants when the original plant was financially stable. Other planting churches continue to support their plants financially in areas where it would be difficult to be self-sustaining.

The big planting churches run events, residential weeks and weekends to which they invite their networks. Co-Mission runs Revive. HTB hosts Focus every summer. Plants participate in HTB's Saturday school of theology and their large Leadership Conference. Planters find these events inspirational and supportive. Moreover, they have the advantage of keeping the plants connected into the ethos, theology and latest thinking of the mother ship. It also means that plants and planters have access to more resources and a far wider network than they are by themselves. There are also networks such as St Thomas Philadelphia's 3D Ministries and Learning Communities which train and support planters and missional communities. New Wine was repeatedly quoted as a source of input and support. Some planters held senior roles in New Wine. Other networks and agencies mentioned were CPAS, the church planting training at the Church Army Centre, Spring Harvest, New Frontiers, Cell UK. The CPAS Growing Leaders programme was seen as useful by a number of those we interviewed. Dioceses need to negotiate how they are going to relate to these external networks.

One Liberal Catholic parish, which was planning to plant, went to a local charismatic evangelical

parish's vicar with a strong record in planting for advice. We were told that it is difficult for Anglo-Catholics to find supportive networks. In this case and others, having a mentor as might be provided by these networks was recommended.

In London, the London City Mission (LCM) was seen as a good partner for planters. One parish said, 'being part of LCM has been very important. It gives us links with outside training and churches that are supportive.' LCM will also pay, house and train workers.

As several of the plants we visited were involved in debt advice, the link with Christians Against Poverty (CAP) is central. In areas of deprivation on urban estates, one plant has formed an important partnership with a team from the Eden Network and at least two plants were working with XLP, a youth empowerment organisation in London. The Church Urban Fund had funded some work in similar areas in a plant. InnerCHANGE has links with St Paul's Shadwell. William Wilberforce Trust is HTB's own professionally run organisation which helps its plants engage in community transformation.

### 6.11 Concluding Thoughts

Clear policies are needed to ensure parity and fairness. There needs to be a correlation between espoused theologies and policies and operant ones. Diocesan strategies on church planting need to be developed. A national policy may also be helpful. It may be that more dioceses need to employ people on their staff who understand church planting and church planters in order to help shape policy and practice. What seems to be most valued by plants is that dioceses should be supportive, flexible and imaginative. Diocesan leaders have to hold the balance between innovation and lawlessness, drawing on diplomacy and people management skills. They must ensure that the impact of planting is not stifled nor allowed to distress those surrounding the plants. Being fair and being seen to be fair with regard to plants and parishes is essential. The role and place of tradition needs to be acknowledged. Church planting from across all traditions needs to be encouraged and nurtured.

Continuing support is needed and appreciated. BMOs have been a useful mechanism for getting around parish structures but what happens when their time limit expires. Is something new needed? Church planting is posing important questions about the sustainability of the whole parish system.

Other networks and external organisations are clearly important to church planters. Dioceses need to appreciate this and learn from them.



# 7. Leadership

## 7.1 Introduction

Leadership was a key concern of those we interviewed in the church plants. Revd Dr Graham Tomlin, Dean of St Mellitus, told us that ‘what makes church plants grow is the quality of ordained leadership.’

## 7.2 Entrepreneurial Leadership

In our conversations, the word entrepreneurial was a constant. ‘Church planters are by nature entrepreneurial’ one bishop told us. David Cooke, leader of the plant at Holy Trinity Barnes, is very clear that ordinands need to be selected on their ability to be entrepreneurial:

We need to be a bit more joined up. Southwark needs to recruit more entrepreneurial people and train them as planters and pioneers. Assumptions about curacies are changing. Bishop Stephen Cottrell says that it is not a given that you will be signed off. We’ll enable and train you but you have to be entrepreneurial. To church plant you need a certain set of things. You’ve got to get some momentum going. You need to know the particular profile of church planters. Does the CofE know who they are? Ric Thorpe is starting to get this into people’s minds. Make sure they are called to it because it is very hard. Identify them in your discernment process. Some hard decisions need to be taken to feed apostles and evangelists into the systems and to say no to pastor/teachers. Evangelism must be top of the agenda – got to make Christ known.

Several leaders of plants admitted that although they are gifted entrepreneurs they are less gifted pastorally. A couple in the congregation at St Paul’s Shadwell characterised their leaders’ approach as ‘we’re entrepreneurs which leads to a tension with the pastoral – need a complementary balance.’

At St Barnabas Kensington, a number of people from the congregation talked to us about their vivid memories of their first leader, John Irvine, who initiated the plant in 1984, as a curate of HTB. One member said, ‘John Irvine had a vision. I was a bit against taking pews out but now it’s great. They’ve redone the Howard Hall – it’s so well used. John was outstanding.’ He was seen as a ‘remarkable leader – strong on bringing women on – good at bringing preachers on’. However, there is an issue that, after

some time, a different type of leader is needed. The same interviewee said, ‘You need different styles of leadership for different situations – priorities might change – seven years seems to be the glory time then decline and change happens. It is possible that John stayed too long – energy moves on.’ In the early 1990’s the failure of the *2,000 by 2000* vision ‘gave birth to the ‘equip and release’ which led to the present leader finding many ‘empowered people – no corporate or consistent vision, just lots of projects which people would just be left to run with’.

## 7.3 Tradition

An issue for Anglo-Catholic plants is recruiting staff in the same tradition. The priest of an Anglo-Catholic parish which had planted in its own parish believes that church planting is dominated by evangelicals because there is not much of a Catholic wing left and that Catholics are not affirmed in church planting – neither priests nor lay people. ‘The Catholic part of the church has been eviscerated and there is no support for catholic initiatives in church planting.’

At Dundonald Church, for the Co-Mission network, a leader of one their plants in South London reflected on their practice of recruiting young men as planters. They have an ‘Antioch Plan’ where they hope to plant a number of churches in London. They will put young men into these as leaders.

In the HTB church plants as well as other evangelical charismatic plants we visited, the ordained male leader’s leadership was closely connected with that of his wife.

## 7.4 Gender and Ethnicity

Some plants have no women leaders because of their explicit theological understanding. We saw this in conservative evangelical plants such as St Peter’s Barge and the Co-Mission plants. In Co-Mission plants, there is an explicit assumption that leaders can be only men, supported by an entirely male eldership. At St Peter’s Barge, one of the three paid staff is a female who fills a particular pastoral role with regard to women. It appeared that women can pastor women and children and lead the prayers as happened in the service that afternoon, but not lead generally.

The dominant pattern in charismatic evangelical plants seemed to be an ordained man as the leader forming a leadership pair with his wife who was rarely a trained, qualified or accredited church worker. However, when one ordained plant leader's wife was asked about the common feature of church plants that they are run by a joint minister/wife couple, she said they had always avoided that. Their experience at a previous church meant they do not think it was a good idea. She is not a joint leader. She was badly ill when they started at their present church and so never got into that role. She put herself forward for the role of cell group coordinator as a single role and was interviewed for it by a number of people including the Archdeacon. When her husband reappeared, he was equally emphatic that they did not run things like that and see it as unhealthy where people do.

Four of the plants we visited were led by women, three ordained and in one missional community by two lay women one of whom is considering ordination. One of the ordained women was a co-leader. In one instance, All Hallows Bow, both the leader and his wife are ordained. We found evidence of leaders identifying, promoting and training women as leaders and preachers. At Grange Park Church, the leader said that all of the team is female apart from him. He now has no issues with female leadership. He explained that they often have to be female as that is who is available for part-time jobs. When we asked, it was clear that most people said there was no issue with women leaders. At a plant which was a second-generation plant from HTB, we were told, "there is no reason why women can't lead a church plant; it just doesn't happen. There are no models from HTB". However, it was also explained to us that HTB at the time of compiling this report had five female curates and one female Lay Reader, in addition to other members of the leadership team.<sup>18</sup>

One of the major sources of support for planters is the New Wine network. One minister's wife characterised 'the leadership at New Wine as very male, white, middle class and middle aged. The only women are the wives of leaders. There are no ethnic minority people in leadership at New Wine.'

When we talked to the leadership at HTB, they saw no problem in women leading plants but neither of their two female curates amongst the fourteen they were training at the time was likely to become plant leaders in their estimation. Therefore, it might be that the combination of a lack of role models and a cultural assumption that men, particularly with their wives, are the natural leaders has given rise to the present situation. There also seems to be some dissonance between the espoused theological understanding regarding women in leadership and the practice on the ground. This situation may need close monitoring with some pro-active steps to rectify the gender balance in leadership.

In the parish of St Ann's Tottenham which includes two churches on estates, attendance at the weekly staff meeting revealed a staff team made up of clergy and lay, black and white, male and female, imports and local. However, Revd John Wood, the Vicar, says:

For the next ten years the churches ... will need to take urgent affirmative action in seeking out and increasing black and other ethnic minority staff posts and leadership positions. This will necessarily involve risk – taking, pro-active and committed mentoring, and the ability to listen and respond to the cultural and spiritual aspirations of those these new staff and leaders represent. The Diocese will have to support and demonstrate this affirmative action in all its training courses and ministry accreditation schemes.

We met only three black and minority ethnic church planters – indeed, it seems that there are hardly any. Therefore, an important question to ask is who are we not reaching and why not? In other words, why are the congregations of all the church plants we visited disproportionately white? If church planting continues without adequate ethnic or female representation, then church plants are not representative of many communities, especially in the London area. This is clearly an area that needs addressing urgently.

### 7.5 Nurturing Leadership

A feature, which was repeatedly identified, was that a leader should have the ability to identify, nurture, train and supervise other leaders. This included the ability to devise and manage systems, which

<sup>18</sup> See <http://www.htb.org.uk/about-htb/leadership-team>

needed to lie behind this support, especially in large, cell and multi-site teams. As in the example of St Francis and St Clare Jennetts Park, a small plant on a new estate, the partnership between ordained and lay was also seen to be important: 'There is a good clergy/lay partnership. ... These are all competent at taking the lead in services.'

The leader of a small plant on an urban estate said that he had 'benefitted from having managerial experience in working with volunteers. He concentrates on encouraging people and getting the church to work through the leadership and contributions of local people.' In large or multi-site plants, the leader needs to be able to judge how much he or she needs to be present. In one such plant where there had been a drop in numbers the previous autumn at the largest service, the leader attributed this to his being absent too often from the service due to other ministerial engagements. '[I] was only there two Sundays a month over several months. This is an issue for a set up with multiple sites. Leadership seems to be key. If the leader is significantly absent, things can slip.'

In one cell church the leader was exercised over the issue of supervision. With 'ten or more cells', she said, 'there are too many for her to supervise, so I need to develop cell supervisors. There is a need to sort out a supervision structure.' One of the cell leaders and her husband said they were worried about the leader 'being too involved and busy. She is good at delegating but is keen that it is done right.' The leader of another plant said, 'In terms of supervision different things have been tried: leader trained leader or all got together once a month. We used CPAS Developing Leaders. Lots of people who have gone through this have gone on to leadership/mission/ministry roles. This is a key investment in people.'

The nurturing of vocations to ordained ministry was a strong feature of many of the plants we visited. This included producing candidates for ordination, hosting interns considering their vocation, being placements for ordinands in training, and training curates and pioneer ministers. One criticism of placing students and curates in plants was that some plants offer little of standard parish life, for example, working with old people or doing

baptisms, weddings or funerals. One plant had set up a working agreement with a local parish in order for their curate to gain such experience. However, many plants offered a positive, encouraging model of church and opportunities to work with large numbers of young adults, children and youth and to engage in innovative mission.

### **7.6 Staff Teams and Volunteers**

A feature of many of the plants we visited was the size of the staff teams. In some of the larger plants there is an assumption that these teams will be populated to a significant extent by paid staff, both ordained and lay. For example, in one plant in London we were told that, of their total income of about £500,000, their staff bill is £270,000. St Thomas Church Philadelphia, Sheffield has fifty-five staff, of whom ten are full time, all of whom are paid for out of the church's own income. Behind this lie assumptions about having an effective, paid staff team, diocesan expectations that plants will be self-sufficient, the importance of roles such as worship leaders being paid and a particular culture of giving. In some of the plants we visited, the social context and the missional approach meant that it was impossible to raise enough money to pay for staff, which meant that all staff had to be voluntary or paid for by external bodies.

The Church of England system of putting limits on how many ordained staff a diocese may employ (the Sheffield formula) leads to the situation where ordained people are employed 'off Common Fund'. Here, the parish or another body raises the funds to pay and house the minister and passes that money through the diocese's financial systems to manage issues like pension and PAYE. This, we were told, is invisible in the accounts in terms of the Sheffield quota and so does not break the rules. We came across a number of curates as well as ministers with titles such as Associate Pastor/Minister/Vicar. These tend also to be paid off Common Fund. The leader of a plant which does a significant amount of events for local professional workers during the week, said, 'It is really good to have a curate. Preparing so many talks in a week would be unworkable without ... the curate is not on Common Fund so can stay longer - wants to do, say, five years - more flexible arrangement.' This system seems to be less than transparent and could

understandably lead to feelings of unfairness, lack of parity and double standards. It is not clear from our conversations what effect Common Tenure will have on these arrangements. If plants assume that they can employ ordained ministers for a fixed term or with the proviso that they can end a term of employment, it may be that Common Tenure's insistence on no time limit on clergy employment may become a problem.

