

8/94 Planting and Developing New Churches

(A report from a Synod Working Party.)

1. A Working Party comprising the Rev G.R. Banister, the Rev P.G. Collins, Mrs N. Gatenby, Archdeacon G.R. Huard, the Rev P.D. Jensen, Bishop R.J. Piper, the Rev S.P. Robinson, Archdeacon L.M. Stoddart and the Rev J.W. Woo, was given the following resolution -

"This Synod recognised that **planting and developing new churches** is an effective way to reach our nation with the gospel and asks the Archbishop respectfully to set up a Working Party to prepare for the next Synod a report on **Research** into the practice and experience of church planting in Australia and overseas, and in the light of that research present a **draft diocesan strategy** for evangelistic church planting. This report should particularly include examination of research into and recommendations for evangelistic church planting among **non-Anglo Saxon ethnic groups** within our Diocese."

2. For our purposes we will mostly define "church" as congregation, and therefore "planting a new church" will mean "starting a new congregation". When we talk about evangelistic church planting we mean "an intentional drawing together of a new group of believers for the express purpose of publicly evangelising the lost and edifying the saints, thereby exalting Christ".

3. We suggest the following six point strategy for planting and developing new churches.

Intensify Growth Attitudes

4. **The Bible Speaks of Growth.** When Jesus told parables he compared the Kingdom of Heaven to the small mustard seed which grew into the greatest of shrubs. When Luke wrote of the ministry of Jesus and of the progress of the gospel in Acts he noted both the numerical growth in the believers and the ever-growing effect the gospel produced in the world. When Paul wrote to the Colossians he observed that the gospel was bearing fruit and growing in the whole world. When John was in the Spirit he saw in heaven a great multitude which no one could number standing before the throne and this company came from every tribe, people and tongue. God's Kingdom will grow large and among all people groups.

5. Since the Bible speaks of growth, **growth is what we should expect.** All of us, in every aspect of diocesan ministry will thus actively anticipate growth. Our Archbishop and his leadership team will constantly set before us the vision and strategies for growth. The functions and accessibility of our theological and training colleges will be creatively extended to encourage and equip as many Christians as possible to be consciously and actively engaged in ministry in its many forms and to be personally growing in Christ. The parish leadership, both ordained and lay, will together be prayerfully working towards growth under the guidance of the Spirit: growth in maturity among the people of God and in an observable impact on the community which they serve. They will communicate this vision for growth to the congregation by word and deed, so that members will in turn seek personal and corporate spiritual growth, and have an active concern for their neighbours which will make opportunities for evangelism. This may well result in pain but growth will be our goal personally and together.

6. We are encouraged by examples of ministries which reflect a mission-minded, rather than maintenance-minded focus, but this attitude needs to spread more widely so that it becomes the characteristic mindset of the diocese. We must keep praying for the Kingdom and keep exhorting each other to be filled with the Spirit. Further we must, among other things, be planting new fellowship groups, and new congregations in the same buildings and new congregations on other sites.

Train Church Planters

7. We need to **identify potential leaders.** Every discussion on church growth indicates that the key to growing new churches is the leadership. The Fuller School outlines the ideal church planter as the one who prays fervently, exercises faith, has visioning capacity, is committed to church growth, is intrinsically motivated, is responsive to the community, creates ownership of ministry, utilises giftedness of others, effectively builds relationships, is flexible and adaptable, has spousal co-operation and builds a cohesive church body. We need to identify such people both among and beyond those already ordained.

8. We need **to train these leaders**. Ministry training may be classified by five levels. There are the foundations of Bible and theology, the training in pastoral skills, the managing of people and plant, the leadership of people and the changing of community culture. While we think all of these levels are important, we are convinced that leadership which empowers others is an essential quality of the church planter and we need to provide training which will best develop this. Theology training needs to be supplemented either by such training before, during or after the theological college study. Internships with proven church planters should be available. Course design should be undertaken by approved church planting consultants.

9. We need **to train church planting teams**. We envisage that church planting will mostly involve teams rather than individuals, and that the team members will mostly be lay people. This will require a change from the traditional mindset of ministry as a restricted and "professional" task. We need to see lay people as colleagues, not helpers, and ministry will need to be discussed and planned together. We also need to recognise that not all members of a church planting team will need to complete the current training of ordained clergy in our Diocese, particularly those from other people groups or sub groups. While they do require an appropriate level of biblical and theological training, there needs however to be flexibility of training, and Moore College needs to consider this.

