

Part 1 Setting the Scene

Posing the questions

While conducting my research for the book 'Hope for the Church' (CHP 2002), I began to realise that not every diocese in England was suffering from declining membership and attendance. Top of every table was the Diocese of London, seemingly growing in size while many dioceses were shrinking fast. This is clear, for example, in relation to adult and child Usual Sunday Attendance between 1989 and 1999 as shown in tables 4.1 and 4.2 of 'Hope for the Church'.

The first question that arises from this is '**What?**' – what exactly is the truth about growth and decline – statistics can be slippery things and it is wise to check the facts with care.

The second question is '**Why?**' Why should one diocese be growing while those around it are shrinking? Are the reasons for this to do with the sociology of the area or with the culture and policies of the diocese?

The third question is '**So what?**' What can the rest of the Church of England learn from the London experience? Is there a diocesan culture, and are there diocesan policies, favourable to growth that can be identified and adopted by other dioceses? Or, if the explanation concerns social and demographic trends favourable to church growth, what are the implications for the future elsewhere? It is possible that post-modern cultural change is furthest advanced in the capital. If the Church here is starting to benefit from new trends, how can the whole Church of England best gear itself up to grow in changing times?

The fourth question is '**What now?**' Will growth continue or fizzle out? What lessons can the Diocese of London itself learn from a clearer self-understanding to enable it to continue its growth in the future?

Answers to these last two questions are suggested throughout the report, but I will not attempt a systematic list of implications for other dioceses until I have tested out

reactions to this report from within the Diocese of London.

Checking the facts - Electoral Rolls

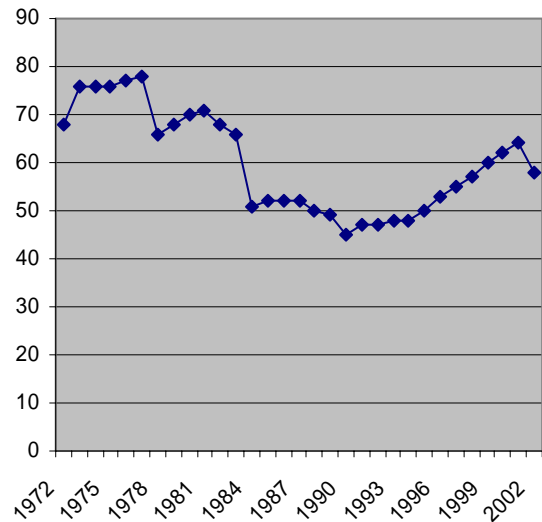
Electoral Rolls are the official membership measure of the Church of England, although in many parishes the roll is not realistic – some who have left or who rarely attend are on the roll, and some who do attend never join the roll. However, in recent years parishes in London Diocese have been encouraged to keep rolls up to date, and London has never experienced the amount of nominal membership that characterises more rural dioceses. Diocesan confidence in the accuracy of ER figures is much higher in London than in most places, and the growth target in the current diocesan strategy document ('The London Challenge') is in terms of electoral rolls rather than attendance. **Table 1 (page 2)** shows the ER total for each year since 1972. From this it seems that membership declined from the starting figure of 68 thousand in 1972 to a low of 45 thousand in 1990. 1972 was the year in which a wholly new roll was prepared, with subsequent revisions every six years. This normally gives a pattern of gentle growth for five years, followed by a sudden drop in the sixth. So true comparisons can only be made between years in the same stage of the 6-year cycle.

Table 2 (page 2) shows the total for re-signing years only, again suggesting that the turn-round began in or shortly after 1990.

However, **table 3 (page 2)** shows the percentage change in membership between years at the same stage of the 6-year cycle. This suggests that the first major change was in 1990, with little sign of any turn-round before then. Perhaps parishes took more trouble to collect all the names in 1990 than they had in 1984. However, the gains continued through the early 90s so that for the first time in 1995 the ER was higher than in the same year of the previous

Table 1: Diocese of London ER (thousands)

1972	68	1988	50
1973	76	1989	49
1974	76	1990	45
1975	76	1991	47
1976	77	1992	47
1977	78	1993	48
1978	66	1994	48
1979	68	1995	50
1980	70	1996	53
1981	71	1997	55
1982	68	1998	57
1983	66	1999	60
1984	51	2000	62
1985	52	2001	64
1986	52	2002	58
1987	52		



**Table 2
Diocese of London Electoral Rolls
(thousands)**

Years when all members have to re-sign

Year	Total Roll	Change	% change
1972	68		
1978	66	-2	-3%
1984	51	-15	-23%
1990	45	-6	-12%
1996	53	8	18%
2002	58	5	10%

**Table 3
% Change over the same year in the
previous ER cycle**

78-84	-23%
84-90	-11%
85-91	-10%
86-92	-10%
87-93	-8%
88-94	-4%
89-95	2%
90-96	17%
91-97	17%
92-98	21%
93-99	26%
94-00	29%
95-01	28%
96-02	10%

cycle, six years earlier. The re-signing year in 1996 saw a further big jump (about 18%) followed by further progress up to 2000. In the last two years, however, the trend appears to be reversing, with a rather more modest gain of 10% between the two re-signing years of 1996 and 2002.

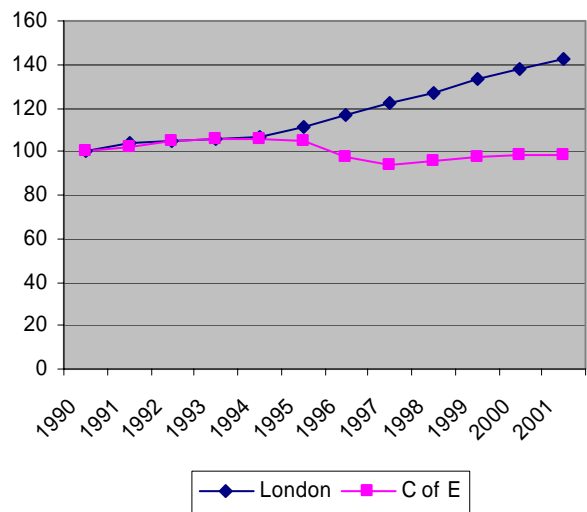
Up to about 1995 ER was one measure used by the Diocese to allocate financial shares to parishes. Since then ER has not been used. It is possible, therefore, that some churches, previously coy about revealing their true size, started to give more realistic totals from 1996. Although this may explain some of the jump in 1996, it is hardly an explanation for the growth before 1995 nor for the continued growth after 1996.

The conclusion of all this is that there has clearly been a dramatic turn-round in the ER trend since the early 1990s. However, there are three caveats. First, growth in some re-signing years, especially 1990, may have resulted from more diligent compilation as well as from bigger congregations. Second, some growth around 1996 may have resulted from the change in the financial share system. Thirdly, the growth may have slowed or ceased in the two most recent years.