In the plants we visited there was a range of approaches to whether staff were paid or unpaid, part-time or full-time. Some plants had large teams of full time and part-time paid workers and one had a team of voluntary workers headed by a full-time voluntary lay leader. For some, this was a matter of principle whereas, for others, this was necessity, mostly where there was never going to be enough money in giving from the members or the local area to pay staff. Therefore, for some, financial constraints had become the basis for their guiding theological principles about how to manage staffing levels appropriately for the context. The financial constraint is heightened when the Diocese or the planting church, as is often the case, launches the plant with the expectation that there will be no funding of any staff from the start or that any support given will be withdrawn over a time frame – normally three or five years.

In a conversation at a large plant, three paid members of staff including the Vicar laid out a key assumption about the paid staff.

The principle behind the way the paid staff work is to encourage and support church members as voluntary workers. If someone offers a service, they will find a way of using that. It is a key value that the church's work is done by volunteers. If this means that things are not quite done or the hall is left a bit untidy, the paid staff will tidy up/sort it out.

The Project Manager for Buildings was very clear that his job as was 'to facilitate professional expertise paid and voluntary.' Their church 'has a culture of just getting on with things but a key function of the staff is to get people to slow down and think how what's about to be done can include more people.'

One urban plant, King's Cross Church promotes the principle that staff should have a part-time job somewhere else as this supports a contextually relevant missional approach to leadership and ministry. As the leader, Revd. Pete Hughes said:

The staff are mostly part time; two full-time people are Pete and Kath; four half time - Andy also an urban planner - Rachel also a mum - Rose - Paul just over half time and with the London City Mission and Only Connect, off Common Fund, we do his PAYE etc. We wanted to be small and create a volunteering culture. For example, an XLP worker is a better use of our money than employing a worship leader or a children's worker (which we might need) because we have great volunteers. Andy and Rose have oversight over our community engagement. Paul is a real evangelist (Alpha prayer on the streets) - comes alive outside the church. Staff team is much more geared to mission out there. With part-time staff having another job, it means they had a missional leaning - a living faith in the workplace. There is a tension between making Sundays live and keeping the mission going. Sundays are just a part however key.'

A common model we met for finding plant leaders was to develop them in the planting church as ordained curates and for those curates to build a team of leaders to take with them to form the planting group.

We observed an unusual approach with the plant started at St Catharine's, Houghton. The planting church was St Luke's Thurnby, in the adjacent village. The planting team was from St Luke's but the leader had been recruited through advertising and was unknown to them. When we asked the leader his opinion about being an outsider to the grafting group, he said, 'There are pros and cons. I could have been at St Luke's for a year but I think this has been better. Not a St Luke's takeover but driven by St Luke's. The fact I didn't come from St Luke's helped. I arrived on the same Sunday as the graft.' This was the only example we saw of this approach.

Developing a culture of volunteering is, for number of plants, a key principle both in how to run a large church and in developing belonging and discipleship. At St Peter's Brighton, there is a drive to connect

new members into groups (called Teams), which have an outward facing focus, often attached to one of the community, service or worship functions of the church. Such a structure, as we were told at St George's Deal and at Grange Park Church 'make heavy demands in terms of leaders, both in terms of their work load and the training and supervision needed to equip and support them'. Systems need to be set up to support the volunteer leaders, as in the example of the leaders of the missional communities in St Thomas Church Philadelphia, Sheffield: 'Leaders need support and coaching. ... Each MC leader has a coach/mentor and meet in huddles.'

It seems there is a need to be sensitive to the demands voluntary leadership puts on individuals. In one plant we were told, 'Sometimes when we are running groups, we have to stop them as there is too much of a burden on a few people – done too often. But then the majority missed the way it was before and so volunteers appeared.'

### 7.7 Lay and Local Leadership

At Grange Park Church the ability of the leaders to identify and support lay leaders provided a key starting point for their success as community builders on a large new estate. The Vicar's wife got to know one of the health visitors who reported the experience of the local GP surgeries being overrun by depressed mums from the local estate. This represented a problem of isolated mums stuck at home. Therefore, the vicar's wife opened their home on a Thursday morning and had lots of mums and children in. The health visitor could come and do the weighing. This was also a good way to meet people. They identified natural leaders and sent them off to set up similar groups with mums, which spawned about seventeen groups. Now the mothers claim that Grange Park is the friendliest place they have ever lived. This has built a base of people who have had positive contact with the church. Moreover, mental health has improved on the estate.

Indeed, church plants may give an opportunity to break free if there is a culture of dependence amongst lay people. As a vicar with a small church plant in his parish said:

Regarding leadership structures, in the last six months I've appointed a churchwarden (not a formal legal parish one). She's a key holder, lets people in, and coordinates things like flower rotas, and the group who make the Tuesday lunch. People are slowly learning to get on with it – setting up for worship. It is much more the case there than at [the Parish Church. There] they feel it is a bit beyond their grasp.

The assumption that the work can be done by nurturing local leadership was exemplified in the project manager for the new building at Grange Park Church. She was one of the first residents and was thrilled to be invited to manage the building project. She said, 'I wanted to be living out the values so I decided to do some work to live out my faith even though I wasn't massively clear what my faith was.'

This ability to identify and enable local leaders is sometimes constrained by the arrival of a large planting team with a ready-made understanding and confidence in doing the leadership tasks. Local people may be less confident and less used to church. The leader of the plant at St Paul's Hounslow (planted from St Stephen's, Twickenham) said,

Attendance is reckoned to be about 40:40:20 St Stephen's, old St Paul's and new people. New people keep coming. The congregation is a mix of Indian, white British, eastern Europeans, African Caribbean. There are people of different faiths and humanists. The St Stephen's group is full of talent, which has been useful in setting up the legal framework and dealing with building issues. Yet, there are leadership and other skills in the more local members that are coming to the fore. To some extent it reflects the local area.

### 7.8 Training: 'I have no idea what I am doing but...'

'I have no idea what I am doing but...' This was a common refrain at the MCs Church Planting Conference held on 18 October 2012. Nearly every person who spoke made the same assertion so it is clear that we need some strategic and coherent training for church planters. Several church plants employed interns as a means of training and indeed Revd Richard Coekin has developed their

own ministry apprentices training scheme on a full time basis - the 9:38 network, set up by himself, Revd Vaughan Roberts and Revd Ian Garrett. It is from this programme that Co-Mission recruits curates. 3D Ministries (3DM), founded by Revd Mike Breen (former senior pastor of St Thomas Crookes in Sheffield) in 2007 is based at St Thomas Church Philadelphia, Sheffield. They run Learning Communities for churches that have participated in their training programme. St George's Deal is a part of this and found this to be very helpful as it gave them space to reflect and some 'accountability outside the Anglican structures.' Revd Ric Thorpe runs a church planting course at St Mellitus, which is appreciated. St Mellitus was commended for offering training 'that was pushing theological education in a different direction.' The Church Army evangelists in Skelmersdale found their training at the Sheffield Centre very useful for their community work in Skelmersdale.

A significant impression on visiting the plants is how many young adults are employed on leadership teams, using interns, or ordinands doing mixed mode training schemes and recent graduates from churches with large student memberships. Financing such staff depends on a range of models from no support at all to paying something towards their rent or course fees or providing a salary and accommodation. One example is the Children's and Youth Worker at a large plant we visited.

She was an economics student here. She was converted at the New Frontiers church and then attended [the plant church]. She applied to do the kids' work - seemed a good opportunity. She was an unpaid intern at first. After six months became the overall manager. She uses advice from the more experienced members of staff - learning by doing - has had no training.

There is a clear path through membership and volunteering to a full time paid role for a person who understands the purpose, values, and culture of the plant they are working in. Such a pathway ensures capable people of a similar age to those whom the plant is targeting. However, there may be concerns about putting an untrained person with no experience elsewhere into a role in charge of a considerable number of children's and youth

projects within the plant and outside on the streets and in schools. This raises a general question about the Anglican Church's responsibility to ensure the quality of training of internally sourced leaders, and just how this is delivered and monitored.

When asked about training, most church planters agreed that something needed to be done but some then posed the following questions, do we know what we are training people to be and for? Do we know the personal and ministerial competencies required? Are we able to discern a particular profile for church planters? Some of the churches had interns who were learning on the job and several had pioneer curates. One curate suggested, that in the training of ordinands it might be better to stream ordinands to see if they have a particular vocation, ambition or set of skills which would lead them naturally to church planting. He believed that there should be an intelligent, mutual discernment process to see whether their training can be particularly tailored for their gifts and skills. This may be an area for Ministry Division to consider alongside Pioneer Training. Are church planters under the same category as Pioneers? How do we discern them and should we be looking for them in our discernment processes?

### **7.9 Concluding Thoughts:**

Leadership and training are important areas for the church to consider. Entrepreneurial leaders are making it up as they go along and learning by experience. Tradition, gender and ethnicity all play into this as well. The larger networks run their own training programmes which engender loyalty and ensure reproduction of a particular approach. It seems that the church needs to take some urgent steps to find and train leaders who can connect with our current society both in terms of understanding the context and being able to challenge the context. A missional imagination, which can be expressed in a myriad of ways, needs to be fostered and developed among leaders. We believe that more could be done to foster lay and local leadership. Volunteers, both lay and ordained, are highly valued and are an important part of staff teams. However, just how staff are recruited and paid, and how volunteers are managed all seem to be challenging areas that need careful thought and planning.

# 8. Finance and Sustainability

## 8.1 Introduction

Finances and sustainability are key issues for church planting. The assumption and expectation in the London Diocese is that plants will be self-supporting either immediately or within a three to five year time frame. Diocesan support, grants or salaries and stipends are either non-existent or diminish over a limited number of years. In other dioceses, there is a mixture of understandings. Sometimes the diocese thinks the plant is so important that it continues to fund a post for many years. Otherwise, it operates with the same expectation as London Diocese. A difficulty is working out an approach that is fair to the range of plants, particularly in a diocese with as many plants as London. From those for whom we could get figures and where we could disentangle them from the larger bodies of which they were part, we discovered the following: the range of income generated by the plants we visited, with regular Sunday attendances from single figures to 600, was between £82,000 and nearly three million pounds in 2011. This is clearly an important financial gain for the dioceses.

Capital expenditure on buildings over the last decade was as high as nearly £8.5 million pounds in one instance. We came across eight of the plants for whom capital expenditure on buildings had been in a range from approximately £300,000 to £1.8 million. Money spent on running those buildings in 2011 ranged from around £15,000 to over £240,000 in the thirteen examples for which we had figures. Full time equivalent staffing levels ranged from zero to 20, with a consequent impact on plants' salary costs. Parish share or diocesan quota ranged from £7,000 to £140,000. Arrangements round whether a parsonage and a church or similar building are provided by the diocese vary, meaning expenditure on the hire of buildings and homes can vary significantly. One plant in London, which does not have a parsonage from the diocese, said it had to find £42,000 a year to rent a suitable house in the area for its leader.

The lack of consistency in diocesan support can aggravate a situation where other Anglican churches near a plant are already suspicious or hostile. A minister in one such church talked to us about the plant paying 'much less to the diocese even though they are much bigger than [my church]

and with a much bigger income – because they pay their own clergy'. The diocese needs to be flexible about how they approach the funding of plants as well as sufficiently challenging to expect self-sufficiency where appropriate. They also have to do considerable work in communicating a clear policy that is fair and consistent.

## 8.2 Cheap Church or Costly Church

A significant debate in church planting is the financial model for planting a church. Interviewees contrasted what they called 'cheap church' (as coined by the Archdeacon of Hampstead) with the dominant model (often characterised as the HTB model), which is seen as very costly. Some of this is based on a missiological approach especially advocated by members of MCs. Their approach starts from small numbers of people moving into an area to listen and build relationships. The emphasis is on starting small and growing slowly and gradually. They see that as authentic mission in a community. The cheap church approach is also based on the understanding that in some areas of deprivation or where there are few people with substantial incomes, this approach is the only viable one that can be taken. One town plant told us that they 'run church on a shoe string'.

There is an understanding among some planters and senior church leaders that church plants in certain areas will never be self-financing. A treasurer of a large suburban plant said that he 'would not expect [their café church plant] ever to stop needing financial support but they still have a responsibility to give seriously. Planting in a poor area needs subsidy. [It] will never be self-financing.'

Moreover, the membership of a plant may not be able to finance a high maintenance model. The new vicar in an urban team explained that 'the plants were not in fact church plants especially in terms of governance and finance - the plants don't have either. None are self-funding. [Two plants] attract lots of single mums - either single or whose husbands do not attend - a very expensive model.' An Area Dean indicated that it may be unworkable to expect some plants to be self-financing, for example, in being able to pay their diocesan contribution: 'We thought [the plant] would be paying their Common Fund by now but they are not. They are still heavily dependent on [their planting

church]. For plants, paying full Common Fund in five years is unrealistic. Growth often plateaus from time to time, especially in churches in poorer areas.’

Plants in such areas will need to adopt a model of low costs or of subsidy from elsewhere, if they do not have access to sources of income other than giving. One suggestion from a senior church leader was that churches ‘should be financially based on endowments rather than giving’. A suggestion from a diocesan finance officer was to capitalise on the buildings: ‘it should be possible for all sorts of churches to maximise trading income from hiring halls, car parking, playgroups, telephone masts, etc. You could have a tiny congregation but a large income.’ One example we saw in a deprived area was the leaders using their large Victorian parsonage to attract interns with free accommodation even if they could not afford to pay them a salary. A leader of a plant in one of the 5-10% most deprived areas in the country told us, ‘in terms of finance, we get no support from elsewhere. We always manage – God provides – although it is obviously often very close. People are very generous with time, effort and food.’

