

ACC-15 - Anglican Witness: Evangelism & Church Growth Initiative - Case studies

Although the members of the Anglican Witness core group are involved in evangelism and church growth in very different contexts they find that they have much in common. All are:

- encouraged by finding some situations where there is a hunger for the gospel and where they can see the Holy Spirit bearing fruit in evangelism and church growth. But they are also aware that they cannot be complacent, and need to continue to explore what works, and why, and build prayerfully upon these lessons;
- aware of the challenges of trying to reach *un-churched*, *less reached* or *unreached* people, who have not yet experienced serious exposure to the gospel in a relevant way that speaks to them and their situation. These will be those with a non-Christian worldview, those of other faiths or those whose worldview has been shaped by a strongly secular agenda in a post-Christian society (for example, research puts 33% of the UK population in this category*). These will sometimes be people who live where there isn't an existing Christian presence, or Christian mission, be it a large geographic area, distant from the active work of an existing diocese, or a newly developed urban area outside of current parish initiatives.
- also aware of a growing number of *de-churched* people (for example, research also puts 33% of the UK population in this category*). These are people who previously belonged to churches but have either drifted away, feeling the church is unfriendly, boring or irrelevant, or who have been hurt by the church. * Research conducted by Tearfund in 2007

At the March 2011 core group meeting the group were reminded by Bishop Patrick Yu, the convenor, of the parable of the sower and how immediate growth doesn't always follow our efforts

http://www.anglicancommunion.org/ministry/mission/ecgi/resources/sharpening_our_focus_on_evangelism_and_church_growth.pdf despite . Despite this, the mandate is still to continue sowing the seed, and not to only choose the easy and fertile ground.

Although our mission contexts vary, the group has found it helpful and energising to understand the lessons that have been learnt in different situations, both successes and failures, and to grapple with the underlying principles and see what lessons can be learnt from each other and applied to our own contexts. Such understanding has also made it easier to support each other in prayer. In the light of this, we offer four case studies from four different mission contexts. The case studies, from Africa, Asia, Europe and North America, share experiences where the church is working in places where: there is a hunger for the gospel; where people have become *de-churched*; with *un-churched* people, both in places where the gospel has never been shared and amongst those in a post Christian society. Although the contexts may vary from your own, we trust that some of the underlying principles and issues will be relevant to the context of your province and your local church.

Please read all four case studies and begin to reflect on the questions at the end of each case study. At ACC 15, during the Mission presentation on Monday 5 November, each table group will be allocated one of these four case studies and provided with some more background information, before discussing the question, and giving feedback in a plenary session.

Case Study 1: Transforming the Cathedral, winning the city, changing the world

Background: Kenya is home to a diversity of religions, Christian denominations and sects. Christians of protestant orientation are estimated to make up 45% of the population, Roman Catholics 33%, Muslims 10%, indigenous beliefs 10% while other religions such as Hindus and Bahais about 2%. Though it is recognized that close to 80% of Kenya's population are Christian, over 60% of those who claim to be Christian do not attend a place of Christian worship on a regular basis. Kenya, and Nairobi in particular, is facing much change; 78.8% of the population are aged under 35 and over 60% are aged 15 – 35. A change in retirement age, from 55 to 60, results in working people staying longer in the city, also most people do not relocate to the rural homes immediately after retirement as was the practice in the past.

Mission strategy: All Saints Cathedral in Nairobi is located centrally, next to Uhuru Park. After its first mission strategy plan from 2007 – 2011, the cathedral embarked upon a second mission strategy, 2012 – 2016. Its mission statement is *Transforming the Cathedral, winning the city, changing the world* and the thrust of the Cathedral's evangelism and outreach is to reach out to the un-churched, de-churched and unreached. It carried out a SWOT analysis (strengths; weaknesses; opportunities; threats) to develop its mission strategy. One of its strategies has been to develop different worship services to serve different needs; it seeks to promote worship experience at the Cathedral that is authentically Anglican but contemporary, enriching, inclusive (recognising the diversity that exists at the Cathedral), and respond to the spiritual needs of the congregation. The Cathedral, seeks to develop liturgy that is appreciated and relates to the various target groups that exist.

Sunday services: After refurbishing the crypt, acquiring tents and developing additional parking space, the cathedral now offers the following services, all of which include Holy Communion at least once a month:

- More formal services: 6.00 am 7.00 am (both Holy Communion) and 6.00 pm;
- Vibrant Adult services: 8.00 am, 9.30 am and 11.30 am;
- Youth services: (18 – 25): 9.30 and 11.30;
- Teens services: (13 – 18): 9.30 and 11.30;
- Sunday School: 8.00, 9.30 and 11.30;
- Kiswahili service: 9.30;
- Service for the deaf: 11.30;
- Revival meeting: 3.00 pm.