Despite these possibilities, the contrast

Table 4: ER Index 1990 = 100

	London	C of E
1990	100	100
1992	104.2	102.2
1993	104.8	104.4
1994	106.1	105.5
1995	111.4	105
1996	116.6	97.6
1997	122.1	94.2
1998	127.1	95.8
1999	133.2	97.2
2000	137.7	98.6
2001	142.4	98.2



between London and the C of E as a whole is made clear by **table 4 (above)** – a divergence that began in 1994, and became large in 1996, has by 2001 (the most recent year available) widened into a chasm.

Checking the facts - Sunday Attendance

The Usual Sunday Attendance figure for a given year relates to the average number of adults and children (over and under 16) in church on a normal Sunday with no special events. Nationally, this was replaced in the year 2000 by a count of people present at services over four weeks in October. This makes it difficult to plot changes between 1999 and 2000. Moreover, the October count is likely to be more volatile than the uSa figure, and so it may be several years before we can be confident in the trends observed. So the uSa question was re-instated nationally in 2001, enabling a comparison to be made with 1999. However, in the case of London Diocese, the question asked up to 1999 related to a count at a different time from October. This means, in effect, definition a. was replaced by b. in 2000 and by b. & c. in 2001. The best that can be done in the case of London, therefore, is to use the October count change between 2000 and 2001.

As well as all these complications with estimating recent changes in attendance, the totals provided by the C of E centrally for London Diocese do not always agree with those that I derive from the diocesan statistics directly. Partly this is because some errors in filling in the original forms have not been corrected for in the official figures. For example, one church gave an attendance figure in 1999 of 2400, and in 2001 of 1000. When followed up, they agreed the 2001 figure was wrong and should, if anything, have been slightly higher than 1999. Also it is because of differences in the treatment of non-returns, which are estimated in the official statistics on the basis of ERs. Whereas this may be a reasonable procedure in most of the country, in London, where many churches have an attendance a lot greater than ER, this can lead to under-counting. The official figures certainly give a reasonable estimate of totals, but it is wise to be cautious about the accuracy of percentage change figures between annual totals.

All this needs to be born in mind when looking at **table 5 (page 4)**, which shows the official attendance figures for London and the C of E since 1989. This table suggests that adult attendance in London Diocese was fairly stable between 1989 and 1997, with a short-lived growth in 1998 and

Table 5 Adult Usual Sunday Attendance (thousands)

Year	C of E	London	My estimate
1989	920.4	41.6	
1990	916.7	41.4	
1991	913.6	41.6	
1992	903.1	41.8	
1993	882.7	41.2	
1994	879.7	42.3	
1995	853.7	41.9	
1996	831.8	42.4	
1997	816.5	42.2	
1998	802.9	44.6	
1999	799.1	46.6	46.6
2000	790	45.2	48.2
2001	781	43.8	49.4

1999, most of which was then lost again by 2001. The attendance trend is certainly better than the national average (a growth of 5% from 89 to 01 compared with a national loss of 15%). But it is by no means in line with the ER growth described above.

The figure for 2001 in the case of London is not on the same definition as 1999, and so little note should be taken of the % change between them. However, London also recorded a drop between 2000 and 2001 in the adult October Sunday count from 49,300 to 46,000, or 7%. But this figure is subject to the errors mentioned above by one large church, by the estimating procedure, and by volatility in the count, and should also not be relied upon as a % change estimator.

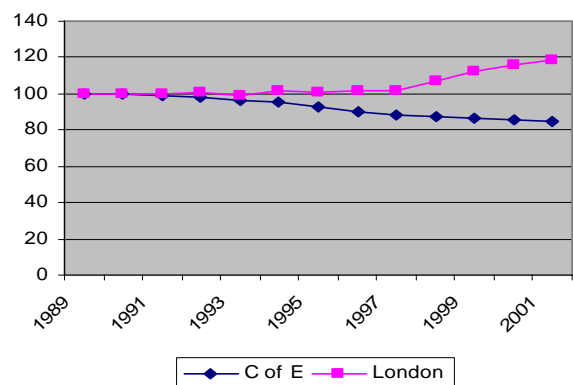
My own procedure is to compare the 2000 and 2001 Sunday count figures only for

those churches that sent in a return for both years and for which the diocese holds data. I then assume that non-returners change in the same way as those that did send in their forms, in other words that the sample we have is random. This, together with a careful screening of suspect data, should get around the problems with the official figures. Unfortunately, in the data sets I've been provided with there is attendance data on only about half of the churches for both years. However, these churches show a growth in October adult Sunday attendance of 2.5% between 2000 and 2001. As will be seen later, the variation in trend with the size of congregations is about the same as with earlier years and longer time frames, and so I am inclined to believe I have a fairly random sample. I am more inclined to go with my estimate, therefore, than the official one. It also accords with the anecdotal evidence and feel of the diocese that attendance growth continues. It is much more consistent with the last known year, 1999, when attendance growth was 4.5%. These two figures allow an interpolation for 2000 of mid-way between them, or 3.5%. On this basis then the trend in recent years on a comparable basis is as in Table 5 column 3 (opposite). This translates into the comparison between London and the National Church as shown in **table 6 (below)**

Although I place more reliance on these estimates, estimates is all they are, and more work will be needed on a bigger sample of

Table 6; Index of Usual Sunday Attendance (1989 = 100)

	C of E	London
1989	100	100
1990	99.6	99.5
1991	99.3	100
1992	98.1	100.5
1993	95.9	99
1994	95.6	101.4
1995	92.8	100.7
1996	90.4	101.7
1997	88.7	101.4
1998	87.2	107.2
1999	86.8	112
2000	85.8	115.9
2001	84.9	118.7



the churches for 2002 and subsequent years before we can be sure which way the trend is going.

I have come across two or three churches that appear to be deliberately underplaying their growth in order not to come under too much pressure for large parish share increases. This fear may not be wholly logical, as allocation is not done by numeric formula, but it is nevertheless real. So new members are not encouraged on to the ER, and dubiously conservative figures are put on attendance returns. These anecdotes further suggest that the published attendance figures in recent years may be underestimates.

The increase in attendance on my assumptions from 1995 to 2001 (years at the same stage of the ER cycle, six years apart) is 18%. This compares with an increase in the ER in the same period of 28%. The increase in ER from 1996 to 2002, after resigning, is around 10%. Although these figures are not exactly consistent, they do all tell roughly the same story. At a time of significant decline elsewhere, there was significant growth in London both in membership and attendance. Exactly how big that growth was, and whether it continues to the present, however, are fairly open questions. It should be noted that national attendance decline has slowed to almost nothing in the last two or three years, so unless attendance is still growing in London Diocese then it no longer stands out from the crowd.

Church or Society?

The Diocese of London does not cover the whole of the capital, and there are other denominations active in the same area. So the question of whether London Diocese is simply benefiting from favourable external circumstances or its growth is generated by its own distinctive effectiveness can be answered by comparisons with other branches of the Church in the capital.

According to *'Religious Trends 3'* (*Christian Research 2002*) churchgoing in Greater London in all denominations declined in the 1990s by only 5%, compared with a national drop of 22%. Only the Roman Catholic, Methodist and Independent churches recorded an overall drop in attendance. The explanation for this is partly provided by immigration of Christians from other countries. For example, the Kingsway International Christian Centre, mainly attended by Nigerians, grew from 600 at its beginning in 1992 to 7000 by 2001. It is now the largest church in the country. Other minority ethnic groups have also started their own flourishing churches. In Inner London, minority ethnic communities now make up half of all churchgoers.

