

Growing new congregations

Reaching out to people who are untouched by church because they are physically, or culturally, just too far away

Each edition of *Pathways* explores one of seven focus areas for our common life together. The focus areas aren't a description of everything the Church does, but they do represent the areas that we think God is currently calling us to pay particular attention to as we seek to become a more Christ-like Church.

In this issue we take a look at an ambitious plan to grow as many as 750 new congregations. It's a response to rapid social and environmental changes across this Diocese, and it's a plan that needs and involves all of us if it is to succeed. But it's not about new church buildings.

Did you know?

- In our larger conurbations, less than one person in 100 attends a Church of England Sunday service.
- Areas of our towns and cities are experiencing high levels of poverty and inequality, and have been under-resourced in clergy.
- A population at least the size of Edinburgh will move into this Diocese over the next fifteen years. This is both a pastoral challenge and a great mission opportunity.

Jesus was present and engaged with his people and as a Christ-like church we are called to be present and engaged in every community: big and small, urban and rural, old and new, right where that community is.

We now have new opportunities for us to reach out to those who are untouched by traditional church because they are physically, or culturally, just too far away. If every church began to plan for at least one new congregation or missional project, then we could see as many as 750 new congregations. **Turn over the page to find out more.**



We hope to invest £5m in growing new congregations over the next five years. By God's grace that investment will translate into two new 'Resourcing Hubs', five projects that will grow and support a congregation of 100+ people, and at least 50 new Fresh Expressions of church of any shape or size.

From Autumn 2019 parishes, benefices and deaneries will be able to bid for grants from a new development fund to support the growth of new congregations.

Fresh Expressions

Fresh Expressions are new forms of church that emerge within contemporary culture and engage primarily with those who don't 'go to church'. This might be a youth congregation based in a school, a Messy Church that grows new disciples, or a church for those suffering addictions. There's no one model, and the possibilities are endless.


Church grafts and church plants

Church plants take members from an existing congregation to a new place. Church grafts are people moving from one church to another, often to assist a church that is struggling, or into a new area of housing. There are lots of examples of this kind of activity already taking place in the Diocese.

Resourcing hubs

Resourcing hubs are large churches that want to 'give themselves away.' They offer resources, ideas and a forum for learning where it is needed, where it is wanted and in a way that's right for the local context. Our first resourcing hub is Greyfriars Church in Reading which has funding for an additional curate who will put down roots in the deanery and gather a team around them ahead of grafting into a local parish.

Not every initiative requires funding to get going (see opposite page) and we want to encourage creativity and experimentation in approaches to growing new congregations across the Diocese. With this in mind, we're also launching a new parish discernment tool during the summer to help parishes recognise where God is already at work and what might be needed next. ¶

 To find out more about this focus area and the tools and funds to assist you, visit oxford.anglican.org/commonvision



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We are inclusive and love anyone who turns up on Sunday. We have lots of comments about the love and friendship that is so clear to people when they walk in.