Sunday attendance is over 6,000 people, comprising about 800 children, 500 teenagers, 800 youth and 4,000 adults. This Story was featured in the September 2010 ECGI newsletter; the 2012 – 2016 strategy document can be found at

<http://www.allsaintsnairobi.org/attachments/article/83/ASC%20Strategic%20Plan%202012-16.pdf>

Question:

Recognising the distinctive position cathedrals have in the Church and wider society, and the opportunities of access to a various resources, how best can they position themselves as centres of mission outreach?

Cathedral congregations appear to be growing in many parts of the world. If we are discovering that people come to faith and grow in faith more easily in these larger congregations what are the implications for how we staff and structure the ministry of Anglican Cathedrals, and how do they best relate to the rest of the diocese?"

Case Study 2: *Back to Church Sunday - Inviting the de-churched*

Background: Christianity in many Western nations is in decline. Although there is growth in some situations, an increasing percentage of the population can be described as *de-churched*, those who had previously attended but have now stopped attending. Although some of these will never return, except in response to personal or national crisis, others may be more open. One simple, yet effective, missional practise is that of one friend inviting another to church. This habit has been all but lost in some Anglican circles, and *Back to Church Sunday* is a program that aims to help such Anglicans relearn this basic invitational skill.

Mission strategy: *Back to Church Sunday*, the brainchild of Michael Harvey, was launched in the diocese of Manchester, England in 2004. The premise is simple: Anglicans are encouraged to invite a friend back to church on Back to Church Sunday (B2CS). By dedicating one Sunday a year to *Back to Church Sunday*, the participating dioceses effectively bring attention to this missional skill. Priests are encouraged to teach on invitation in the lead-up to the Sunday, and every parishioner is issued the challenge to invite one friend to the B2CS service.

From the modest launch in 2004, B2CS quickly grew over 3 years to 3,000 participating churches. In 2011 there were over 13,000 participating churches. From England, the program has spread to other parts of the world and all parts of the communion are invited to participate in the initiative. In Toronto, Canada, Bishop Poole and the College of Bishops met with Michael Harvey and launched B2CS three years ago. The following year, 2010, Harvey spoke to the House of Bishops in Montreal and the program went national. Virtually every Diocese in Canada has participated in some way. In 2011, over 800 Canadian Anglican parishes participated and it is estimated that over 10,000 people accepted an invitation to come to church. Worldwide in 2011, 150,000 people accepted an invitation to church on B2CS. In the UK, studies show that 10% of people invited on *Back to Church Sunday* are found worshipping 6 months later in the church to which they have been invited. Therefore we estimate that 15,000 people were added to the Church in one day in 2011. That would mean roughly 1,000 people became participating members of the Church in Canada. Invitation works but it needs a significant culture shift to embed it, and will need a patient application of the principle.

New developments:

B2CS is a program geared to helping Anglicans recapture a missional skill. The goal is for Anglicans to invite friends to worship not just once a year, however, but throughout the year. Additionally, studies show that it takes on average five invitations before a friend will accept the invitation to come back to church. To better address these challenges, Michael Harvey is piloting a new, companion program called *Seasons of Invitation*. Participating parishes will promote 4-6 invitational Sundays throughout the year, to see if a pattern of invitational Sundays helps better form the habit and increases rates of acceptance. This pilot program is being road-tested in the Anglican dioceses of Newcastle, Canterbury, Lichfield and Toronto and the Roman Catholic diocese of Middlesbrough.

More information about B2CS can be found at: www.backtochurch.co.uk The Diocese of Toronto also has a resource page at <http://www.toronto.anglican.ca/parish-life/congregational-growth/welcoming-ministry/back-to-church-sunday/> and videos on their youtube page at <http://www.youtube.com/user/tordio135>

Questions:

Are there issues your church needs to address to make itself more welcoming and relevant before inviting the de-churched? In contexts where going to church is counter-cultural, what fears, prevent us from inviting others to attend? And what does the Gospel say about those fears?

Case Study 3: 'The Ford' – Pioneer Ministry

Background

Chapelford is a new housing estate built upon the site of a former World War 2 Air Force base, in Cheshire, England. When completed over 2000 houses will have been built and the residents are mainly relatively wealthy. A supermarket and restaurant have recently been opened, and a primary school will open soon. The estate falls within the boundaries of two local Church of England parishes in Liverpool Diocese but there is no church building on the estate and, to date, no community building available for use by local groups.