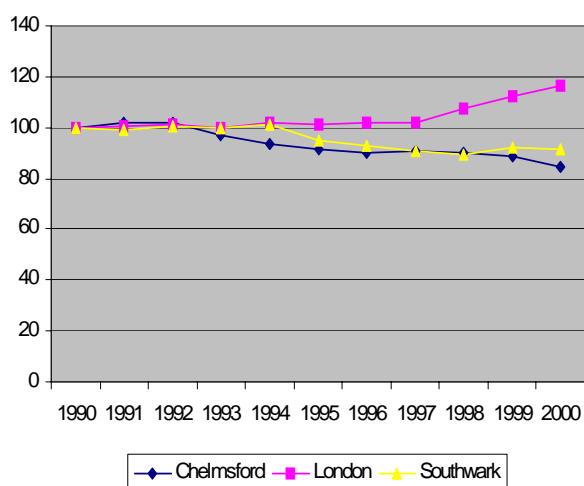
It is clear from this that London does present opportunities for the Christian Church not available in many other parts of the country. However, the Church of England as a denomination has also been subject to greater competition from powerful new churches in a way not seen in most other parts of the country.

But a more directly relevant comparison is between church attendance and membership trends in the three C of E dioceses that cover Greater London. Southwark Diocese includes London south of the Thames (except for bits in Rochester and Guildford dioceses) and the eastern part of Surrey. Chelmsford Diocese also provides a direct comparison, having five deaneries in east and north-east London with a combined population of over a million.

Table 7 (Page 6) shows adult attendance trends in the two dioceses of London and Southwark, and the five London deaneries of Chelmsford. The comparison could not be clearer – adult attendance fell over 10 years in Chelmsford-London by 16%, and in Southwark by 8%, but rose in London Diocese itself by 16%. In the first few years of the decade, the trend in the three parts of the capital was very similar. Then, about 1994, the trends began to diverge very

Table 7: Index of adult uSa 1990 =100

	Chelmsford	London	Southwark
1990	100	100	100
1991	102.2	100.5	99
1992	101.9	101	100.3
1993	97.1	99.5	99.7
1994	93.9	101.9	101.3
1995	91.5	101.2	94.9
1996	89.9	102.2	92.6
1997	90.6	101.9	91
1998	90	107.7	89.1
1999	88.8	112.5	92.3
2000	84.3	116.4	91.7



rapidly. In the Chelmsford part of London, attendance actually fell by more than the national average while it was growing just across the diocesan border. A diocese will not grow, therefore, simply because it is located in the capital city. There may be special, and sometimes favourable, conditions in Greater London, but the facts speak for themselves. It is also the character, policies and performance of a diocese within that context that determines whether it grows or declines. Otherwise, the experience of the three dioceses concerned would not have been so hugely different.

The context

When mentioning the growth of attendance

Main Conclusions:

- 1. Membership and attendance have both grown significantly in London Diocese since the mid 1990s. This contrasts with decline elsewhere in the C of E.**
- 2. But there are problems with data definitions, handling and interpretation so that the exact scale of that growth, and whether it still continues, is currently unclear.**
- 3. There may be factors, such as immigration, favourable to church-going in London. However, the growth in London Diocese is in such contrast to decline in the other two GLC dioceses that it is clear that the performance of the diocese itself must be a key factor.**

Part 2 The knockdown arguments

and membership in London Diocese to other Anglicans, I have been struck by a common response. This is the instant, single, knockdown reason why it may be happening in London but it could never happen 'here'. Growth in London is 'just' the unique situation of the capital, and so can be dismissed without challenging familiar assumptions. Anglicans in situations of decline sometimes dislike being challenged by news of growth elsewhere. These knockdown reasons also fail to take account of the lack of growth in other parts of the capital. They fail to explain why a long-term decline was suddenly reversed in the mid 1990s. The reality is far more complex than even the most plausible knockdown reason, so all must be treated with caution.

Reason 1 – “It is just Holy Trinity Brompton”

In fact, recorded attendance at HTB has been stable in recent years, so is not itself a cause of growth in the Diocese. It is difficult to know exactly how many London churches are using Alpha courses, because not every church using them actually registers. However, the proportion using Alpha does not seem to be exceptionally high, and section 4-8 below will show that the limited evidence we have so far suggests that alpha-using churches in London Diocese are only doing modestly better than others when it comes to membership growth. There are, however, some significant church plants and transplants from HTB. These have made a contribution to recent growth, and an attempt at quantification is made in section 4-10 below. Other churches have also planted new congregations, and it is now official diocesan policy to provoke and encourage these. So, the reason for growth in this area is not 'just HTB', it is church-planting policy.

Reason 2 – “It is just that the best clergy want to work in London”

It is true that there are a lot of able clergy in London, and there are many applicants for some posts. However, the diocese does have problems filling some of the UPA posts, and also some of the settled suburban situations with larger congregations and traditional ministries. Clergy with children are sometimes put off by the poor reputation of many local schools in London. The diocese is popular not just because of its location, but also because it is perceived as a good diocese to work for. Many of the able clergy are home grown. London has at any one time about a hundred ordinands in training. This is not good luck, but the result of lively and inspiring church life. There are many able clergy elsewhere in the country, but they don't always see the same growth that similar clergy in London experience.

Reason 3 – “It is just population growth in London”

In fact there are modest rates of population growth in many areas of the country, and there have been since the industrial revolution. But these do not automatically translate into church attendance and membership growth. Attendance at churches with large parish populations is little greater than at churches with moderate parish populations. Anyway, population growth in London has not been exceptional. According to 'Religious Trends 3', the population of Greater London rose 7% between 1991 and 1998, compared with the national growth of 6% (table 4.9).

Reason 4 – It is just the result of immigration

The minority ethnic population of London has grown rapidly in recent years – according to 'Religious Trends 3' by 30% from 1991 to 1998. About 12.7% of minority ethnic groups in London attend church on an average Sunday compared

with 7.3% of the majority population of London. In 1998, minority ethnic groups made up 1,757,000 out of a population of 7,146,000. Their extra churchgoing therefore totals 95,000. Anglicans make up 16.3% of London's churchgoers (Religious Trends 2 p12.17). Assuming Anglicans have an average ratio of ethnic groups, these gives an extra 15,500 Anglicans from the ethnic factor. With 30% growth since 1991 this would give a net growth of church attendance of 4,600. This is a significant figure – equivalent to an increase in C of E churchgoing of about 8% over 7 years – about 1% pa.

So the increase in the ethnic-minority population of London is large enough to be a significant factor. On the rough and ready data and fairly heroic assumptions above, a 1% pa factor could account for at least a third of the attendance growth over the last six years. However, the nature of the individual churches is key to whether new opportunities are actually grasped. There was a lot of immigration into London from the 1950s onwards, much of it of West Indian Christians, but the Church of England was not good at welcoming and absorbing immigrants at that time. In order for the Church to benefit from immigration, it has to be good at welcoming and absorbing 'people not like us'. It would seem from anecdotal evidence that the C of E in London has got better at this in recent years. Opportunities for growth are not taken up unless the culture of a church and diocese enables it to do so.