We heard of two examples where large planting churches had not taken up the offer of establishing plants in poorer areas where the predicted giving would not sustain their model of church planting. We could call this ‘costly church’. One Archdeacon told us ‘big churches and church plants cost a huge amount per Electoral Roll member. What else might we do with half a million pounds? Is this good stewardship?’ He had done some initial calculations to illustrate this imbalance in cost.

In his Sabbatical Reflection, Revd John Wood says,

rich churches rightly desiring the (re) evangelisation of the nation will need to reassess the level of external, sent resource required to change and grow a local situation in a healthy and sustainable way. It could actually be far smaller than the current ‘invasion’ strategy and lead ultimately to much greater cumulative growth, as resources can be deployed over a wider area to many more localities.

Costly church models of church planting, particularly as exemplified in London, can require many

resources to sustain them. Many of these church plants attract people who can provide them. However, this model will only reach certain sectors of the population. Some of the big London church plants that we visited were adjacent to poorer housing estates with aims and programmes to reach out into these estates. It was noticeable that very few people from the estates attended these churches.

### 8.3 Sources of income

Revd John Wood, the Vicar of St Ann’s Tottenham with church plants on Broadwater Farm and Tiverton estate, explained their sources of income as a mixture of parish, diocesan and other bodies’ support. He told us:

The church planting model is low cost. It’s an incarnational model – not about getting people from estates into big churches. In terms of finance on the Farm, there are one or two people who give a lot. They are also proactive in getting support from churches elsewhere who are excited by what’s being done on the Farm. Tiverton is more cross-subsidised. On the Farm, they originally paid the missionary but now everyone is voluntary. It’s an effective model because it is local and self-supporting. There are a number of good groups. Support from the team across the St Ann’s parish is very important....Only explanation is providence.

Grace Church Hackney, said:

we are completely self-supporting. In the first three years St Helen’s Bishopsgate paid the rent on the house and the New York supporting church for three years paid for a part-time music minister. We pump primed St Barnabas [a plant from Grace Church] and have paid and pay rent in both parish churches we have used. We pay rent for diocesan houses. Grace Church Hackney Trust pays pension and stipend. They are a charitable trust.

St Thomas Church Philadelphia, Sheffield also had American funding for a period. They have ‘eight-ten self-supporting youth workers’ and ‘had American funding for five years to fund the youth network as well as the missional communities network’.



In the Tas Valley Cell Church, which is part of a multi-parish benefice across a number of rural villages in Norfolk, we were told the Cell Church is 'self supporting – mainly through standing orders. There is always a collecting box at cell meetings and stewardship leaflets.' The Cell treasurer said:

the cell church is financially viable. They are their own unit alongside the parishes. They do not have to spend any of their money on buildings. They pay 17% of the benefice parish share, which is bigger than any of the parishes. Some people have standing orders both to the cell church and the parish they attend so there is an element of double counting. If all the cell church's members' money went to the cell church, there would be a big hole in the parishes' funding.

Jacque Driver, the treasurer of St Paul's Shadwell in East London, described their financial model:

The deal with the diocese is, if you want to plant, you have to pay for it – no diocesan support. We pay about £10,000 for the rectory. None of our vicars are on Common Fund. We pay the diocese to cover Rod (Associate Vicar) and Ric's pay. We get the church building free. The Institute belongs to the diocese and is seen as an income-generating asset – get it rent-free. Of our income 70% is giving. We get one grant from the Bishop's Mission Fund for a children's worker. We don't do fundraising events. The congregation should donate enough to run everything. We sell Ric's services to St Mellitus and get £11,000 a year for Ric's diocesan role. 2013 total income £340,000. 107 people are giving. We have 156 people in Connect groups which means that 50 don't give. Collections don't raise much (£10,000). [In terms of] expenditure, we give £40,000 to other organisations, spend £72,000 on planting and training people for other churches and £73,000 on clergy costs.'

At Oak Tree Acton, the diocese agreed to sell the parsonage house of the original parish plant. This generated over three million pounds, part of which was used to support the acquisition of a former fire station in the centre of Acton. The Church Warden told us that

the diocese basically had paid for the building and for refurbishments - cost about £600,000 to buy the building from the council and about £600,000 to refurbish it and restructure it, of which Oak Tree paid about £85,000 including furnishings. Financially we are okay. People give generously. We are raising money to fix the lift. This is done through gift days.

Some plants set themselves up as charities and trusts to facilitate their operation and finance. St Peter's Barge, constitutionally a Trust, is a straightforward church plant into a situation where there was nothing before and they have been self-sufficient from day one. They have no support from the diocese but have the blessing of a well off demographic. Their budget is around £260,000, which comes in mostly from the Sunday congregations – only a little from weekdays. They do not have collections at services. Their income is based on standing orders, so they feel it hard when people leave.

The leader of St Catharine's Houghton, a church plant from St Luke's Thurnby, in a rural village outside Leicester told us that the Diocese pays for the house and half of the stipend - the rest comes from the diocesan mission fund. Often money comes from St Luke's, for example, to do the TV screens and the sound system. The parish share is £21,000. In 2014 the diocese is moving to a system of offering. 'We're waiting to see how it works. We need to sort this out also with St Luke's. The income went up dramatically when 15 people came from St Luke's. We are fine now financially but if the parish share goes up, we will be in difficulty.'

A common method of planting is to plant into churches where there is a big church building with a small congregation. The initial issue is often dealing with a building that has fallen into disrepair or needs significant work to make it usable. Many of these buildings are listed and of significant architectural value, so the incoming plants have succeeded in applying for money from English Heritage. For example, St Peter's Brighton, which planted into a huge and architecturally important early 19<sup>th</sup> Century building on the road into Brighton told us, 'the biggest chunk of funding for the building came from English Heritage. This allowed us to go to other trusts as we already had a considerable amount of

grant. Individuals also gave. There was fundraising in the congregation and we used some of our standing order income.’ Gifts days are another popular method to bring in large sums to deal with one-off set-up costs or expenditure on buildings.

### 8.4 Giving

A plant treasurer told us:

an issue with income is getting people to see it as a priority. There are three camps: new people do not yet understand giving and its spiritual aspects – it is not a quick process to get them to understand this and give in accordance; givers who give often quite generously but do not have [the plant] as a priority. They often give 1%; and the more established who see giving as a priority.

In a plant on a new estate, we were told, ‘there is an issue with the turnover here. We lose standing orders and it takes some time for new people to become decent givers. A few people tithe but there is a range of people who don’t give much.’

In the large plants we visited, which needed considerable income, there was a clear line that giving is an expectation, a Christian duty and a privilege. However, a common approach was to have ‘fairly low-key teaching on giving. There will be one or perhaps two stewardship Sundays a year. They will be based on the present budget and present income. They talk about how you can give and why.’ Collections were rare during services we visited. The assumption was that people would set up standing orders. In a suburban plant, we were told, ‘we’ve got the highest level of giving per head in the area. Our giving income is about £200,000. We teach once a year on money. We don’t want to be going on at homeless people and poor people.’

According to one treasurer of a plant that had many young adult members and significant turnover, ‘the issue is developing a giving culture. It’s a generational thing. People in their 20s/30s don’t commit, don’t engage with organisations- don’t think they’re going to be around that long. Tip of the iceberg of discipleship is shown by finance.’

A significant characteristic of a plant that is seen to encourage giving is that it is generous itself. One small town plant said that for them two of their key planting principles were ‘money and generosity – in spirit and support – we try to give stuff away, whereas the established church has a reputation for asking for money’. One plant leader, who felt rather misunderstood, said, ‘we’re seen as wealthy but we give £100,000 away’. This sense of generosity based on committed giving by members was apparent in an urban estate plant: ‘we don’t ask for contributions, which is general [parish] policy. Some people do standing orders to [the parish] and some give by envelopes. It is important that regular people are committed to supporting regularly. A collection on a Sunday would send the wrong message.’ The Visitor’s report on a BMO network church plant stated:

Teaching about sacrificial giving forms a natural part of life at [the plant]. The leaders give a personal example of commitment to the Christian Gospel and a spirit of generosity and trust in God is at the heart of why the Annual Report reveals incoming resources of £243,182 which was a 20% increase on the previous year’. This is a remarkable achievement particularly at a time of growing economic difficulty.

In plants in wealthier areas or with well off congregations we were given some examples of gift days that raised large sums. One plant ‘raised £520,000 in one evening to cover the shortfall of camp costs’. Another’s ‘gift day gets £360,000 pledged’. Another had ‘£63,000 pledged’ to bring a building they were offered rent free to a useable state.

As is often the case in churches, plants can be vulnerable financially because major contributions come from a small number of people or families. One treasurer said, ‘There are four or six families who give £400-500 per month. There is a big group who give £200-300. However, they also have numbers of retired, part-time workers, housewives and people with low incomes. Belonging is more important than giving but it is an important question.’

## 8.5 Off Common Fund

A financial issue that can cause friction between plants and other churches is their level of staffing, particularly of ordained ministers. Plants are seen to have access to more paid clergy than other churches, which claim they could be as successful if they had that number of staff. In some cases, the agreement is that the diocese will pay for a priest and a parsonage – as is the usual agreement for a standard parish. In 2013, the expected contribution to the diocese (variously termed parish share, quota or common fund) is £79,000. If the diocese is working on the assumption that they should be self-supporting from the start, the plant will have to raise the stipends not just of additional and assistant clergy but also of the leader.

Then there seems to be a negotiation as to how much a plant should contribute to the diocese. Some dioceses, of which London is an example, are moving to the idea that churches' contributions are to be based on how much churches feel they should give knowing the diocesan budget. As one Area Dean with a plant in the deanery established for seventeen years at this point said,

in London, churches are invited to be as generous as possible in giving to Common Fund. [The plant] was invited to work towards paying the full cost in three years, which they have now done. London has a philosophy of self-sustaining churches. They had been finding the money to employ people – had several administrators at one point so were challenged to come up with more Common Fund.

If a plant has to pay for all its clergy and accommodation itself, the church planters struggle to see why they should contribute when they get nothing back. The language used by plants on a number of our visits was *giving* to the diocese or *donating*, with a sense of charitable giving rather than obligation. From the figures we were able to obtain, the range of contributions was from just over 1% to 63% of annual income. Issues such as capital expenditure on buildings can affect the negotiations over contributions.

As has already been discussed, the organisational process to enable employing more staff than would normally be the case is to use *off Common Fund* status. Dioceses are constrained by the Sheffield quota, a national agreement as to where the bank of ordained ministers should be deployed across the country. If extra ministers appear in the official accounts of the diocese, they are breaking the rules. However, in order for ordained ministers to be properly licensed, to have access to pensions and PAYE, and for them to be seen as legitimate ministers to be able to participate in IME 4-7 (curate training), the system is that, as one plant leader put it, we 'pay for our clergy ourselves – through the diocese but they are off common fund so that cost does not appear on accounts so we are not breaking the Sheffield quota'.

One London, part-time curate in a parish with plants gets his housing from the college in which he is a part-time tutor. The parish contributes about £5,000 and has raised £5-6,000 from a trust. The diocese just pays £3,000. After he leaves, the parish will be moving to a full time curacy. They hope that the diocese will pay as for a normal curate.

He talked about the impact the planting churches who operate on a costly church model seemed to be having on the deployment of clergy. When he was ordained, HTB funded a large percentage of the ordinands at St Paul's. The effect of HTB is that more and more curates are going to churches that have money rather than going to churches that are good places to train. 'It is the age old problem of how to pay for curates in a modern guise.'

He continued, 'the issue of leadership and the issue of funding for inner urban, deprived areas is not a simple problem. There's not a simple answer. It may be that money has to be offered from wealthier churches and relationships but it has to be based on being used in a relational way to support relational, community-based work.' As the Southwark Diocese planting policy says, it may be that there is a need to be flexible in balancing the costs/savings against the long-term mission benefit:

Early consideration should be given to the financial implications of a possible plant. Parishes considered for a possible plant will often be those which might also be under consideration for the withdrawal of a stipend. On occasion a sending parish may be willing to fund ministry costs themselves, so allowing the stipend to be saved. On other occasions there may be a judgement to be made between the gain of a stipend saved versus the potential longer term gain of a parish coming back to life and contributing to diocesan funds. House for Duty or part-time posts should also be considered where possible.

Plants we visited demonstrated ingenuity in finding alternative sources of support for their clergy. These included trusts and charities, and other churches in Britain or abroad. Some dioceses used bishops' mission funds. Some worked through partnerships with other institutions where the clergy might teach or run departments or activities that generated income. Speaking engagements also generated income.

### **8.6 Concluding Thoughts:**

As is to be expected from the entrepreneurial styles typical of church planters, we found that planters are effective and creative in raising money. They

are successful in developing a giving culture in their churches and in attracting people who have the means to give significant sums. They are also effective at encouraging donations from other sources. Much good work has been done in repairing and modernising decrepit buildings. This is of immense benefit to dioceses, both in financial and mission terms.