Liverpool Diocese uses the imagery of *lakes* to represent its traditional churches, with their fixed parish boundaries, and *rivers* to describe its more flexible new expressions of church; the *Ford* is named in keeping with the *Lake* and *River* imagery, signifying crossing the *ford* to the chapel. It is an ecumenical group supported (spiritually rather than financially!) by local Anglican, Methodist and Elim Pentecostal churches, and has been formally adopted into the missional structures of these churches. The leadership *cell* started regular meetings in August 2011, and is preparing to embark on a wider range of activities during the second year. The Ford is led by a licensed Church of England non-stipendiary priest, Rev Dr Sarah Baker and her husband, Peter.

Objective

The primary objective of 'The Ford' is to provide an expression of church for Chapelford. The first year has provided many challenges including differences in churchmanship between the Anglican/Methodist groups and the Pentecostals and questions of headship and purpose. The *cell* group will provide regular, weekly meetings, with corporate worship being introduced during the second year, probably within an informal format. Twice-weekly, morning social outreach groups, named *Ripple*, in keeping with the overall water theme, attract mainly young mothers, and other groups are planned to reach other members of the community; a more comprehensive demographic understanding of the estate will help facilitate the targeting of these.

Year 2 will see a part-time support worker in place, which will provide a focus for communications and activities, and enable a more strategic approach to planning. A parallel process is being undertaken by a community group under the leadership of the priest, which is advancing plans to build a community centre; fundraising ventures for this have begun in earnest.

The future structure of the *cell* groups is being considered. The *cell* has undertaken the 'Journeys' course, and will be starting the 'Christianity Explored' course <http://www.christianityexplored.org/course>, with a view to subsequently offering them to enquirers generated through the *Ripple* and other groups. Planning for joint ministry ventures (men's outreach, children's work, etc.) with the parish of St James, Hood Manor, in which over 80% of Chapelford sits, is also underway.

Questions:

What geographical areas are you aware of, within your own context, which have no Christian presence? How could your church begin to establish a Christian presence in these?

Case Study 4: God Provides - Orang Asli Village in Gopeng, Malaysia

“It is a good idea, let us begin now.” remarked the penghulu (village head), referring to the idea of hill padi [rice] planting which our team had proposed to him and the village leaders. Within a short period, our team made another trip to Kampong Kepayang. We traveled one and half hours in our four-wheel drive vehicles through rugged roads and walked another two and a half hour’s up the hill where the Kampung was; a group of eager people was awaiting our arrival. We had a rest and some refreshment then started to sing some songs and worship God. After that we explained to the folks about the techniques and methodology we would be using. We stayed overnight in a small little church which was built one year earlier. Some basic planting apparatus was created from the materials found on site. Divided into seven groups, each with one of our team members as leader and three to four of the villagers, we taught them how to plant hill padi seedlings. It was a long day and we all rested after a hard day’s work. Again in the evening under the kerosene lamps, we worshipped and shared the Word of God. On the evening of the third day, after continued toiling and working in the field, we had a night of celebration where the villagers brought their best food for us. On the fourth and last day, we taught them how to water the seedlings and to protect them from birds and animals.

After two weeks, our team visited them again to see the progress. We were thrilled when we saw most of the seedlings had grown into shoots. Two and a half months later, we revisited them and saw the crops were ready for harvest in another week’s time. Finally we were there to do harvesting together with them. The whole village, too, came and joined us in the harvesting. Some helped to carry the apparatus and others brought drinking water for us. In the evening, we had a big celebration. Everyone was very happy. We praised God for His goodness and we felt a sense of success. Before we left the next day, we told them to do the same for the next harvest.

Two months later, we saw some of them in the town and asked about the second planting season. They told us that they did not start at all; we thought they were not sure how to go about it but a year later, we realized that they would not do anything without our team doing it together with them. We explained to them that they should be working towards self-reliance. Suddenly one member of our team blurted out that they have a different world view to us. The Orang Asli, who have been living in the jungle all their lives, do not have the concept of ‘rainy days’. They often use the phrase ‘Tuhan bagi’ which means ‘God provides’. They are not worried at all about tomorrow believing that their God is so big that He can watch over and provide for them daily. No wonder, they do not plant or rear animals. They seem to have more faith than us. We are thinking that they will be worrying a lot, instead the reverse is true – we ourselves are the worriers.

We learnt our lesson, never again treat them as we are, instead we should be instilling in them the values of God’s attributes and how to follow Him. Economic empowerment is good but it should not be operating at the expense of reducing, or affecting, their faith in God.

Questions:

How might the worldview of the non-Christian challenge our own Christian worldview and help us rediscover biblical passages that we neglect (eg. Matthew 6.26)? How do we recognize how God is providing in a different culture and build on this, rather than contradicting this?