The question on ethnicity on the 2002 ER forms has come up against some resentment, and it is not yet clear whether it can be used to chart the progress of ethnic minority groups into church membership in London Diocese. Until this can be done, it will remain unclear exactly how much of the increase in attendance is from minority groups.

Reason 5 – “It is just that London is full of lonely people”

This suggestion is that London society is dislocated – many young adults arrive in London having lost their home community and find new roots, or re-discover old ones, in the churches. However, like the other 'knockdown' factors, the trend of young adults to find work in London is nothing new, so it cannot explain the turn-round in attendance from the mid 1990s. Also, young, rootless people moving house often are normally thought of as most unlikely to be churchgoers. House moving is one of the main times at which people stop going to church. More people stop going to church when they move than start. In any case, the percentage of the population moving into a region is not vastly different in Greater London from the rest of the South of England. In the financial year 1998/9, 6.4% of the population of Greater London had moved in to the region during that year. This compares, for instance, with 5.7% in the SE and 5.6% in the SW. The equivalent figure in the North of England is 3.5%.

Although, therefore, there may be some truth in 'all the lonely people' as a feature of London life, it by no means results in automatic increases in church membership and attendance rates. It is a background factor to church-growth but not the knockdown reason for it.

How information was obtained

I interviewed six people in a position to

Main conclusion

All five of these knockdown reasons have a grain of truth in them. The immigration reason is potentially highly significant. However, all of these features of London life have been present for many years and they apply to other London dioceses that have not seen the same growth. Opportunities for growth exist in different ways in every part of the country – the key is whether the Church has the ability to exploit them. The real situation is much more complex than any of these suggestions allow.

Part 3: An Overview

have an overview of the diocese, or at least of one area of it. Others were contacted by the diocesan office for their views on the reasons for the exceptionally rapid growth of some churches. The interviewees were:

Pete Broadbent, Bishop of Willesdon

Peter Wheatley, Bishop of Edmonton

Malcom Colmer, Archdeacon of Middlesex

Lyle Denham, Archdeacon of Hackney

Margaret Tilley, PMDA (Parish Ministry Development Adviser) for The Two Cities

Laurie Pattinson, PMDA for Stepney

These overviews tended clearly to reinforce and complement each other, building together into a coherent picture. The story told was one of change in the culture, personnel, policies and self understanding of the diocese much more than one of fortuitous change to the communities in which it ministers. What follows is an attempt to summarise and systematise the factors mentioned, and so to indicate how the diocese sees its recent turnaround in terms of ten inter-related factors. My own comments are in italics.

This perspective will be complemented in Part 4 by a look at what statistical evidence has to say, and in Part 5 with some church case studies. All three perspectives are needed together to enrich both an understanding of the causes of past growth and the actions that might provoke future growth.

Factor 1: the role of social change

The loss of Christendom is more advanced in London than in most of the country. This has some favourable implications for the growth of gathered congregations.

Acceptance of the loss of Christendom means that the diocese is not spending so much time and energy trying to keep the old Christendom ties. Fewer occasional offices

mean that clergy have a new freedom to concentrate on building their congregations. As nominalism has now died in London, there are few faithless church members and little 'dead wood' to deal with. The new post-modern culture may look bad for the church in terms of loss of respect for authority and institutions and the lack of interest in joining groups and in discovering truth. But people are on spirituality searches, and that is a good way in. People do seem to be more open in London than in some other places, and there is more of an international flavour to the population. There are more 'searching people' than in the average diocese, though perhaps not significantly different from neighbouring dioceses in London and the South East.

Although this probably describes an objective reality, it is also symptomatic of a way of looking at things. Many Anglicans view post-modernism as a problem, a cause of the decline of the church, as it surely is when the church fails to respond to it. In London Diocese, post-modernism is seen as an opportunity, as a fruitful source of future growth in the church.

Factor 2: the role of ethnic diversity

This was dealt with in Part 2 Reason 4. The diocese has become more successful at welcoming 'people not like us', whether through ethnicity or for other reasons. The culture is changing – from suspicion of ethnic diversity to celebration of it. Some churches are becoming predominantly ethnic-minority and there are modest but growing numbers of clergy and church leaders from minority groups. Many more are wanted.

Again, what by some is seen as a problem (loss of traditional churchgoing groups moving elsewhere and being replaced by ethnic minorities) is here being seen as an opportunity. The culture of response is just

as important as the social change itself.

Factor 3: the role of social action

London has probably the greatest concentration of UPA parishes in the C of E. For example, 46 of the 100 parishes in the Edmonton Episcopal Area are UPAs. So it is far from being a uniformly wealthy diocese for the pampered middle classes. The diocese employs a Community Ministry Adviser to help UPA churches develop their social programmes. These often result in the spin-off benefit of increasing church membership.

Social programmes happen elsewhere, but not every diocese has an official policy and diocesan officer for UPA social programmes. I would very much like to test the relationship between social programmes and church growth statistically, but unfortunately so far do not have enough data on parish programmes. Part 4, however, does include analysis of the growth trend in UPA parishes.

Factor 4: the role of the clergy

This is universally regarded in the diocese as the most important single factor in church growth. The normal answer to the question 'Why is this particular church growing?' is to say 'It started when a good new incumbent was appointed.' In almost all of my case studies in Part 5 the story of new growth begins with the appointment of the present incumbent.

Almost all the deacons taken on each year are London-sponsored. With 100 ordinands in training at any one time, the diocese is therefore able to cherry-pick the best. They typically later move on to incumbencies within the diocese.

The diocese has also become known as a diocese growing in mission where energetic mission-minded clergy are welcomed. It is not just the ability of the clergy, it is also the attitude of the clergy. Here is a cycle of change favourable to the growth of the

Addendum:

Please insert this page between pages 9 and 10 of the report; our apologies for the error

church – a mission minded diocese attracts and promotes mission minded clergy, some to be bishops and archdeacons, who in turn make the diocese more mission minded in the future, and so attract others.

Appendix 1 reproduces a statement from an Area Bishop of what he expects from the new vicar of one of his parishes. He makes it abundantly clear that only a priest who will go for growth has a chance of being appointed to this living.

The policy of taking great care to appoint able and mission-minded clergy is facilitated in London because a high proportion of livings are within the patronage of the diocese. For example, in the Kensington Area, the Bishop of London has patronage of 43 parishes (48%), the Crown 6 (7%), societies 24 (27%) and private individuals 16 (18%).

The ratio of clergy and other ministers to parish population or to church attenders in London is less than the national average. If we take all licensed ministers then in London there is a population of 3900 per licensed minister compared with a national average of 2300, and a Sunday attendance of 65 compared with a national average of 48. So London is not favoured because its clergy are especially thick on the ground.