10. Many lay people are frustrated by a system which appears to monopolise rather than multiply ministries. Others wrongly believe they are paying a clergyman to do that job for them. If we want churches to grow we must not only allow, but actively encourage the diverse ministries in our churches to flourish. We need to explore how we can mobilise the ministries of early retirees, women, shift/flexi-workers and job-sharers. Church leaders who take the time to discern and encourage lay ministry will see their own effectiveness multiplied and extended many times over. It is the laity who hold the keys to the community and who will take the gospel out and into it via their relationship networks.

11. Where this team-sending has been modelled, the size of the teams has varied. Some have been small, with members selected specifically because of their ministry gifts. Others have been large and formed a sizeable nucleus of the new congregation. In the case of the larger team a double opportunity for church growth occurs: growth in the new congregation and in the sending church as it renews its own growth efforts.

12. We need **to care for the church planters**. Too frequently in our past we have sent the church planters to their ministry without ongoing support and care. We are convinced that there needs to be systems for review, accountability, encouragement, instruction, training and celebration. We need to encourage risk taking and to support and applaud the effort, even if failure occurs to reach the original goals occurs.

13. Care for church planters may come from different sources: from the sending church through fellowship and regular report and prayer opportunities; from some kind of diocesan church planters' network where ideas and problems could be shared; from a conscious pastoral concern exercised by the area bishop; via in-service courses geared to the needs of church planters, both lay and clergy.

Target the Different People Groups

14. We need **to recognise society groupings**. We do well to recognise the different socio-economic, ethnic and generational groupings and community interest groups, housing estates, industrial estates and educational institutions which defy parish boundaries. These boundaries were set according to geographic factors, not social ones. This will require a less individualistic and protective approach to ministry, and a more flexible, co-operative one on an area, rather than solely a parish, level.

15. We suggest that the role of Area Deaneries as ministry-planning co-operatives could be crucial here. University churches, churches formed from school communities and on their campuses, as well as ministries to industry and sporting groups, retirement villages and within shopping centres could be pursued as possibilities.

16. We need **to embrace changing Australia**. The true child of the Church of England is the Church of Australia and, while it may be improper to call ourselves this, if we are to be true to our original charter, our church ought to reflect the ethnic mix of Australian society. Today the Anglican Church faces a very different future from that faced in the past. The 1990's are a new context, with new challenges and opportunities to build a firm foundation of a Church reflecting multicultural Australia. Since the Second

World War three-and-a-half million people have come to our shores. As a result Australia now has 140+ ethnic non-English background people speaking 40 languages other than English. 85% of these people live in the major cities of Sydney and Melbourne. If we are to be the Church of Australia then we should reflect the Aboriginal, Asian and European mix that our nation is, as well as being the church of the English Settlement. Many of our new settlers see us as an ethnic Anglo church and find racism runs deeply in us. The National Church Life Survey indicated that 7% of Sydney Anglican Church attenders came from non-English speaking countries. This clearly indicates an under-representation within Sydney Anglican churches amongst those born in non-English speaking countries, compared to the whole population. Cross-cultural ministry needs to be a central concern of the Anglican Church in Sydney.

17. We need **to develop an inclusive approach to ethnic ministry**. In cross cultural work there is debate about whether churches ought to be developed according to the homogeneous or heterogeneous unit principle. McGavran states, "People like to become Christians without crossing racial, linguistic or class barriers" and there are many who support this principle and quote 1 Corinthians 8 & 9. However others point out that there are many factors involved in church growth and that this approach may hinder growth especially if racial arrogance infiltrates the church. They quote Ephesians 1-3. We contend it is not a case of either/or but both/and depending on the suburban setting and the stages of growth in the church life. The natural progression would seem to be from the mono-cultural to multi-cultural to integrationist model - although in practice the situation is very fluid.

18. It is worth saying that the church is essentially heterogeneous and every church however homogeneous (as the Anglican Church in Australia largely is) needs to work toward the heterogeneity where perfect fulfilment will be in heaven. Moreover Anglicans can continue to value their British tradition and still carry out their ministry and mission in such a way as to broaden and deepen their understanding of God's purposes.

19. We need **to draw on the gained experience of our cross cultural work**. At the present time our cross cultural work includes International, Aboriginal, Arabic/French, Chinese, Greek Bible Fellowship, Iranian/Persian, Italian, Korean, Maltese, Maori, Spanish, Tamil, Turkish/German and Vietnamese ministries. Although much of this work is housed and supported in a parish church the key to this ministry is finding the person from the people group and investing time, energy and support in that person. Often that person will find it very costly coming to Christ. Gathering the group is then a networking process which may cross the whole of Sydney. One very successful method of care and evangelism has been the English as a Second Language Classes. People interested or involved in these ministries would do well to network with those involved in cross-cultural ministry and to consult with Mike Wilson of the Cross Cultural Department in the Home Mission Society.