However, we heard concerns about the apparent unfairness of the way church plants are funded by the diocese both from traditional parishes and other plants, especially in London. There is concern about assuming that plants can be self-supporting in a relatively short time in areas of deprivation, where they may never be able to achieve this. There is also a concern that the 'costly church' model plants are attracting an unfair share of available clergy. If this is accepted by dioceses, this may necessitate a more conscious, active approach to planning around allocation of resources, deployment and organising partnerships between churches that have money and plants that do not. Therefore, an on-going challenge for church plants in areas of deprivation is whether they will ever be self-financing. Some of the church planting models are very costly and not affordable in many contexts.

# 9. Community Engagement

## 9.1 Introduction

All the church plants we visited were keen to be connecting with their communities, building relationships and alleviating suffering, either because of the call to build the kingdom or as a way to introduce people to Christ or both. Only on one occasion were we told that a plant was ‘not very involved in community transformation ministries.’ For several of the plants, community transformation was a struggle as they tried to connect with their context; for others they saw themselves having a serious impact on issues that beset their communities. Many plants described themselves as ‘outwards looking’. Some are driven by community transformation with ‘prayer for the transformation of the city. We aim to empower people to have an impact on the community they are in.’

In Revd John Wood’s paper, he highlights the issue of finding an appropriate model for social engagement for the area in which a plant is set.

The problem of large churches ‘going small’ in mission and outreach is that their methodological DNA often goes with them. This may have clear and obvious implications for a new plant’s services (lengthy, expository preaching, extended times of worship in a particular musical style, an absence of liturgical form), evangelism (largely based on ‘branded’ small group discussion material) and social engagement (transplanted models of social action being default mechanisms for appropriate and sustained community engagement).

One of the features of church planting in the model where a large team of people move into a struggling church is that results tend to be seen quickly. This is seen as important in building the momentum to establish the plant. These results are normally seen in the size of congregations and the levels of income. When we visited these plants for worship on a Sunday, white, graduate, professional, young adults in traditional families often dominated the congregations. The approach to growing church comes from their ‘methodological DNA’ and can have the result of replicating the social mix or homogeneity of the church from which they emerge. These are highly capable people from a middle-class demographic so there is a danger that the plant may not mirror its context in engaging

with the community in an appropriately contextual fashion.

One leader of this type of plant told us that the existing local Anglican church was ‘much more reflective of the ethnic mix round here. If someone comes to faith on the estate, they may be better going there.’ This raises questions about the nature and purpose of church planting in that context. Another symptom of this comes in the issue of schooling. One plant in an area with significant deprivation planned to transform the local community by, amongst other initiatives, improving the schools by getting involved in their management and supporting them. However, as one of the members of that plant told us, ‘a big issue for church planting is that people won’t send their kids to local schools.’ This is a problem for the older children’s and youth work in a plant and a contributor to the turnover many of them experience in London.

Second and third generation plants from the HTB family are attending closely to the appropriateness of their community engagement approach. We were told that second generation HTB plants were more local and contextual. However, we were also told that the contextual approach seems to come more naturally to those who are working with a MC model. As Dr Stuart Murray Williams told us, ‘MCs are not interested in numbers but more interested in community transformation.’

To achieve results in community transformation takes time and is difficult to measure. A London planter said: ‘we’ve got a way to go. We’re in a tricky diverse community – people have moved onto the estates. Change happens over twenty years and impact takes a long time’. In a northern plant, members of the team have moved into the area. They live there in adjacent houses with the aim of making friends in the community which is poor, urban and deprived. They are there for the long haul. ‘It takes a long time to get to know people and build up trust ... We do a lot of social transformation and are making a difference in the local area. Need to be patient and do it in God’s time. Success is: have you made a difference in people’s lives – how much have you moved people on?’ It takes a long time to get to know people and to build up trust.

This means understanding what the local needs and issues are. It necessitates listening and patient assessment of the possibilities for change and of the capability of the plant to contribute constructively. In one plant which had been operating for about a year with evident success in terms of attendance on Sundays and weekday events like Messy Church, we were told, 'in terms of community transformation, [the leader] has a plan but at the moment it's early days.'

For some plants that are set in parish churches it can take some careful reflection and learning to understand how a parish church is by its nature a hub and expression of community. One village plant we visited was taking on a parish role, doing traditional things like Remembrance, Christmas, managing a graveyard and holding regular school services in the church.

## 9.2 Plant Buildings and Community Engagement

Most of the plants we visited had their own buildings, although some had to or chose to rent other people's buildings. We found a variety of ways of using plants' buildings to undertake work with the community. A couple of the plants had cafés as you came into the building which were open and welcoming on estates where there were no other such meeting places. There were other examples of plants offering a café for extensive or limited periods of the week. In one plant building with a café, there are boxes just by the café counter where people can drop in and leave food for the food bank and items for 'Baby Basics' - starter kits of baby goods for new mums on the estate.

Many plants let their rooms out to community groups, after expenditure on bringing them up to a suitable standard. There were multiple benefits from this, such as extra income for the plant. This was seen as a possibility for plants in areas where giving was likely not to be enough income for the plant to survive. However, the rationale was of using, adapting and developing the plants' premises for community use. Developing the building also means that the plant's own social action activities have a place to operate if that is appropriate. So we saw evidence of buildings being used for CAP and benefits advice, addiction groups, homeless meals,

homeless night shelters, carers and toddler groups, after school and homework clubs, food banks, and drop-ins for the homeless and vulnerable, marriage, relationship, bereavement and separation/divorce courses, work with excluded school children and training for young people to get into jobs. A London plant runs a community choir with 100 members, seventy of whom are from the local community, and not churchgoers.

Plants' buildings can offer a place of easy access to the holy. A house-based plant on a 1960's estate is about to create a sacred space 'The Upper Room' upstairs in the house where they meet. The catalyst is that people have nowhere to grieve. 'There is no cemetery or crematorium for miles.' A plant on a wealthier estate had struggled, but managed to fund and adapt a building amongst the estate shops:

This stretched our faith and we had to raise a lot of money. We need to keep finding new events to focus on - have used the Centre to set up Easter Labyrinth, Christmas Journey, Shepherds' Journey - multi-sensory, things to do and make, different stations through the upstairs of the building. They have a very good relationship with the school who have used these well. All of Key Stage 2 came through - 600 children. Using the creative side to teach people the story and bring it to life or to bring new perspectives to people who already know the story.

However, having a building may not always be a good start for community work, particularly as a plant develops into something more like a parish church. The leader of a plant, in an area of London where the flats are very expensive and owned by people who were not in residence much of the time, said, 'community transformation is difficult for us - no community round here - not a sense of community - lots of homes and flats empty a lot of the time.'

## 9.3 Activity out in the Community

We found fewer examples of social transformation work outside the plant buildings. Many of the activities that happened outside the building were evangelistic such as Alpha, open question sessions in a café, a pub or a library, or holiday clubs, Bible weeks and Soul Survivor in some public spaces

or groups and services in an old people's home. Schools and youth work are an exception. A number of plants paid for workers or used skilled volunteers to go into schools and supported counselling services across groupings of schools. These workers, the ministers and plant leaders often operated as detached youth workers. Eden teams partnered in this work in some plants.

Some plants' community activities are explicitly designed to bring people to faith but we met many examples of activities and initiatives that were about providing a service and building community. A large charismatic evangelical plant in a provincial city runs Tots and Toddlers – mainly for people from the local community. There is no religious content. 'We just want to bless the community. We will give out leaflets or give notices about events but it is definitely not evangelistic. It is about building friendships and community.' One estate plant, although strongly focussed on evangelism, had come to understand that 'the estate can be very lonely and isolated. Often there are not many people around. The church has been good at building community.'

We came across a few examples of non-evangelistic work in the community. One plant leader said: 'for five years we ran a market stall where we listened to people. 30,000 drinks were given away and hot breakfasts for the homeless. We were closed down by the people who ran the market because we were too Christian.' In describing the work of a cell in its village another leader said, 'they do people's gardens, and offer pastoral support to the bereaved – phenomenal support for individuals. There is a deliberate attempt to have a transformative effect – building community value – raising the spiritual temperature.' Another example would be the Open Home started for isolated mums on the Grange Park estate, which was described earlier. The use of planting tools such as leadership development and establishment of a growing network of support groups has worked to transform the community there without an evangelistic agenda.

Interestingly, one large charismatic evangelical London plant is experiencing an 'explosion of social transformation ministries.' They have a cluster of social impact investors, which they say is a 'brilliant

way of discipling the congregation'. They told us that it is 'easier to get people involved in social transformation ministries than evangelism.'

Another example of this shift is a couple in London's East End who are members of and supported by a plant in the HTB family. They feel called to do work on relational issues, to fill chasms both relational and emotional in people's lives. It is about meeting people's needs but also about faith sharing and working for conversions – starting with friendship. They don't want to do things for people on the estates but are gently trying to catalyse the locals so people will do it for themselves. They are developing a relational network. They have moved into the estate in rented accommodation.

The HTB church plants we visited are all involved in social welfare ministries – some of which they run themselves, and some are run by other agencies from their venues. HTB has its own professionally run organisation, The William Wilberforce Trust, which is engaged in social transformation ministries. It is based at St Augustine's Queensgate, has twenty-eight paid staff and aims to help churches to work with the vulnerable and needy. They are involved in four key areas: prison, homelessness, debt and addiction. They are well networked to local agencies and have built good relationships with probation services.

#### **9.4 Community Engagement and Partnership**

A recurring theme in efforts to transform the local community was the desire to work in partnership. 'What can we contribute to what's already happening?' was how one plant leader expressed it. The partnerships could be with statutory bodies, other churches, or local Christian agencies such as the Youth Charity XLP or bigger groups like CAP and secular agencies like London Citizens. Generally, the idea is to support and supplement what is already being provided. In one partnership with a local youth and community service, a plant's Eden team provided female workers when girls started coming to the club. Some plants reported very good relationships with the local council and benefitted from some funding from them for youth programmes and had built a 'good reputation with Social Services.' As is common in homeless night shelters, the plants involved are one of a number

of churches that look after one night a week each during the winter months.

Although a number of the plants we visited were in multi-cultural areas, we found no evidence of cooperation with groups from other faiths as might be expected in such communities. We found one social justice network that described itself as a partnership of faith groups but on investigation was in fact a network of Christian churches and agencies. Interfaith issues arose only when people were talking about integration in the local community and around sharing faith with non-Christians.

### 9.5 Worship as Community Engagement

Worship and services are used by plants as a way of connecting with the community. In some plants accessible services are held at Christmas, All Souls, Easter, and Harvest which are more user-friendly, sometimes by being shorter or less formal. Sometimes they are formal in a way that people can recognise that this is church more than on a normal Sunday where the ministers wear robes and the chairs are arranged in rows. There were numerous examples of plants changing or even cancelling their service for some sort of engagement out in the local area. The normal service is abandoned and the congregation go out into community and serve using flash mobs, giving things away at car boot sales, cleaning the streets, cooking, BBQs, Q and A in Costa. In one of the Anglo-Catholic plants the leader talked about 'the 102nd anniversary of the death' of a boy and the impact of this on the local community.

[He] was killed in the crossfire between armed police and armed robbers. We put up a simple plaque on the wall of the plant building. We had a 2pm service of the Word followed by tea and cakes. Lots of locals, councillors came. I was surprised that 25-30 people stayed on for the 5pm mass.

Support of worship as a community activity may indicate significant engagement, however, gradual. One small estate plant leader said:

People are starting to connect. A musician has come forward. Local people are sweeping up and putting away chairs at the end of the service, saying, 'I'll do this or that'. There is a lovely atmosphere. It's enjoyable – a children's folk mass with people constantly learning. The coffee time after is getting better and more people are staying on. We'll really have started when local leadership develops. There is a real lack of glue for the community, which the church might provide.

As one estate plant leader said, 'Messy Church is a great place for non-church people to belong – people who don't do Sunday church or are on margins of Sunday church. For some it helps. You get a meal. Messy Church is church for some.' The two Messy Churches we saw that had been established for some time were more representative of the local population than their respective Sunday services and provided something that children and parents enjoyed and looked forward to.

St Peter's Brighton hopes to establish a Worship Academy as Brighton has many amazing musicians. They would aim this at young people whose families do not have enough money to pay for musical training.

### 9.6 Concluding Thoughts

All plants we visited were keen to be engaged in community engagement and many longed to be more effective. We suspect the struggle lies in the obvious demographic difference between the church planters, their members and those whom they are trying to serve. The lack of interfaith engagement was noticeable. Sometimes there is a clear difference in focus between the leaders and the members as the leaders may be keener on community engagement than the church members. For some, it was seen as a means to an end, for others it was a part of normal Christian service and compassion. In many plants, a project oriented approach was the norm – doing for rather than being with. However, we should not underestimate the good work that is being done to alleviate suffering and hardship in many contexts.



# 10. Growth

## 10.1 Numerical Growth

After visiting twenty-seven church plants, we have seen that church plants clearly bring growth in numbers. The early church grew by church planting. The command to baptise, found in the Great Commission, is an indirect command to form new communities. Church planting and the healthy development of churches were central to the early church's mission as churches were planted and believers brought to full maturity in Christ. Church planting should be a direct result of evangelism and discipleship. As the *Mission-Shaped Church* Report expresses it, at its best, church planting will produce churches which have kingdom at their core, fulfil the Anglican calling, affirm Anglican diversity, continue Anglican history and rediscover a forgotten dimension – that the church has a divine mandate to reproduce.<sup>19</sup> We have observed and experienced that this planting and creation of new communities inevitably means growth. Bob and Mary Hopkins lamented that, 'we have developed a theology of decline and we need a sober assessment of growth. The Kingdom of God involves growth.' We have seen that growth is indeed possible - where there are new church plants, something now exists that did not exist before.