However, congregations are bigger than the national average. In 1999 London had 553 full time stipendiary clergy and 478 churches – 1.16 per church. The national totals were 9648 diocesan clergy for 16,225 churches – 0.59 per church. There are very few multi-church benefices in London, and very few churches without their own allocated minister.

Moreover, the number of clergy has not been going down as in the country generally. There were 541 diocesan clergy in London in 1996 and 557 in 2001, an increase of 3%. This compares with a drop of 466 or 5% in the C of E as a whole. Diocesan numbers today are less and less determined by adherence to the 'Sheffield' formula and more and more determined by

financial realities. So here is another benevolent cycle of growth – a diocese with growing attendance and membership can afford to pay growing numbers of clergy. Dioceses with falling attendance and membership are forced to reduce their numbers of stipendiary clergy. Once again, diocesan policy is helping to shape the favourable dynamic because the policy is quite clearly to retain clergy numbers at about the present rate and to pay for them by church growth.

There has never been a policy in London Diocese for the creation of team ministries, once fashionable in many other dioceses. These are seen as sources of institutionalised conflict and bureaucracy. My own research supports the wisdom of this policy. For example, in a midlands diocese with a lot of teams, Sunday attendance in team churches fell between 1995 and 2000 by 14%. This compares with a fall of around only about half that rate in similar non-team parishes.

A policy for church growth that relies on appointing able and committed clergy may give a diocese significant growth in the early years. There may be many more churches in London to be transformed through this simple expedient. However, it is not by itself a strategy for the long term. Leaving aside the question of whether there is any net gain to the kingdom by dioceses competing between each other for the clergy who are perceived in some way to be 'the best', it cannot be possible to go on appointing 'better and better' clergy every time there is a vacancy. The successor to an incumbent under whom a church has grown significantly is likely to find it doubly hard to grow it further. It is likely that 'growth through appointing a good new incumbent' will work only once in each parish. Thereafter, an equally good new incumbent may have to be found just to stand still.

It is not really possible to separate out the role of the clergy from the role of the diocese that finds, appoints and leads them. Hence, some of what I would wish to report under the heading of 'the role of diocesan

culture' has already been reported above. The general point is that much of the process by which church growth is transmitted through the ministry of local clergy involves the policies and culture of the diocese as a whole.

I am not sure of the national percentage of livings under diocesan patronage, but believe it to be between a third and a half. It would be interesting to discover whether one type of patron makes appointments that are more likely than others to result in church growth.

Factor 5: the role of diocesan culture

Mention has already been made above of the top priority given to appointing high quality clergy willing to lead the church forward in mission. A new incumbent is expected to be not a parish pastor or a congregational chaplain but a leader in mission. The culture is to appoint mission-focussed, innovative and energetic clergy, able to work collaboratively in a team with other church members and to release them into ministry.

There is beginning to be a consistency in the diocesan culture for this. For example, a succession of the current and the three previous bishops of Willesdon have pursued an agenda of 'mission - lay ministry - social action'.

New ways and forms of being church are not merely tolerated or even encouraged by the diocesan leadership, but are actively promoted. For example, the Archdeacon of Middlesex has recently persuaded one or two large churches to send transplanting teams to others. The Bishop of Willesdon is trying to get at least one youth congregation started in each of his four deaneries.

Part of the recent diocesan cultural shift is that many boards and committees have simply been abolished. For example, there is now no board for social responsibility and no diocesan pastoral committee. When it comes to boards and committees, the diocese

travels light. Key people are therefore wasting less of their time in meaningless meetings.

There is general agreement that the culture began to be transformed under Bishop David Hope in the mid 1990s, beginning with the programme 'Agenda for Action' in 1993. Under 'Agenda for Action', churches were asked to frame priorities for their mission-action, and so began to frame 'Mission Action Plans (MAPs)'. This process forced many parishes to think and try new things, to become more daring. Others began to believe for the first time that things could actually improve rather than continue sliding downhill. This momentum has been continued under Bishop Richard. During 1998-99, under the programme 'London Bridges' churches were asked to look at their parishes in a mission-orientated way under three headings – 'Recruiting new believers – renewing the household of faith – rebuilding a broken world.' The current programme is 'The London Challenge'. This sets out strategic targets and programmes for the growth of the church. The main numerical challenge is to grow electoral rolls to 70,000 by 2005. Policies to achieve this include the retention of at least 480 stipendiary clergy, to have process evangelism courses available in every parish by 2004, and to have ministry leadership teams established in at least half the parishes by 2006.

There are financial problems and targets set out in The London Challenge, but it still manages to be primarily mission-focussed. The diocese is focussed not on asking each parish to 'pay up' a growing amount of money each year, but on asking each parish to offer to God a growing number of people each year. Rather than growth being sacrificed to the solving of financial problems, the solving of financial problems is seen to be an incidental result of growth.

All this has resulted in a continuing and gathering top-down culture change in the diocese, focussed on mission and growth.

The timing of the culture-shift identified by the current senior staff (around 1994) coincides precisely with the start of the turn-round in numbers identified in Part 1 of this report. This picture of top-down cultural change resulting in church growth is plausible, but will need to be tested by the statistical enquiry. Also, it may not feel like the whole or even the main picture when viewed from the perspective of individual parishes, as in Part 5.

The diocese is not 'travelling light' when it comes to staff appointed by and paid by the diocese itself. To go along with the process begun in the mid 1990s by the MAPs, the diocese has appointed Parish Ministry Development Advisers in each of the five areas. Further new staff members have recently been appointed to the diocesan office. So perhaps the diocese is being run increasingly by professionals rather than committees.

Factor 6: the role of church traditions

The two main church traditions represented in the diocese are 'open evangelical-charismatic' and 'mainstream catholic'. There are not many 'liberals', and not many at one extreme or the other. So the diocese is not greatly debilitated by theological argument, and the two main groups work well with other on a common agenda.

The Edmonton Area in particular suffered from the negativity following the ordination of women, but has now recovered from it. That recovery has contributed to the growth since 1994.

A number of the most rapidly growing churches belong to the 'New Wine' network, which is strong in London Diocese.

It would be interesting to look at the contribution of the New Wine network of churches to the overall growth, both because it may well be highly significant and because the New Wine churches have a

distinctive approach.

Factor 7: the role of financial management

Until 1994, the Common Fund contributions were fixed by a formula including measures of church size. In 1995 this was changed to a system of bids and agreements within deaneries. It is possible, therefore, that from 1995 some churches, released from the formula, began to be more honest about their attendance and membership. However, some disincentive still remains, because others will still expect a 'large' church to contribute more. And it is hard to see how a change in 1995 could affect the trend from 1998 onwards.

More likely, if there is a continuing impact of the Common Fund change on parish statistics it is through real changes rather than reporting changes. The case studies show that, under the present system, parishes are able to fight off large Common Fund increases triggered by recent church growth whereas in dioceses with a formula they would have no chance of doing so.

London does not suffer nearly so much as some other dioceses from 'heavy taxation' of large churches to pay for the ministry in small ones. For example, a church with an attendance of about 300 adults in Greater London in Chelmsford Diocese has a parish share payment in 2003 of £142,000. A similar sized church just over the border in London Diocese is normally paying around half that amount. The saving of £70,000 can, for example, buy a parish administrator, a youth worker and a worship leader.