20. We need **to develop ministry in the second generation gap**. Many ethnic churches lose their young people because those churches stand for an ethnic identity which the second generation does not have. This people group of the second-generation Australian-born ethnic person provides an opportunity which has been almost untouched by cross-cultural evangelism in Australia.

21. We need **to review our progress properly**. While we applaud the dedicating of money and effort to our church planting efforts in cross cultural work, in new growth areas and in specific community groupings, we wish to raise the need for constant review, not only of work being done but of the need for new work to be undertaken. Predetermined evaluation criteria need to be established in order to assess the ongoing viability (or otherwise) of new ministries. If current work is not proving effective then we would like to see a rethinking of methods used, and a willingness to adopt new ways of outreach. Unsuccessful ventures should not be perpetuated unless it can be demonstrated that there are sound reasons for continuing.

Provide Resources for Church Planting

22. We need **to recognise many models for church planting**. Sometimes diocesan leadership will see opportunities parish leadership cannot see. Sometimes parish leadership will see opportunities diocesan leadership cannot see. Sometimes clusters of churches or area deaneries will take up challenges beyond the capacity of a parish. Sometimes the work may be done by an extraordinary individual, mostly by a team, and sometimes by a large group of people who form the nucleus of the new church. The possibilities are as numerous as the gifts God has given his people. Such initiatives ought to be tested within a framework of encouragement and prayer. We expect conflicts will arise because of the different goals of interested parties but we urge pursuit of growth and real attempts to use the conflict for creative solutions. Much unnecessary anguish will be avoided if there is communication and openness within the process:

between Diocese and local parish, between parishes, and between clergy and laity. Every attempt should be made for the vision to be shared, not imposed.

23. We need **to construct training modules for church planters**. We note the seminars that Bob Logan has run. Logan speaks of eight keys to church planting. He speaks of spiritual empowerment, cultural relevance, shared vision, focussed activity, equipped leaders, mobilised people, transforming relationships and reproducible systems. We also note he has developed a church planting course in the Fuller D. Min. program. Such a course should be designed locally and be offered at an introductory level in the Missions Department at Moore College and at a developed level during the after College training.

24. We need **to create funds to initiate projects**. We note the funds available through the New Sites Committee for land, Vision 2001 for major projects, and the Home Mission Society for new ministry initiatives. We also note their stated principle to support fresh and workable initiatives and not to prop up ailing ministry. We think this principle is very important to assist in developing a growth attitude and urge a more rigorous application of the principle. We further note that there has been some frustration with understanding how the system works and urge guidelines and mechanics be clarified and enforced. Finally we make a plea to all constituents in the Diocese not only to raise more funds and people for their local initiatives but also to be generous in providing for the deanery, regional and diocesan initiatives.

25. We need **to encourage networking and researching**. Many of our church planters "work hard but not smart". Church planting, whether it be the addition of a new congregation or starting on a new site, is hard work but there ought to be times of reflection, exchange of ideas with others who have done or are doing the same work and reading of some of the helpful literature available. An example of such literature is the Church Planters' Workbook by Phil Bryant of the Baptist Union of Victoria. He identified four phases. There is the **conception** which identifies and studies the target group, selects the church planter, confirms the sponsor church and develops the plan, purpose statement, values and vision statement. There is the **gestation** where the steering committee, prayer team, meeting place and financial support are determined. The advertising and public interest meeting are also planned. There is the **pre-natal** phase where the core group is established, the leaders are selected, equipped and mobilised, evangelism and discipling methods are determined and community contacts are developed. Finally there is the **birth**. In this phase plans are laid for the first one hundred days, the first two years and the first worship service.

26. As well as "how to" books, there are also write-ups of actual church plants which have been successful. We commend learning from others and suggest that the HMS Parish Support and Development Section provide information, books and videos on church growth as well as how the appropriate diocesan structures and Government departments may be accessed for assistance. It would be even better if one person could be appointed as a key contact person for this work.

Re-think Our Present Structures

27. We need **to challenge our thinking about parish boundaries**. We acknowledge the value of parish boundaries as prescribing plots to work in and for keeping conflicts to a minimum but they can also hinder our ministry. We should consider them as providing a responsibility rather than giving rights. Special interest ministries and ethnic ministries inevitably require crossing parish boundaries and church-goers will ignore them in choosing churches and ministries which will best suit them in their stage of development in Christ. We want also to submit that even where a church may be flourishing there will inevitably be a vast number of people in the parish that will never be reached by that particular church. We must find ways of reaching these "dark spots". Obviously we want such ministries to operate in fellowship and not with conflict and rivalry. Also we do not want so much time taken up trying to maintain good relationships that the necessary evangelistic work is not done. We plead for the strongest sense of fellow-working in the gospel and urge our diocesan, regional, deanery and parish leadership to cultivate such fellowship.