However, there are some interesting anomalies and challenges. Hardly any church plants could tell us the number of new converts. We realise that this is not necessarily a simple question to answer as people have very different stories and life journeys on their way to Christ. But it did intrigue us that this type of data was not readily available. Ann Morisy suggests that it may be more appropriate to talk of 'patterns of participation.'<sup>20</sup> The Team Rector at Tas Valley explained that sorting out dechurched from unchurched is not so straightforward as it depends where you draw the line. For example, does some exposure when you were at school make you dechurched or unchurched?

We discovered that numbers and figures can be viewed as problematic – not only in terms of

recording and interpreting but also because they can create stressful expectations. One church worker at a well-established large plant commented that 'sometimes figures and numbers can seem disempowering.' A vicar commented that he tried not to worry about numbers, as this had been the focus when he had arrived. The church had grown in a spectacular fashion in the early days, but even then not to the extent that the leaders and congregation had been praying for. This had become discouraging and disabling for the congregation. Another had found a drop in numbers traumatic and he even keeps a private spreadsheet of attendance numbers for all the regular and special services to monitor trends. Another senior person we interviewed claimed that the numbers are not as positive as the hype and that some honesty is required in this regard. A diocesan official commented that when church plants are started, planters are not concerned with tracking data so the picture concerning numerical growth is unclear. This was our experience in most of the plants we visited. We had hoped to obtain clearer data from London diocesan records. Our researcher spent six days collating and analysing financial data and attendance figures from the London Diocesan Fund. We found it was impossible to make any firm conclusions because of the gaps in the data and the mismatch between various coding systems. Some of the data had also been smoothed so was deemed to be unreliable.

However, all the church plants we visited have a mindset that numerical growth is not only desirable but also possible. Indeed, Revd Bob and Mary Hopkins told us that discipleship and multiplication are essential. The experience at St Paul's Shadwell is that church growth can be quite quick but community transformation is slower. They worked hard at growing the church. They had different pathways into the church. When they run an event, the principle is to be inclusive. They expect that half who come will not be Christians. A member of the St Paul's Shadwell congregation believed that it has become a hub and has generated a lot of positive energy to mobilise people. We were told that it had grown to some extent with transfer people who are energised and attracted by its clear vision and leadership. At All Hallows Bow, they explain their growth as mainly from people moving into

<sup>19</sup> *Mission-Shaped Church, Church Planting and Fresh Expressions of church in a changing context*, (Church House Pub, 2004), 34-36.

<sup>20</sup> Suggested to us by Ann Morisy at a Reference Group Meeting, 13 Dec 2012.

the area and the dechurched. They believe that creating a culture that is joyful and fun has caused growth to happen. They affirm that ‘the good news is actually good news’ and this is what they try to communicate.

All the church plants expressed a commitment to their locality. They were there for the long haul and appreciated that this means a long-term commitment. As the vicar at Oaks in Skelmersdale expressed it, ‘it takes longer than you think.’ St Paul’s Shadwell talked about a commitment to their context and a long-term strategy for their work there.

### 10.2 Replication

A common belief among many of the church planters, of even relatively new plants, was that one needs to plant again because multiplication is essential. There is a generosity, hospitality and activism behind this belief as well as a pragmatism and realism. The vicar of St Peter’s Brighton, planted in 2008, was exercised about this. He believed that church planting is needed partly to stop people from becoming ‘fat’ and so that St Peter’s itself can continue to grow as current members leave to plant elsewhere. Both Revd Nicky Gumbel and Ven Bob Jackson told us that planting churches replace those whom they send. Nicky believed church planting is the most effective form of growing and that all HTB church plants are planted with the DNA to plant again. He claimed that everything they do is aimed at reaching people outside the church and that they discourage transfer growth.

The Bishop of Croydon stated that, as mission is the whole point of church life, then church planting is a good way of redistributing resources according to the CoE pattern. St Peter’s Barge were trying to multiply their weekday ministries and plant accordingly. Another church plant talked about ‘lots of little examples of fruit’ in terms of relationship building.

However, this on-going planting and replication is not without its problems and needs careful planning and monitoring. One church member felt that their church had planted on too quickly and that this had major implications for resourcing in the planting church. Often the best people go and so

the people who remain feel the pressure. This can mean a drop in finances for the sending church. In her experience, this had led to some turmoil during which some people had left the sending congregation.

An area dean expressed the belief that growth is slower if it is more contextual. The vicar of St Ann’s Tottenham explained that they had not grown massively in some time. St Paul’s Shadwell expressed disappointment that their numbers do not contain many new Christians. They said they were mainly lapsed Christians with some transfers. They claimed that people are ‘cruising around more’ than previously as there is so much choice in London. Several London plants also commented on turnover. St Barnabas Kensington estimated that 25% of people leave each year. St Paul’s Hammersmith experienced a similar churn with people staying on average for three years. This did seem to be a particular issue in London. Might it be that too much reproduction and replication can offer too much choice, which then means that certain plants may struggle? This may be an area for monitoring and oversight at diocesan level.

MCs represent a different approach to encouraging growth. By nature, they are smaller, local and may have a limited lifespan. Numerical growth will wax and wane but their versatility in adopting an either neighbourhood or network approach means they can be more flexible. It is our impression that MCs worry less about numbers and numerical growth and focus more on relationships.

### 10.3 Changing Contexts

We visited some church plants that had been in existence over several decades, as we wanted to investigate what happens to plants over time. We found that plants need to respond to the changes that happen in their internal and external contexts. A simple example is of a plant that was set up to work with young professionals. As happens in many such plants, people in that church married from within that community and had families. The response was to have two services instead of the original one at 6pm on a Sunday afternoon – an earlier one at 4pm with groups for children and a second at 6.30pm aimed at young adults. Since our visit, this has changed again to a 10.30am service

with Sunday School and crèche and a 6.30 service. Another example is having two morning services aimed at different liturgical temperaments but with coffee in between to maintain community and fellowship.

In some places, the external context may impose constraints on even creating a diverse church over time. In central London, a significant factor was the expense of local housing. Once members got married and started having children, they had to move out into the suburbs where houses are cheaper, schools may be better, and it is possible to buy a house with a garden. Turnover in central London plants was reported variously as between 20% and 33% each year. We were told by plant leaders, as well as by Ven Bob Jackson, that, because of this turnover, within five years there may be hardly any members of the original planting team still attending.

Another interesting case was a plant, which, having existed for two decades, had only found the right building to buy and operate from in the last few years. This means they are only now working out how to function appropriately for the community in the town centre.

Planting's first stages are challenging but also exciting. Disappointment can set in when the initial energy is lost. One plant we visited was the only church of its kind when it started, but was now competing with a range of accessible, similar alternatives. Two members of the congregation who had started with the planting team described their nostalgia for the 'energy and fizz of something being planted' with its 'strong sense of unity'. From the excitement and freedom of the early days a plant, in the words of one plant had acquired a 'massive building and costs' so that it felt more like a business or a traditional parish. It had become much more established with many events and people using the building. They described the process as like 'falling in love'. Now they were in the settled phase. It was difficult for a number of people in this plant to cope with the decline in numbers from a high of 800 members to the 400 they have now. It may be important for planters to help members be aware of the different phases a church plant goes through as it settles down and matures.

At both HTB and SHB, they told us it was important to keep stretching the church in order to keep up the levels of energy. This included planting further churches, as that seems to encourage strong growth in the planting church. It is painful to send your best people to form a planting team. This has consequences for the maturity of the congregation left behind as well as potentially diminishing its range of skills and income.

#### 10.4 Life cycle

Church planters told us that plants and missional communities have a life cycle. One plant leader told us that the natural cycle is seven years. This was when decline in numbers begins to set in. He found that it then became a struggle to have a vision for the church. In another plant they got to a stage where the church was 'demoralised and it did not know where it was going. Naffness ruled and they were not doing things that well.' A theme that came up in two plants was that, in such cases, the previous and often original leader had stayed for too long. One leader stated that it is vital to recognise that priorities can change as the internal and external circumstances change and that this might call for different styles of leadership.

We encountered several plants, which had existed long enough to undergo a change of leadership. Some had experienced considerable strain and hurt on the part of the leader and the membership. In three cases, the incoming leader felt they needed to refocus and reenergise the plant. In one case, the new leader saw the structures as unfair and not viable, so he recast the organisational relationships and structures in a multi-plant church. This meant shutting down some of the plants which then led to distress among those who had set up and been members of these plants. The consequence was painful interactions between the new leader and the staff and plant members. In another, the leader identified that he needed to remodel the culture of the plant, which, whilst continuing to attract large numbers, needed to see itself as a settled parish church and to adjust its way of operating accordingly. Again, this proved immensely stressful over ten years for the leader. Such phases are made more painful by staff and members leaving because they do not agree with the new direction. A leader in this situation told us that it is important for the

new leader to recognise that there needs to be a grieving process.

As the Bishop of Crediton said in his visitor's report on Exeter Network Church, 'a BMO is designed to be a provisional arrangement to help a Mission Initiative become established as a full participant in the life of the Diocese.' However, we did not find any plans across the plants visited to deal with becoming a fully-fledged entity in the diocese and therefore remove this provisional status. Rather the feeling was that BMO plants often enjoyed their ability to operate outside the normal structures with, for example, off Common Fund status for their clergy. The Bishop recommended that 'all future BMO documents contain a clear process and timeline regarding Common Fund issues.' BMO status may also need to be reconsidered so that there is a clear process for what happens when a BMO finishes.

### 10.5 Succession

One bishop told us that there is a succession issue for plants, especially with network churches. This applies both to finding the next leader for a plant and to what is going to happen to these planters in the future. If your model is, as is the case with Co-Mission, that church plants are led by young men in their twenties, what is the plan for those men once they get older? Will they always remain in church planting situations or might they wish to become parish priests? This has obvious implications for training.

One bishop said that, 'in terms of succession, it is preferable to grow your next leader internally. A leader builds loyalty amongst the group and this can disperse quite quickly. Where you manage this more purposefully, it works better. It works better getting the succeeding leader from inside or from a similar family'. One plant leader quoted the transition from Sandy Millar to Nicky Gumbel at HTB as a good example of successful internal development and transition. However, one can know all the theory but life may not work like that, as this same leader said that the transition in his plant 'went horribly wrong'.

Succession planning is important. The standard CoE practice of appointments being made from outside

the plant through advertising and interviews can be a problem. Yet, we saw some good examples of where the transition of a new leader from outside was beneficial such as Springfield Church, Oak Tree Acton, Emmanuel Bicester and St Barnabas Kensington.

One bishop asked:

how do you deal with [plants'] continuing existence and opportunistic nature? We want to affirm but also to integrate. Network churches are becoming committed to the locality and they begin to want a building - they want a Sunday morning.

A network church plant in an Anglo-Catholic parish assumed that their leader would become the vicar when the Anglo-Catholic priest retired. They were surprised when the Bishop made it clear that this was not his plan. This is a challenge when a non-geographical model meets a parish model. The transition from network to local can happen quite quickly. Two plants we visited characterised themselves as network churches with a local vision. Both were increasingly involved in the sort of community work in the locality that is the normal work of a parish.

Emmanuel Bicester is an example of a plant onto a new estate within a team ministry. In October 2012, they became a parish church and no longer think of themselves as a plant. Exeter Network Church's leader had always wanted to be within the Anglican fold and have wider accountability. However, they saw themselves as complementary to the parish system as they are relationally based rather than geographically based.

### 10.6 Measuring Success

Leaders and members of plants have differing definitions of success and how it is measured. Some express tension/ambiguity around the concept of success. Mostly church planting means growing a new community, sometimes where there was nothing before or growing or increasing something that was small or declining. The tension appears to be between growth in numbers of members and/or converts and growth in depth of discipleship and, in many cases, impact on the community. As the leader of an urban plant, said, 'There is an issue of

what church statistics on measures we use. There is a pressure on numbers from the Church of England and from the networks we're part of. Indicators might be people giving money and people staying in Acton.'

A small number of those we talked to keep a close watch on numbers. The leader of the MCs' work in Sheffield declared, 'In a 12 month period 60 came to [Christ] and are being disciplined in [MCs]. This is our most successful figure in the last 6 years'. At St Barnabas, Kensington, the associate vicar had a solid grasp on conversion numbers ('10 converts per year - 12 people on current Alpha of which nine are non-Christians') but they felt the pressure around numbers, saying 'progressive evangelical churches are a bit obsessed with numbers. HTB has taken this to the nth degree.' They claim to have been 'wounded by church growth rhetoric and worried about numbers.'

At St Peter's Barge, the leader sees growth as involving a number of quality and quantity aspects. 'Growth is the obvious measure - in maturity, love, faithfulness, etc. [I] can see growth in understanding and service. People are stepping up to help. [I am] trying to wean [myself] off numbers as a measure of success. Conversion is a key measure and [I have] seen folk who have come to faith.'

So, it is possible to establish markers such as values against which success may be measured. In the Tas Valley Cell Church success is measured in terms of growth in cells against explicit values: 'Success is about multiplication of cells - growing becoming. Success is assessed by their five Values: all involved, becoming disciples, creating community, doing evangelism, encountering God. Most cell members can remember these.'