The main reason for this is that London has a higher proportion of large churches than the average. Fewer churches need a subsidy and there are more churches to share the subsidy provision. However, the loss of Church Commissioners money does leave London in the same financial crisis as other dioceses. The plan is gradually to climb out of deficit over the coming few years through increased Common Fund

contributions generated primarily by church growth, and some modest reductions in the number of stipendiary posts.

Factor 8: the role of evangelism

Process evangelism courses like Alpha and Emmaus work successfully in the London context. The majority of churches are now offering courses to take people through their spirituality-search. This tends to produce a culture among the newer Christians of knowing when and where they came to faith. A clear-cut decision was made. Adult confirmees have usually come to that point through attending a course. Friends and relatives are typically encouraged at the confirmation service to try a course for themselves.

There are no published figures of adult confirmations, but total confirmations in London appear to be holding fairly steady, whereas they declined by 11% in the C of E as a whole from 1997 to 2000. However, nationally 5% of baptisms are of adults, whereas in London it is 10%. This does corroborate the impression that the baptism-confirmation step of faith by adults is more common in London than the norm.

Factor 9: the role of church planting

The diocese has a policy paper on church planting, written by Graham Dow when Bishop of Willesdon. Many of the successful examples in recent years are actually transplants of a group from a large church into the building of a dying or moribund church. Others are newly formed fellowships. The 'Encounters on the Edge' booklet 15' from The Sheffield Centre published in late 2002 chartered the Holy Trinity Brompton family of plants. It looks like the net growth in those plants begun from 1993 to the present day in London Diocese is about 1100, though at least one church has grown significantly since the

data was assembled. Other churches, such as St Stephen's East Twickenham, Holy Trinity Hounslow, All Saints Poplar, and Christ Church Isle of Dogs have begun similar plants or transplants in recent years.

In other churches, new congregations have been founded in the existing building. This has been a major factor in the growth of some of the case studies in Part 4. In some churches, new specialist congregations have begun. For example, St Luke's Redcliffe Gardens now has an Iranian congregation, a Russian congregation and a Korean congregation.

I have found the planting scene to be not only to be lively and in part diocesan-sponsored, but also confusing. It seems as though there is no one person with a comprehensive overview, and there are no

systematic diocesan records. It would be a good idea for the diocese to charge one of its officers with the task of compiling a comprehensive list of recent church and congregation plants and transplants, and to monitor their progress and sift the lessons to be learned.

Factor 10: the role of niche congregations

A significant number of growing churches in the more central areas of London appear to have found their own individual way to grow through developing their own niche market. For example, one church specialises in ‘highbrow’ classical settings of the mass performed to professional standards, another uses its priceless art treasures to offer liturgical beauty, another specialises in ministry to the rich and famous, another uses jazz music, others attract individual language groups, or age groups.

These models taken together suggest a new way of being the Church for the whole nation. The traditional, medieval, system in the Church of England was geographic – the parish system. This is now more or less meaningless in much of London. This new way of the Church offering itself to the whole community is through congregations each specialising not in a small geographical area but in a small sub-culture area.

Just as a diocese divided up geographically make it a fundamental tenant to ensure that every area is covered in the pastoral network, so should a diocese divided up culturally. In practice this would mean first charting the cultural forms offered by the church against those existing in the community, and then encouraging or planting individual congregations to fill the provision gaps identified.

Main Conclusions

Part 4: Statistical research

- 1. It is perceived that changes in the role and culture of the diocese have been instrumental in turning around decline into growth. This has been more important than general cultural or societal change.**
- 2. However, it is also perceived that the most important ingredient in the turnaround has been the appointment of suitable clergy.**
- 3. There is probably significant scope yet for growth through appointments. But eventually the diocese will run out of places that can be transformed so simply. Also, many growing churches will be stopped in their tracks by the ‘glass ceiling’ phenomenon mentioned in Part 4-3. The implicit ecclesiological model may need to be shifted from a ‘shepherd and flock’ model to a ‘people of God’ model. The training and equipping focus may need to be on leadership teams rather than on clergy. This is especially so in the area of faith-sharing (See ‘Hope for the Church’ Chapter 16).**
- 4. As more and more of the existing churches begin to function well and to ‘fill up’ growth will more and more need to come from the planting of new congregations.**

Methodology

This section contains most of my own original contribution to the enquiry. The aim is to test out the importance of a number of potential factors that may explain either variations in growth and decline between churches or the overall upward trend. The factors considered are selected either by lessons learned from national data (eg is the growth mainly in the small churches or also in the large?), or by the desire to test out theories and policies suggested by the overview above (eg are the churches that have parish MAPs doing better than those that never bothered?) or simply by the availability of data. The usual technique is to compare two or more groups of churches that possess the factor under consideration to varying degrees.

What follows is not a comprehensive survey or a last word. There are a number of further avenues it would be interesting to explore, some suggested by the evidence below. However, what follows does offer some helpful insights into what is happening, and some useful pointers to policies for sustaining growth in the future both in London and elsewhere.

The most serious data problems relate to the measures of growth and decline themselves. Until 1999 Sunday attendance was measured by a count rather than usual attendance on a normal Sunday as in most dioceses. From 2000 onwards the definition changed nationally to an October count, but the uSa question was re-instated in 2001. However, this was on the normal definition, which means that it is impossible to make a direct comparison between attendance measures in London for any useful pair of recent years.

However, London has always taken more notice of Electoral Rolls as a membership measure than have most dioceses, and it is likely that they are more realistic here than elsewhere. But it is difficult to make direct

Map 1

London Diocese Episcopal Areas



Deaneries:

Willesden

Harrow
Brent
Ealing
Hillingdon

Kensington

Houslow
Hampton
Spelthorne
Kensington
Chelsea
Hammersmith

Edmonton

Enfield
Barnes
Haringey
Camden

Stepney

Hackney
Islington
Tower Hamlets

Two Cities

Paddington
Marylebone
Westminster
The City

Table 8
Electoral Roll change
1996-2002 by Episcopal Area

Two Cities	18%
Kensington	17%
Stepney	9%
Edmonton	5%
Willesdon	2%

(based on an 85% sample)

National ER change 1995-2001 was -7%
(2002 not yet available)

comparison between years unless they are at the same point of the six-year cycle.

Fortunately, we now have data from 2002, a re-signing year. Most of the comparisons, therefore, are between 1996 and 2002, which have the advantage of being up to date. However, the data sets I've been provided with miss a significant number of 2002 figures as some parishes have not sent in their returns. Also, the 1996 data for one deanery (Central Barnet) have gone missing. So I am unable to work with the full 'population' of parishes, just with a sample totalling about 85% of the diocesan electoral roll. I know of no reason why this large sample should not be reasonably random.