28. We need **to encourage church planting initiatives at all levels**. Growth and order will always be in tension. Both should be encouraged. Conflicts will inevitably arise when people feel their interests are being frustrated or threatened. We wish to say, "don't choose the quiet life if growth will occur". Parish leadership, deanery leadership, regional leadership and diocesan leadership all should be encouraged to take initiatives in church planting. Further we encourage crossing not only parish, deanery and regional, but also diocesan boundaries if the gospel will increase. Our plea is, however, that we seek fellowship and harmony with our brothers and sisters as we cross agreed boundary lines and then allow others to cross our boundary lines. We also plead that when we cry "for gospel or theological reasons" in either taking the

initiative or opposing the initiative, they really are the reasons and not just either imposing or protecting our own interests.

29. We need **to acknowledge church planting, especially ethnic ministries in our governing bodies**. It is important to give our ethnic and church planters a voice in our Synod, Standing Committee, Regional Councils, Deanery Conferences and Parish Councils. We understand the difficulty of size and composition this may create but if we are going to hear the voice of growth then we must work out a formula for this to happen.

30. We need **to assemble church planting experts**. It may be advantageous to put together some church planting teams to assist people in their church planting projects. For example such a team may join the locals for the six weeks prior to the opening of a new church and then return every three or four months for two or three years. It may be right to ask the Department of Evangelism to dedicate one of its staff to this ministry of gathering such teams and assisting the church planters.

Work for Continuous Growth

31. We suggest that **ministers consider beginning new congregations**. This is the simplest form of church planting. We note from church growth books that once a building is consistently 80% full then congregations level out in size. We also note that most pastors have the capacity to minister to between 150-200 people only and that if they wish to increase that size then they will need to add staff. Generally speaking the addition of each staff member may increase the ministry capacity by another 100 people.

32. We also suggest that **the Diocese review its lay ministry training** and look for ways of extending its availability, scope and content. Lay people need to be equipped for ministry theologically and practically. Does the present diocesan approach meet the need? How does our lay ministry training compare with that of other denominations e.g. the Uniting Church's Elm Centre?

Specific Recommendations

33. Offer a "Church Planting" module both during College Training and in the After College Training.

34. Provide Internships before, during and after College Training with successful church planters.

35. Develop a church planter's fellowship for sharing ideas and programming conferences.

36. Appoint a church planting resource person in HMS, certify proven diocesan Church Planting consultants and request the Department of Evangelism to assist in training and strategising when church planting occurs.

37. Request Area Deaneries to assist Bishops and Archdeacons to identify "black holes" and to remedy the situation.

38. Allocate \$300,000 for specific church planting projects in 1997-98. Set advanced funding schedules with termination dates.

39. Identify a major project, allocate \$500,000 and own it as a diocesan experiment.

40. Establish ethnic congregations across parish boundaries and provide for their representation on Synod, Commissions and Committees.

41. Appoint an Archdeacon as the focal point for cross cultural ministry and mission.

42. Select candidates for ordination from ethnic congregations and in their training incorporate multicultural aspects.

43. Further investigate the type of theological and leadership training appropriate for church planting teams, especially among ethnic groups.

Research Available

44. The National Life survey team says that not much formal research has been done into the principles of church planting or even the state of church planting in Australia, whether among different ethnic groups or more broadly. However, the large number of congregations that have commenced in the 10 years prior to 1991 (around 1,000 across Australia based on the above percentages), suggests that a wealth of experience in church planting exists across the denominations involved in the survey. Some of the material listed below has been used as we have drawn up our strategy and specific recommendations.

45. We suggest the following books for those who wish to do further research.

+ Church Planting - Our Future Hope	Charlie Cleverly, Scripture Union 1991
+ Inside the Mind of Unchurched Harry	Lee Strobel, Zondervan 1993.
+ Reaching the Unchurched	Mike Hill, Scripture Press 1994.
+ Mission Minded	Peter Bolt, St.Matthias Press 1992.
+ Planting Tomorrow's Churches	Martin Robinson 1992.
+ Church Planter's Workbook	Phil Bryant, Baptist Union of Victoria.
+ Breaking New Ground	General Synod of C of E, 1994.
+ New Ground in Church Planting	George Lings, Grove Booklet.
+ Urban Church Planting	Roger S Greenway, Baker Book 1976.
+ Planting & Developing Missionary Churches	John Nevius, Presbyterian Reformed.
+ Ministry on the New Frontier	Anglican Home Mission Society
+ Church Planters Workbook and Checklist	Logan & Rast, Fuller Institute.
+ Church Planting Principles and Techniques	Western Port Baptist, B.U.V.

For and on behalf of the Working Party

REG PIPER
Chairman

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