However, there is reluctance to see growth just in terms of numbers. We found it common that people have a general idea of numbers of members of congregations, groups, and projects but there is little evidence of people recording closely where growth comes from in terms of de-churched, unchurched or transfers from other congregations. One person in St Thomas Church Philadelphia, Sheffield even said, 'Sometimes figures and

numbers can seem disempowering.' Leaders often seem to avoid measuring success by numbers, talking about a journey of growth, as in the case of the leader of Grange Park Church in Northampton: 'Success - difficult to measure - we're not that anxious about numbers. It's about keeping people on the journey of discipleship.' We found evidence of a preference to look for other, more qualitative evidence to point to growth, as was said in Exeter Network Church, 'Success is seeing life grow - can you see it? Can you hear it?' St Helen's Bishopsgate, when supporting their plants, take the approach, 'Success isn't numbers. We encourage them to look at faithfulness to the Gospel, being a pillar and buttress of truth in your community - not just about outreach, also need building, training, equipping people'. Evidence is sought in stories and conversations. The leader of St Barnabas Kensington showed us a file full of letters attesting to the impact their work was having on individuals' lives. He said, 'God dictates terms of success in context - providing an environment where people's faith can be fanned and confirmed - forty such stories so far - if we have fifty of those, we've done a good job - people all over the world and the UK feel that SBK has had a key part in their life.'

For those involved in plants whose work is social transformation there is an issue both of what you measure and how long the timeline is for seeing success. One couple in the East End of London who have funded themselves to move into a largely Bangladeshi area of their plant's parish, said, 'some people [in our church] get what we are doing. They support us financially but often people think in terms of results in projects. Is having a cup of tea a deliverable? [Our] success is documented in stories - the work is preventative - 15-25 year framework for success. Success would be locals running a church themselves as well as projects.' The concept of timelines for success being longer than expected, often expressed as God's time scale, is sometimes used by those involved in a more community-based approach. At the Oaks Church in Skelmersdale, it was expressed as 'we do a lot of social transformation and are making a difference in the local area. We need to be patient and do it in God's time.' Discipleship happens in the home groups and in conversations. 'It feels very fragile. We are at the coalface, chipping away at fragments.'

We have to be faithful – and live in God’s timing – it might be 10 years, it might be 150.’

### **10.7 Concluding Thoughts**

It seems that both growth and success are difficult concepts to measure and quantify. How does one measure growth in discipleship? As one planter comments, it does depend on where you start. Numbers should be easier to measure but do not seem to be. While numerical growth may be an indicator of a healthy church, it may not be. Plants need to be sufficiently reflective to work out both what they want to become and to assess what they are actually becoming.

Transitions can be traumatic but can be helpful when a different approach is needed and the original personnel have done what they needed to do. Such reflection should flow into planning. This includes consultation with the diocese, as there is a growing understanding that affirming the entrepreneurial energy of planters fits in the overall plan for mission in the diocese. Not planning how to move on from temporary arrangements like BMOs may risk allowing plants to remain anomalous. We saw a range of clumsy and skilful approaches to change in plants. We also found evidence of constructive learning from experience that has improved the way plants and planting churches approach planting into a locality.

# 11. Concluding Discussion

## 11.1 Introduction

This study has shown that church planting is linked to church growth and that church growth is indeed possible. The study has raised many organisational and theological issues that beg further research. It has covered a range of plants but significant learning over time would be better served by another longitudinal study around where the new numbers come from. Is it just numbers or is it numbers combined with deepening discipleship and impact on the local or networked community? One of the questions that lies behind this research is a question about just what constitutes growth. Is the growth people transferring from other churches (transfer growth) or people who used to go to church but have not for years (dechurched) or is it people who have never had any experience of church (unchurched)?

## 11.2 Growth

A deeper consideration and reflection on what exactly is growth would be helpful. Where do our assumed understandings of growth come from? Is all growth necessarily good growth and how do we evaluate this? Is success in church planting and church growth simply a matter of finding the right techniques, approaches and people? This is certainly a discussion that we need to have. For example, are we just in thrall to modern capitalism's obsession with seemingly endless and infinite growth? Has growth become an end in itself? The agrarian parables of Jesus – perhaps especially the parable of the sower – suggest that different rates of growth, and success or failure may be dependent on the contextual soil in which the seeds are planted. We discovered a range of perspectives on this among the plants we visited. Those with a more 'franchise' approach expect quick results in terms of numerical growth. Others are there for the long term, realising that growth may wax and wane, that faithful presence is important and that fragility is inherent.

If we consider the Christian church from both a historical and global perspective, we see clearly that Christian expansion is not linear but serial, unlike other world religions. What was a centre of Christian vitality in one generation may become a wilderness in another. Christian advance is not a steady line of success. Advance may not produce

further advance. Christian advance is serial – rooted first in one place and then in another. Therefore, it seems that there is a vulnerability at the heart of our faith; indeed the Cross stands as a reminder of that vulnerability. Each manifestation of growth has the fragile status of an ingrafted olive branch that by its very nature can be removed. Much of Jesus' teaching on the growth of the kingdom is about its veiledness, its unpredictability and the sheer length of time maturity can take. Yes we can have confidence that the Kingdom grows, but we may need a greater humility when we talk about particular manifestations and whether they are expressions of growth or decline. It is also vital to remember that the effectiveness of Christianity within a culture depends on proper translation and contextualisation.

However, it is also important not to be lured into an eschatology of fatalism and decline. New churches are being planted and growth is possible. This is an important message to communicate.

## 11.3 Contextual Awareness

Our research has shown that there are a range of models and approaches to planting. Most planters show some sensitivity to and some awareness of context – this is vital if a plant is to take deep root in the local soil. However, we believe there could be more reciprocity demonstrated. How do the planters and the incomers listen and learn from the surrounding context? How are the plants shaped by the contexts in which they live and serve? Professor Andrew Walls has reminded us that a missionary 'has to live on terms set by other people.'<sup>21</sup> One of the key things that has been learnt from the reception of Christianity in Africa, for example, is that it was not what Western missionaries said that mattered in the long-term but rather how African Christians appropriated Christ in ways that made sense to them, utilising African spiritual maps of the universe. This is a lesson for us here and now when we consider church planting and church growth. Are we able to plant churches that are truly contextual and can flourish in indigenous soil using

21 A Walls, "Afterword: Christian Mission in a Five Hundred Year Context" in A Walls and C Ross (eds), *Mission in the 21st Century, Exploring the Five Marks of Global Mission*, (London:DLT, 2008), 197.

local spiritual maps? Christian mission involves humble listening, mutuality, and is a long-term process. Most of the church plants we visited were either aware of this or slowly gaining a growing appreciation that this is the case.

There are still on-going questions concerning definitions and terminology in church planting. Definitions and categorisations to determine just what is a Fresh Expression of church and what is a church plant are difficult and slippery. We believe that the boundaries are blurred and that it may be best not to worry too much about exact categories and delineations. Terms such as Pioneer and MC can also be understood in different ways so care is needed when using these terms.

We wondered whether some of what we experienced in church plants is not just what is required for growth of a normal parish church – good welcome systems, entrepreneurial engagement, additional staff, realistic approaches to giving, use of small groups, appropriate worship/liturgy, good relationship building, community engagement. There clearly is a spectrum as not everything about church plants is unique to them and most of what makes them ‘successful’ is frequently replicated in parish churches doing the sorts of things that enable congregations to flourish within their communities.

#### **11.4 Future Trajectories**

The following is a short summary of what we have seen and experienced combined with brief reflections for on-going engagement.

Meeting places and spaces are important. Every church plant we visited acknowledged this in some way. Most were intentional about shaping and designing their space to enhance and communicate their understanding of mission. No church is isolated from its environment and the church plants reveal something of their context. So we believe that where plants meet is an important factor to consider when planning a church plant.

Models and approaches to church planting vary. This may be because of context or it may be for other reasons such as finance, theology, or ecclesiastical tradition. The church planting

model adopted will communicate all of this and more. Some approaches are more top down, costly and homogenous. Some are bottom up, cheap and less homogenous. Some are liturgical in focus while others are more free-form in style and worship. Some are networks while others are parochial or part of the parish system. These values influence style, worship, community engagement and involvement in the plant itself. Some are missional, some are attractional. Some are more focussed on presence and being there, others are more activist. We have seen all these models and approaches at work. Generally church plants have a clear focus and vision and so design the approach accordingly. There are some key values in common whatever their model and missiological approach: 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. Some church plants are clearly trying to reimagine church for our current context. We have seen creativity and variety concerning models of and missiological approaches to church planting. This is encouraging and we hope this continues to be the case. Flexibility, variety, innovation and creativity are all needed to reach a diverse world of many contexts. A missiology of welcome and embrace is needed in our hurting world.

Obviously finances are important. How is the church plant going to be sustained? We saw a variety of approaches including overseas funding, sacrificial and generous giving, diocesan support, volunteering and self-supporting ministry. Generally planters are creative when it comes to funding and sustainability – there are lessons here for the rest of the church. Two of the Church Mission Society’s founding principles might be helpful here: put money in second place, not first, and look for success only from the Spirit of God. The Spirit blows where the Holy Spirit wills and we need to be reminded of that principle. Rt Revd John Taylor observed, ‘I have known projects abandoned for lack of funds, but not for lack of gifts of the Spirit. Provided the human resources are adequate we take the spiritual for granted.’<sup>22</sup> There is a clear contrast between

22 J Taylor, *The Go Between God, The Holy Spirit and Christian Mission* (London:SCM, 1972), 5.



church plants with buildings to maintain and the missional communities that tend to meet in already existing venues. These different approaches have clear implications for finances and sustainability. While resources and finances need to be carefully considered we would not want to see the risk removed from church planting either.

Diocesan support and involvement is vital. There seems to be no consistent approach or policy applied to church planting among the dioceses we visited. Indeed, if there was one, it was often reactive or playing catch up. There is a perception that a level playing field is needed. There is a tension between observing rules and policies (where they exist) and a more pragmatic and entrepreneurial approach. The latter is usually justified as enabling gospel witness to be more effective. Flexibility is certainly needed but we acknowledge that it is tricky to apply this consistently. Permission giving and encouragement at the structural and diocesan level is significant for church planters. It is also important for church planters to appreciate that good relationships with the structures can enhance mission rather than hinder it.

Leaders in church plants tend to be entrepreneurial and want to get things done. This begs immediate questions related to the earlier discussion on the nature of growth, unpredictability, the long-term nature of an incarnational approach and embeddedness in a particular community. Plant leaders do need to be able to read and understand their context and this takes time, patience and intentional listening. We were constantly struck by how busy plants leaders were – this was borne out by how difficult it was just to get to meet with

them sometimes. Business can be a distraction and a temptation. We believe that leaders need to take more time to reflect on both their contexts and their engagement in that context.

Vocations for church planting are an issue. How do we recognise the gifting and calling of people who are called to do a new thing? How do the church structures develop an appreciation of this? The demography of planters and of what is being planted into is a key issue. Most of the church plant leaders are white, middle-class men which reflects leadership within the CoE generally.

The amount of community engagement was both impressive and puzzling at the same time. It was impressive because of the amount of time, people and resources that some plants are able to put into this. It was also puzzling because there did not seem to be a clearly thought through and developed theology of community engagement. Why are we doing this? How does it relate to who we are and why we are in this community? Is it a means to an end – i.e., to get people into church or is it an end in itself? Much of the community engagement was project oriented and focussed on doing things for people. We think there needs to be a more rigorous understanding of community engagement and why it is important for Christians to be engaged in their communities in a holistic way.

For the future, we look forward to how church planting and church growth will interact with their surrounding contexts to shape and to be shaped by them.

# Appendix 1

## Introduction to Church/Congregational Plant Visits as part of the Church Commissioners' Church Growth Research

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We are looking to gain insights along a range of issues to do with church/congregational planting in the Church of England. These can be categorised under a number of headings as laid out below. You know your set up and we hope that you will be able to help us use the time we have got with you to see as much as possible that will be helpful and to talk to people who will give us a picture of what is happening, why, what it feels like from their different points of view. We are happy to talk to people individually or in groups. We will make sure that the first part of the conversation involves clarifying what we are doing and why and what we will be doing with the information people give us. If people want to talk to us confidentially or are concerned that what they say is not attributed to them, we are happy to negotiate and work with that.

These are the areas we are trying to understand:

### **a. Plants as part of the wider church**

- What help and support do church/congregational plants need from the diocese? What helps and what gets in the way?
- What about money and buildings at the start and in the longer term?
- What about the impact on churches round about?

### **b. Plants and Mission**

- How have you gone about church/congregational planting and why?
- What about leadership and how you make decisions?
- What are the definitions of success? Do they include numbers of members, those attending, the quality of discipleship, mission and social justice? Who define(s) the definitions, how and why? Are they held in common?
- If numbers are growing, where are those new people coming from – unchurched, dechurched, lapsed, from another church, etc?
- Would your approach work elsewhere?

### **c. Plants and their Context**

- Do plants reflect their setting? How does yours? Is there any transformative impact on the area?
- What about the longer term? Has your approach changed? What about financial viability, giving, turnover and numerical decline?
- What do plants become over time? When do they, or will they ever, stop being plants?

If there are other areas that you think we need to understand or know about, we will be very happy to hear about them from you and include them in our thinking. We are not coming at this research with any particular preformed ideas or judgements and so will benefit from understanding approaches we have not yet met

There are several tools we are using to gather the information we think will help in our study. These include visiting and attending activities at the plants, talking to people individually and in groups, and looking at statistics, documents, policies and plans. We have already talked to a number of national officers, policy makers and experts and are studying the literature.