Table 9
Electoral Roll change
1996-2002 by deanery

Hammersmith	48%
Chelsea	30%
Brent	29%
Westminster St Marg	29%
Westminster St Mary	16%
Hackney	14%
Hounslow	13%
City	12%
S. Camden	12%
W Haringey	11%
E Haringey	10%
Paddington	10%
Hampton	9%
Tower Hamlets	8%
Islington	5%
Kensington	4%
N. Camden	4%
Enfield	2%
Hillingdon	2%
W. Barnet	0%
Harrow	-3%
E. Ealing	-7%
W. Ealing	-7%
Spelthorne	-9%

(E. Barnet no data)

Research Finding 1 - Geographical Variations

If growth is highly specific only to one area or type of area, then its cause is more likely to reside in the sociology of that area than in the culture of the diocese. On the other hand, if it is wide spread among all areas, then it may be more to do with the diocese as a whole.

Map 1 Page 17) shows the five Episcopal Areas of London Diocese, and **Table 8 (page 18)** compares ER change in them. There is indeed quite a wide spread between the areas, suggesting there may be some 'hotspots'. However, one explanation offered is that the Willesdon Area has been mission and growth-minded the longest so the initial growth-spurt from the change in culture has ended. The others are catching up. We do not yet know the national ER total for 2002, but the percentage change between 1995 and 2001 (years at the same point in the cycle) was -7%. Even Willesdon has done significantly better than that.

Table 9 (opposite, below) shows an ER change league table by deanery, and this

Table 11
Electoral Roll change 1996-2002
(Urban Priority Areas)

	UPAs	Others
1996	15,979	28,174
2002	18,535	29,765
change	2,556	1,591
% change	16%	6%

Table 12
Electoral Roll change 1996-2002
by size groups

ER in 96	UPAs	Others
0-49	51%	40%
50-99	24%	23%
100-149	14%	6%
150-199	8%	4%
200 plus	1%	2%

Table 13
Electoral Roll change 1996-2002
by starting size group

ER in 96	Outer	Inner	Total
0-49	41%	47%	47%
50-99	15%	25%	23%
100-149	6%	13%	10%
150-199	4%	8%	5%
200-299	-4%	17%	5%
300 plus	-7%	5%	-2%
Total	1%	18%	9%

reinforces the patchy nature of the growth. Four deaneries stand out as having had exceptional growth, and four as having had a decline in ER. If this range seemed fairly random, that would be less significant than

if there were some sort of pattern. However, there does appear to be a pattern in that growth seems much faster in the 'inner deaneries' than the 'outer deaneries'. This is shown in **Table 10 and Map 2 (page 19)**. These show that the ER growth is concentrated very heavily in the 'inner' deaneries of the diocese. In fact there is virtually no net growth in the outer deaneries at all. Again, this contrast is not quite as extreme as it first appears because deaneries similar to these in other neighbouring dioceses have been in numerical decline (eg see table 7).

This finding reinforces two of the 'knockdown' theories. Population growth in Inner London (not the same area by any means as my 'inner deaneries' but with a lot of overlap) in the 90s was about 10%, double the rate of outer London. And the percentage of minority ethnic churchgoers was also much higher. However, the growth rate of ethnic minorities in Inner London has in fact been less than in Outer London in the Period because there were already many from ethnic minorities in Inner London at the start of the period (see Religious Trends 3 Table 4.9). So this picture is not clear-cut.

Another way to cut the geographical cake is by socio-economic characteristics. Perhaps the Church has been recovering ground in the less advantaged areas while being unable to break new ground in the leafier suburbs. **Table 11 (page 20)** gives a breakdown between UPA parishes and the others. This division is not the same as the 'Inner-Outer' division above, but there is inevitably a lot of overlap. The result is that the UPA churches have indeed done better than the non UPAs.

So the growth is clearly concentrated in the Inner Deaneries and the UPA areas. This clearly shows the rightness of the policy of not allowing small or moribund congregations in the UPA areas to die, but rather to attempt to revive them with a new incumbent or a transplant. The potential for new life is clearly there. It also shows the

rightness of the diocese in the future concentrating effort in the outer suburbs in an attempt to inject a new growth dynamic here also. Many of the UPA churches depend on the suburban churches financially through the Parish Share system, and so the whole diocese stands in need of growth in the suburbs in order to maintain and grow its overall strength.

But there is one further major factor in this

ER in 96	Outer	Inner	Total
0-49	18	757	775
50-99	224	1485	1709
100-149	307	710	1017
150-199	193	142	335
200-299	-176	663	487
300 plus	-361	182	-179
Total	205	3939	4144

geographical detective story. In every area and diocese of the country that I have studied I have found that church decline has been concentrated in the larger churches. In today's world, small churches are tending to grow and large ones to decline. This results in the fact that decline is concentrated in suburbia, because that is where most of the large congregations are. I believe that size is the controlling factor here because small congregations in suburbia have been doing just as well as small congregations in UPAs and villages. So, could the comparative

growth in the inner deaneries and the UPA parishes be simply because the churches there were smaller in 1996?

Table 12 (opposite) shows the UPA-Non UPA parishes divided up by ER size in 1996. It can be seen that the difference between UPA and other churches in the same size-band is much less marked than the simple totals in Table 11. In fact, the differences are now quite small enough to have little statistical significance. Probably about 80% of the difference in growth rates between the UPA and non UPA churches is due simply to the UPA churches being smaller to start with.

Table 13 (opposite) shows the Inner-Outer churches divided up by ER size in 1996. Here, the outer churches still did less well than the inner ones in the same size band, although the difference was less marked

Table 15: Electoral Roll change 1996-2002 by start size of church

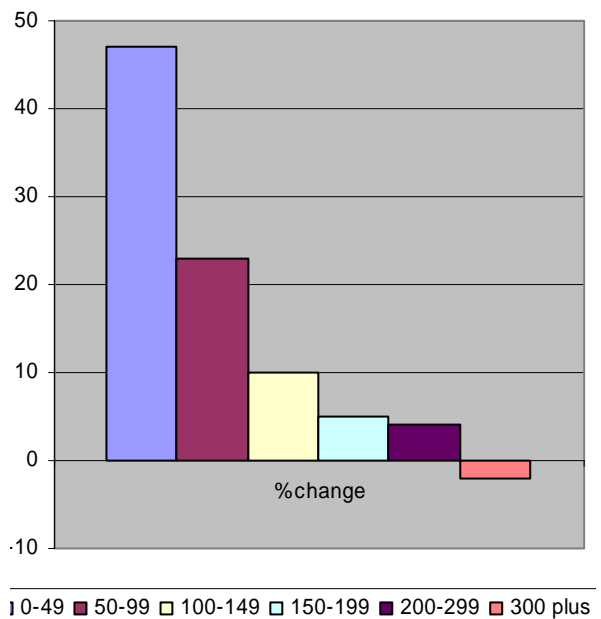


Table 15: Electoral Roll change 1996-2002 by start size of church

start size	churches	no. grew	no.shrank	no.steady	1996 total	2002 total	change	% change
0-49	52	41	10	1	1653	2428	775	47%
50-99	100	69	27	4	7284	8993	1709	23%
100-149	84	51	32	1	10,407	11,424	1017	10%
150-199	41	21	19	1	7179	7517	338	5%
200-299	38	19	19	0	9568	9903	335	4%
300 plus	21	8	13	0	9318	9160	-158	-2%
Total	336	209	120	7	45,409	49,425	4,016	9%

than in the simple totals. If outer churches had moved in the same way as the inner churches in the same size band their total net growth in ER would have been 11 % rather than 1%. So, of the 17-point difference between the inner and outer ER growth, 7 is associated with the inner churches being smaller, leaving 10 associated with the geographical difference.