### **Worship, groups and other activities**

It would be good to attend any of your plant's activities that would give us a good sense of the way you operate, your style and theology, your approach to mission and ministry, the people involved and how you are working together and with them. Obviously, especially in small groups, we will stick out. We are happy to be a 'fly on the wall' or to be introduced and talk to people, according to your wisdom about what will be best for that group or activity.

### **Interviews**

1. If worship and other activities happen on a Sunday, the visit should include a Sunday. Often this is a good time to talk to people and groups as well as to watch what goes on.

2. Interviews with key leaders and officers. These will, we hope, include the vicar, minister(s) or lay leaders as well as other key leaders and officers such as the treasurer, the heads of activities or departments such as youth and children, worship, pastoral or community.
3. Interviews with sample of members. These can be individual or in pairs or small groups. They can be in homes or at the plant centre (if there is one) or as part of group's meetings. It would be good to see a cross section of people – new Christians, the congregation that was there previously, those who came in to start the plant off, different age, ethnicity or gender groups, etc.
4. Interviews with representatives of the community who will show the impact of the plant

It may be that your plant does not contain some of the categories above but we hope you will see what we are trying to do and work out who it might be good to see in your context. If there are key people that it is not possible to see while we are physically in your area, we will be happy to talk to them on the phone. In addition, it would be good to know if there if there are other key people outside the local area such as a diocesan officer, an archdeacon or a national network that it would help to talk to.

### **Documents that would help our research**

- Membership, electoral role, attendance statistics over the life of the plant
- Financial reports over the life of the plant
- Planning documents such as mission action plans, strategy documents, business plans, consultation documents
- Policies around growth, discipleship, leadership, community action
- Publicity literature and websites

We realise we are asking you to add work to your already busy schedules and are thankful for any help you can give us. This document is meant to be an overall picture of what we hope to do and is intended to make our time with you as effective and efficient as it can be. We hope to have good conversations with you before, during and after our visits to make sure you and we negotiate the best use of the time and get the greatest benefit possible out of it.

# Appendix 2

## Details of Visits to Plants

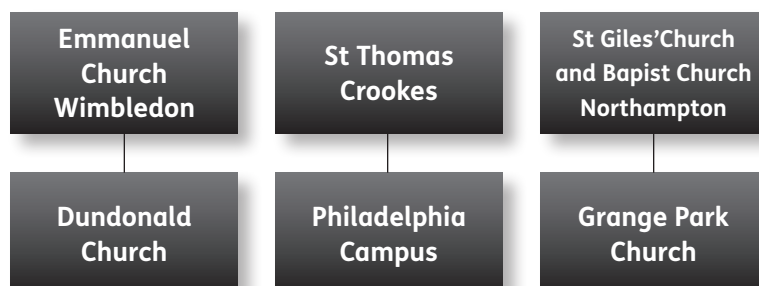
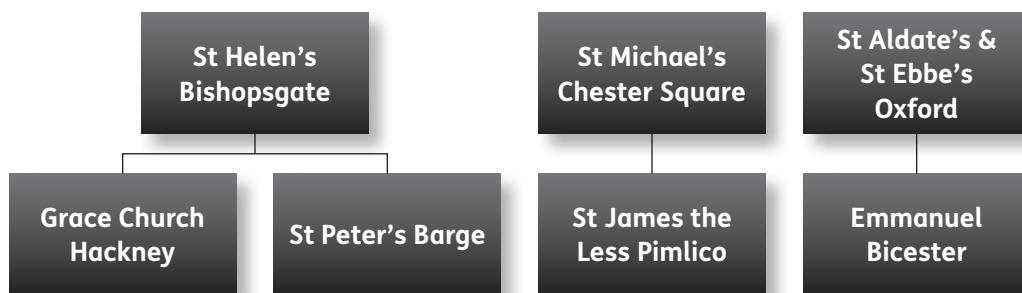
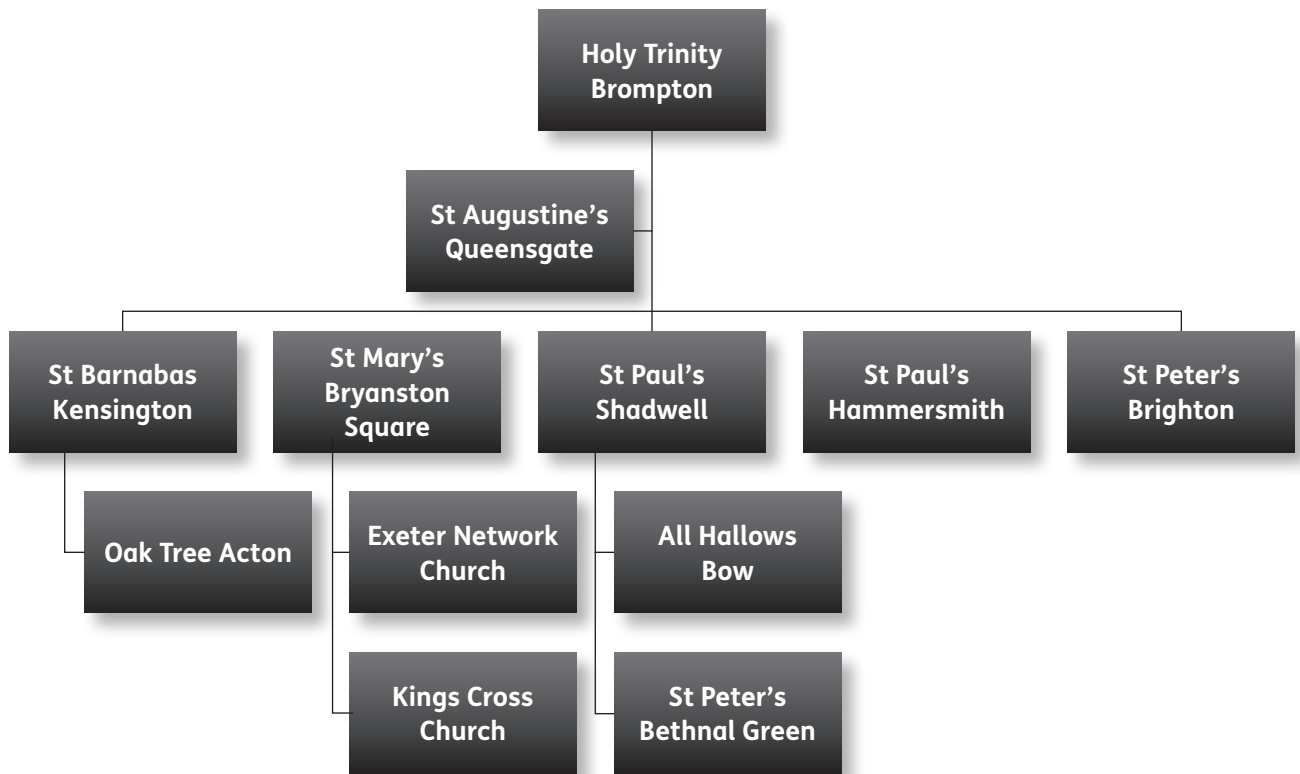
Name of Plant	Days	Visits	Sunday	Interviews & Substantial Conversations		Worship attended	Groups & Events visited
				Types	No's		
Dundonald Church	1	1	No	Senior Pastor, plant leaders, trainees	5		Ministerial training school
Emmanuel Church Bicester	1	1	No	Vicar, pioneer ordinand, member	3		
Exeter Network Church	2	1	Yes	Leadership team, church members, group members	7	Sunday 4.30 & 7pm	Cell group, Leadership team
Grange Park Church	2	2	No	Vicar, elders, counsellor, young people, café users, youth leader, members, group leader, project manager,	12	Midweek prayer	Youth drop-in, toddler groups,
Holy Trinity Barnes	1	2	Yes	Vicar, members	5	Sunday 10.15am	
St Francis and St Clare Jennetts Park Easthampstead	0.5	1		Vicar, plant leader	2		
Oaks Skelmersdale	2	1	Yes	Leadership team, staff meeting, community members	5	11am Sunday service	Community lunch, staff meeting
St Thomas Church Philadelphia Sheffield	2	1	Yes	Clergy, missional community leaders, MC members, 3DM worker.	11	MC worship, Sun evening service	Missional community
St Catharine's Houghton	2	2	Yes	Vicar, Sunday School leader, churchwarden, group discussion with members of plant team and existing congregation, conversations at services and lunch	23	9am HC, 10.30 Morning Service Vicarage lunch	
St George's Deal	2	1	Yes	Clergy, members, missional community leaders, church secretary, Messy Church leader	12	Sunday 10.30	
St Peter's Brighton	1	1	No	Clergy, families worker, youth and children's coordinator, student, project worker and ordinand, chief operating officer	6		Toddlers, Vulnerable women

Name of Plant	Days	Visits	Sunday	Interviews & Substantial Conversations		Worship attended	Groups & Events visited
				Types	No's		
Springfield Church Wallington	3	3	Yes	Clergy, churchwarden, youth minister, young people, pioneer minister, cell group leaders & members, children's minister, embers, musician, cell group coordinator, pastoral care coordinator, treasurer	18	Sunday 10.30	Messy Church, Youth club,
Tas Valley Cell Church	3	1	No	Team Rector, cell leaders, cell members, school head, Open the Book team, youth leader, treasurer	12	Daily morning prayer	Cell groups, Messy Church, Open the Book, school lunch, Alpha
Warfield Church	1	2	No	Vicar, assistant priest, youth worker, interns	5		
<b>In London Diocese</b>							
Good Shepherd, Tottenham	1	1		Vicar, members, churchwarden, lunch organisers, lunch guests	8	Midweek mass	Lunch club
Grace Church Hackney	1	2	Yes	Vicar, members	8	5.15pm Sunday HC	
Kings Cross Church	1	2	Yes	Vicar, members, administrative assistant & student worker	5	3.30pm Sunday service	
Oak Tree Anglican Fellowship	2	2	Yes	Vicar, visiting bishop, churchwarden, members, student,	6	4.30 Sunday service	
St Ann's Tottenham	2.5	3	Yes	Clergy, members, reader, lay leaders, schools worker, musicians	12	5pm community HC	Staff meeting, toddlers, community meal
St Augustine's Queensgate	1	1	Yes	Member, Curate, Head of William Wilberforce Trust	3	11am & 4.30pm service	
St Barnabas Kensington	3	3	Yes	Clergy, leaders of Sunday school, toddlers group and homeless project, congregation members, first time attenders, cluster group members, pastoral worker, verger, administrator, operations manager, ex SBK ordinand now a planting priest	19	9am HC, 10.30am, 6.30pm services	Staff meeting, cluster group, homeless project, toddlers group, welcome lunch

Name of Plant	Days	Visits	Sunday	Interviews & Substantial Conversations		Worship attended	Groups & Events visited
				Types	No's		
St James the Less Pimlico	1	1	No	Vicar, lay assistant, church members	7		
St Paul's Hammersmith	2	2	No	Vicar, churchwarden, members, associate pastor, young adults pastor, children's pastor	8	Sunday 10.30am & 6pm	Staff meeting, welcome lunch, cluster group
St Paul's Shadwell (with All Hallows Bow & St Peter's Bethnal Green)	5	5	Yes	Clergy, ordinands, lay staff, treasurer, welcome team, congregation members, Eden team leader, visitors to worship, Shoreditch project manager, children's worker,	18	9.30 am HC, 11.00am & 6pm	After School club, small group, connect group, internship meeting, staff meeting
St Paul's Hounslow West	2	2	Yes	Vicar, reader, leadership team, ordinand, members, Messy Church parents and children, coffee servers	15	10.30 Sunday service	Messy Church
St Peter's Barge	2	2	Yes	Clergy, women's worker, administrator, members, musicians	7	4.30pm & 6pm Sunday service	Midweek business lunch and talk
Total	47	45			242		

# Appendix 3

Relationships between planting churches and their plants outside their own parish that form part of this study



# Appendix 4

## Case Studies

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### Case Study One:

#### **Sunday Worship at The Church on the Farm, Tottenham, 5pm, 24 February 2013.**

The church meets in a two-storey portakabin in the middle of the Broadwater estate. Tower blocks of flats overshadow it. The shiny new primary school and the new community centre are opposite, presumably results of investment after the riots some years ago. The building used to be a council facility but the church rents it for £700 a month from the new owner. It has a main room which will seat forty or so, an entry area with kitchen/bar where food was laid out, an office and an upstairs room used for the children's groups. There are toilets and storage as well. It is a good building for community use and right in the heart of the estate and it does not look like a church.

When I arrived at about 4.30, there were people around preparing food. I received a friendly welcome from Fr Roy (a white, retired priest) and Keith Jackson (a black Reader who is the plant leader) who were waiting near the door. Looking around, the people were a mixture of black and white. Three women were practising the songs for the service at microphones at the front backed by recorded music. The chairs were laid out in rows for the service. The service was a community service. They hold these occasionally, particularly to reach the community who, they claim, will be especially attracted by the food. This was the second time they had done such a service. The first had been at All Souls when people could bring the names of their deceased, loved ones. These community services were much more formal (robes, formal liturgy, chairs in rows rather than round tables) than the weekly Sunday worship which happens at midday. Fr Roy's wife came to sit by me and explained to me what was going on.

The service started at about 5.05pm. People continued to come in for the first third of the service. The attendance was forty to forty five, half and half children and adults. Keith Jackson led the service. Hetty Lewis, a black Reader but from St Philips, read the gospel. Keith preached on Jesus' temptations. People from the congregation did the other readings and the prayers. The children

from the 'Move and Create' group came up to tell us what they had done on Monday after school – about fifteen primary age children. They told us they did Bible reading, ate refreshments, did arts and crafts, made angels for Christmas, and played games. Mel who leads it introduced them. She and her husband, Olu, came originally from St Ann's, Tottenham. Olu runs the youth group, The Refuge, on Friday evenings. Fr Roy's wife, told me the children and youth work is a success story. Olu and Mel then took the children out for their session upstairs. Fr Roy took over from the offertory prayer. If he is not available, Keith and Hetty do the service with pre-consecrated bread and wine. The children and young people came back before communion. There was quite a lot of movement, going in and out and noise during the service but the policy is just to keep going. It is more important that people feel welcome. The room is quite small and the children feel at home, so they tend to wander around. I was welcomed in the service and asked to come to the front to talk about what I was doing. There was a service sheet prepared for the day with most of the text and the songs, accompanied by standard prayers on a laminated sheet. It was a local mixture of texts from various CoE liturgies in a locally designed order. Keith led the end of the service.

At the end of the service, people tucked into the food immediately. There was a very warm atmosphere with people chatting to one another and making sure people were welcomed. I was encouraged to get food and had a tasty curry. The food was a 'bring and share' meal and so included a range of hot and cold food. The hospitality was attentive and generous. As we all ate, I spoke to a white mum, her daughter and the daughter's friend. They come to the morning service once or twice a month. She had three more children who were eating at a table with other children. The children were obviously comfortable in the church.

I spoke to Hetty, who is the Reader at St Philip's (black in her 70's). She told me that the Broadwater Farm estate is in St Philip's parish not St Ann's. St Philip's and St Ann's set up the Church on The Farm jointly. Hetty had been involved from the start. The vicar at St Philips has gone over to Rome so Hetty has had to spend a lot of time running St Philip's, but she is really committed to this church. She



told me there had been a worker from London City Mission, Nick Labiche, who was based here but who left not so long ago. There were no paid workers now. Keith used to work for a bank but he gave that up to do this full time. He is here during the week and so many people pop in. I talked to a young mother with three children, whose husband died last year. She said that Keith had been really good. He took the funeral and had been available to talk to many times. Nearly all those who come are from the local estate. In terms of finance, they get no support from elsewhere. Keith said that they always manage – God provides – although it is obviously often very close. People are very generous with time, effort and food. There are no other churches on the estate although there was a minibus from a black Pentecostal church parked outside – perhaps taking people to a church off the estate. Keith said doing this work is so much more satisfying than his previous job in finance but he has benefitted from having managerial experience in working with volunteers. He concentrates on encouraging people and getting the church to work through the leadership and contributions of local people. He takes assemblies in the two schools. They also run sessions in the schools where pupils can come and talk about their issues – general support and counselling.

I talked to a young, white woman who is a public defence lawyer and a Baptist. She used to go to church in Islington but wanted to do something in the area where the young men she regularly defends come from. So she has moved to here. She leads, preaches, and works with groups. She finds this church is a stark contrast to Islington churches with their huge amounts of talent and resources. I also talked to a black mother of a year seven girl. She helped lead the singing. She asked me if I was frightened coming onto the estate, given its reputation.

### **Analysis**

This brief description tells us something of the worship and ambience of this particular congregation. We note its location on the estate and that it meets in a formerly Council-owned facility that the church rents. It does not look like a church and costs the church a monthly rental.

These are decisions that are important and reflect the church's attitude to location and ownership of the building. The church is in another parish (St Philip's) but the two parish churches set up this venture jointly. So this demonstrates cooperation and generosity between churches.

People are there before the service setting up food, arranging the seating and practising. Service sheets had been prepared for this particular service. Food and welcome are important so hospitality is an important value. Lay involvement is demonstrated through the readings and prayers. The sacraments are treated respectfully and Anglican order is followed by using pre-consecrated elements if necessary. It appears they are comfortable with formal and less formal approaches in worship. This demonstrates that being well prepared for worship is important, that lay people need to be involved and that a relaxed atmosphere is important so that children (and parents) can feel at ease. Children and young people are involved and feel able and comfortable to contribute during the service. The church is engaged with young people during the week so has more than just a Sunday involvement in their lives.

Good food was brought by the congregation so folk could enjoy a tasty meal afterwards and share together. Volunteering is important to this community as there are now no paid workers. Hetty and Keith are very important for the life of this community. They encourage the involvement and leadership of local people. Keith is able to bring his previous work experience to bear on his volunteering work with the church. They seem to be well known and appreciated by the local community as many people drop in during the week. Most of their attendance is from people on the estate. They are the only church on the estate so their presence is vital. This is a church that is committed to the local context. It appears that at least one outsider has been attracted to the church because of its location and work on the local estate.

Money is tight. Therefore they are forced to rely on God and their experience is that God does indeed provide and that people are generous with their resources.

So this brief case study begins to tell us something of the values, beliefs and approaches of this church in terms of: meeting place, missiological approach, worship style, leadership, relationship with neighbouring parish, finance, community engagement and growth. We must be modest with our findings and conclusions. This is only one

snapshot of one event in the life of this church and there is more to learn from interviews, as well as attending other groups and meetings. However, much can be gleaned by attentive observance and listening, judicious questions and intentional participation.

## Case Study Two:

### **Springfield Church's service in Wallington Girls' School, 10.30am, 24 January 2013**

Springfield Church has chosen to have no buildings of its own for worship, events or meetings. It is part of its ethos to use a range of venues across their area. On Sundays their largest service is held in Wallington Girls' School. Wallington is part of the largely white, suburban London Borough of Sutton, not far from Croydon. There was a large banner outside the school building just by the entrance and a series of banner flags advertising the service on the main road. They said they were getting new banners and flags as the present ones were looking tired. The service was held in the school hall – set up sideways with the band and speakers/service leaders set up against the windows out onto the front lawn and trees, rather than on the stage. The band was very loud whilst practising, loud enough to be heard outside in the car park. In the service it was appropriate when the congregation filled the hall. Two young adults in the entrance hall handed out notices and a prayer bookmark slightly hesitantly. The cell group doing the welcome, readings, and prayers this week was Cell-O-Tape, a young adults' cell group. With so many people arriving, there was no guidance as to what to do or where to sit. Notices were scrolling on the screen, as the hall filled with more than 200 people, mostly white, with a spread of ages but with significant number of young adults. There were few children as they had gone or been delivered to their groups.

The service, led by Revd Will Cookson, the Minister, started with twenty minutes of notices and interviews – including a report back on the young adults' weekend the previous week. I was asked to come up to the front and talk about the research. Then came twenty minutes of worship songs ending with prayer, followed by ten minutes of traditional intercessions and a bible reading (1 Corinthians 3), both done by Cell-O-Tape members.

During the first set of songs, I was taken round the children's and young people's activities going on in various rooms and playgrounds around the school - Roadrunners (6-11), Sparklers (2-6), the crèche and the youth cells. The Roadrunners run from 10.20 to

12.00. It is a progression of play, games, craft, and sessions in their year groups. They come together for an acted Bible story and worship together. Then they go back into year groups to talk about life and how they are getting on and how to be Christian and then a final prayer. The youth have worship together and then split into cell groups: one for each year for school years 7-9 and a single group for years 10-13. According to Becky, one of the teenagers, the cell groups get into quite heavy stuff where there is a lot of sharing. Chris, who manages the children's work, later told me how difficult it was to find enough people regularly to resource all these groups.

Back in the hall, the sermon by Revd Dr Donna Lazenby, the curate, was quite dense, intellectual, well delivered and twenty-two minutes long. The service continued with more songs and the offer of prayer ministry from teams around the hall. Will then led the eucharistic prayer and communion, followed by a final song. The service finished about 12.15. This was an overrun. Will was gently told off later for this by Chris who runs the children's work. The service used Common Worship texts, ran without announcements, and the worship band played well.

After the service, while good quality coffee was served, I talked to Jim who was one of the original planters from St Patrick's. He had also been warden for a period. He talked about the transitions through meeting in three schools and how much of a pain it was to get the extra parochial place status with all the levels the process it had to go through. He was not impressed with the support from the diocese. They did not seem to understand what Springfield was. He was convinced that it continues to be a good idea not to have a church building. He explained that people come to Springfield because it is not off-putting like a proper church in a church building. (This is in contrast to other witnesses from Springfield I met who said that the relationship with the Diocese was positive and helpful). He believes that they need many volunteers because of the way they run church.

The bass player in the band talked a bit about how difficult it was to get enough players and singers so that people can have a week or two off. The former

leader used to be very demanding about coming to rehearsals for quite a time before you were allowed to play on a Sunday but now things are more relaxed and inclusive. As a bass player, she is a rare commodity, and so also plays at Holy Trinity at their evening service. They used to have an evening service at Springfield but they cancelled it, as it was not working that well.

A man in the congregation who had come up to say hello before the service said that he had moved to Springfield from a local Baptist church because his children were bored. They have stuck with Springfield and really enjoy being part of it. He helps with setting up the hall.

### **Analysis**

This church plant has clearly chosen not to own church buildings and prefers to meet in a range of local venues in their area. It has a large congregation and caters well for groups of different ages – children, young people and adults. The service was nearly two hours and normally it is 90 minutes into which they pack a lot. Notices are clearly important as they took nearly one quarter of the time. The worship ran smoothly. The length of the service was an issue with all the children's groups running at the same time so an overrun is not appreciated. The children's and youth work is well organised and integrated. They provide activities for all ages and they take young people's spirituality seriously.

There was a strong emphasis on not owning a church building as a core value and for missional

purposes. According to Jim this is important as it normalises church.

They advertise their presence using banners and flags rather than by being recognisable with their building. This may be more familiar and less strange in their current context. Jim expressed strong feelings on how difficult it was to regularise their presence within the diocese.

Three people spoke of how difficult it was to get volunteers to help with children and youth work, with music and more generally. Is this because they have a lot of activities and have to set up from scratch every week? Volunteering is a key value for this church and appears to be challenging at this time. Quality and inclusion are both important values concerning their music.

From this brief case study we begin to learn about their attitudes towards church buildings and the importance of being present not just on Sundays but also during the week in their area. Their model and missiological approach is one of a dispersed presence as it is not all focussed on Sundays. This suggests that they place an importance on community engagement. They try to be non-clerical as leaders are known on a first name basis and do not wear dog collars – a common choice among church planters. This points to a shared leadership between clergy and lay as an important value. Their relationship with the diocese has been difficult. Again, there is more to be uncovered by further meetings and interviews but this one event provides some key insights.

## Case Study Three:

### **Sunday Worship at The Shire Missional Community, Sheffield, 11am 9th December 2013**

The Shire is a small missional community meeting in the Shiregreen area of Sheffield. We met in the home of one of the two couples who had moved onto the estate seven years ago. These two couples had moved there with the purpose of living on the estate and getting to know people. The work originally began as a children's ministry, then a youth ministry and has developed into a missional community. The two families who initiated the missional community live next to one another in an adjoining house. The estate is 95.6% white with 30% of households claiming income support. 50% of residents in this community have no qualifications at all, with just 4% having two or more A levels.

The service began at 11am with twelve adults and seven children in attendance and finished at 12.30. Numbers vary from eight to thirty. We all sat in the living room of one of the leader's homes. The singing was led by one of the leaders who played the guitar. Children roamed, played with toys, cried and were fed. It was all very relaxed – people joined in eagerly. Then there was sharing of testimonies. There was no pressure or expectation to share but some spoke of how God had been with them during the week and provided for them or encouraged them in some way. It was all very practical. A bus fare had been provided by a group member and this was seen and appreciated as God's provision. Another leader spoke briefly about Joshua as the 'sermon' slot. This was followed by a time of prayer where most joined in with prayers for themselves, their families and their community. Personal needs and prayer requests were shared easily and comfortably. The atmosphere was one of a large family sharing joys, concerns and news with one another. At the end of the service everyone stayed

on for lunch and a chat. The leaders explained that it has taken all of the seven years of living there to begin to feel a part of the estate.

Although this missional community is part of St Thomas Philadelphia, no one (apart from the leaders) attends the Sunday services there. It is too far away and culturally very different so there is no expectation that this missional community join in with their services. They also have a regular service (once every six weeks) in the local parish church with whom they have a good relationship.

#### **Analysis**

Everyone knew one another well, was comfortable with one another and trusted one another. The presence of the leaders living on the estate was clearly crucial. Although they are different – three of them work in professional jobs outside the estate – they are committed to being present and to living there in the context. People are clearly used to coming to their homes and various other activities, such as young people's groups, discipleship groups, toddler groups, also take place there during the week. Their leadership was facilitative and encouraged participation. They were able to adapt the service to include children.

The Sunday service was simple and unfussy. Each person there could relate to what was happening, feel engaged and join in. God was real and involved in their lives. It raises questions about what constitutes Anglican worship.

The incarnational presence of the two couples is clearly crucial. They are committed to remaining there for the long term and realise that this kind of work requires long-term commitment. They are known in the area, especially through their work with young people and in schools. They had an open home policy. At the time of the visit, one of the wives was experiencing a call to pioneer ordination training with the aim of becoming the leader of this community in a more formalised way.





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