So there is still a significant difference between the Inner and Outer Deaneries, even though 40% or so of the contrast can be explained by different average congregation sizes.

Table 14 (above) expresses the changes in ERs in number rather than percentage terms. It can be seen that over 70% of the overall ER growth has come from the smaller (under 150) churches in the Inner Deaneries. The main loss has been in the larger (200 plus) churches in the Outer Deaneries. These are the churches that may well need first call on diocesan help and attention if growth is to be maintained into the future. Otherwise, their continued decline could jeopardize the prospects for overall growth in the future.

Research Finding 2 - Size Matters

Almost every time I examine church attendance and membership data subdivided by size group, I find the same result. This holds true for the large national sample across denominations given by the 1989 and

Table 16 Numbers of churches in each electoral roll size category

	1996	2002	change
0-49	52	37	-15
50-99	100	99	-1
100-149	84	79	-5
150-199	41	55	14
200-299	38	42	4
300 plus	21	24	3
Total	336	336	0

1998 Church Census data, and for many individual Anglican dioceses. In general, church decline is being led by the large churches, mainly located in the suburbs and towns, and church growth is being led by the small churches, mainly located in the countryside and inner cities.

Table 15 (bar chart and statistics below) shows the situation in London Diocese when comparing ERs in 1996 and 2002. Exactly the same clear-cut pattern emerges as elsewhere, although in a situation of overall growth instead of the more normal one of overall decline. The main growth dynamic is in the small churches, and the most significant decline is among the large churches. 88% of the net ER growth took place in the churches with ERs of less than 150 in 1996. These churches contained only 43% of the people in 1996.

This finding may be the most important in the report, and may provide the most scope for a new and successful diocesan initiative to stimulate future growth.

Not only is this pattern now well established by my detailed enquiries in a number of dioceses, the reasons for it are also being well understood and are reported in my book 'Hope for the Church' (CHP 2002) pages 117-123. To avoid lengthening an already long report, I won't re-iterate them here.

One possible explanation for the comparative growth of the small is that individual churches are on a natural growth and decline cycle – the small ones of 1996 become the large ones of 2002, and visa versa. There is always some re-cycling tendency, and there is also a particular problem of the glass ceiling that is mentioned in section below. However, in the main what we are seeing in London Diocese is smaller churches growing and larger churches not growing, with the result that there are fewer and fewer small churches remaining. This is shown in **table 16. (below).**

This finding illustrates the inevitable

Table 17 Attendance change in churches in North London in the Diocese of Chelmsford 1990 - 2000

Size group	churches	no. grew	no.shrank	no. steady	1990 total	2000 total	change	% change
under 100	62	22	39	1	4041	3875	-166	-4%
100 plus	36	4	32	0	6051	4564	-1487	-25%
Number of churches in each size category:					1990	2000		
		under 100		62	78			
		100-199		26	14			
		200 plus		10	6			

conclusion - *that overall growth based only on the growth of the smaller churches is bound to slow and stop automatically as more and more of the once small churches, possessing a growth dynamic, become large and lose it.*

This in turn means that the Diocese cannot expect its overall membership and attendance to keep on rising unless it takes specific steps to stimulate the further growth of the larger churches. Through Springboard's work with larger churches in a number of dioceses, we now also understand what a number of those specific steps should be. Again, they are listed in 'Hope for the Church' pages 123-131. I am currently working with larger churches in the dioceses of Lichfield, Chichester and Wakefield on this agenda.

I am not able to make a direct comparison between the churches of similar size in the dioceses of London and Chelmsford in Greater London because I only have usable data for London on ERs and for Chelmsford on attendance, and they are for different time periods. However, **Table 17 (page 23)** does show the key distinction in Chelmsford between churches of over and under 100 adults attending on a normal Sunday. An attendance of 100 indicates a similar size of church to an ER of 150. It can be seen both that the same contrast exists between the large and the small, and also that the larger churches in The Diocese of London, even if static, have been on a much better trend than the large churches across the diocesan border in north London.

It is this thinning of the ranks that has increased the parish share burden on the remaining large churches in Chelmsford. This in turn may have brought about further decline through the lack of ability to employ the assistant staff that larger churches need to sustain their life. London has so far escaped the full force of this downward spiral, not only because large churches have not been too heavily targeted for parish share, but also because there is less need to do this as the number and strength of large churches has not been diminished through membership decline. The burden can still be spread far and wide.

Springboard is willing to initiate a process of alerting the larger churches to their situation, and assisting them with formulating new growth strategies appropriate to their size and situation. This process would involve written materials, conferences and networking, sponsored by the diocesan leadership. It would be aimed at the leadership teams of churches with 2002 Electoral Rolls of 150 and above.

Research Finding 3 - The Glass Ceiling

At somewhere around an adult attendance of 100 or an Electoral Roll of 150 there exists a 'glass ceiling' against which many growing churches bump their heads. Sometimes growth is halted, sometimes the church is sent back into decline. Only very

rarely do growing churches today seem to break through into a new size category. In fact in some dioceses not a single church has broken through the ceiling in recent years. Many have fallen through, but there is a sort of non-return valve that prevents churches growing through the ceiling. The reasons for this are largely associated with the difficulty of moving to a new style of leadership and organisation. Below the ceiling, the incumbent is able to act as pastor to the congregation, and relatively simple and informal arrangements enable a church to run reasonably efficiently. Most people know most people within a single church community, newcomers are noticed easily, and people drifting away can also be identified and paid attention to.

But there is a clear ceiling to this natural church community at which point the incumbent can no longer offer adequate pastoral care to all, and beyond which he or she begins to be seriously overworked. Also at this point, informal communications become inadequate and formal structures and meetings, together with assistant staff, must be introduced. This larger fellowship is much less likely to pick up on newcomers and drifters unless it has spent time on programmes to achieve by organisation things that once were done naturally within the tighter family. The transitional point between a 'family' church and a 'programme' church is known as the glass ceiling.

Table 15 shows that the glass ceiling size (ER 150) is in fact the break point between the churches with above average growth and those with below average growth. In fact it is the cut off between a group of 236 strongly growing smaller churches and a group of 100 larger churches that are not really growing. Sooner or later every growing church in the smaller size categories will reach an electoral roll of 150 and so is likely to see its growth stopped in its tracks.

Clearly, therefore, any diocesan strategy for fostering the continuing growth of the

diocese must pay attention to the problem of the glass ceiling. In particular the diocese should offer help to churches that are approaching it. This needs to include making churches aware of the issue and of the strategies available for breaking through the ceiling. It may also include practical help, for example in recruiting and training secretaries, administrators, pastoral care managers, and other assistant staff in churches that have not been used to employing their own personnel.

Springboard is also able to offer training

Table 18
Churches breaking through the 'Glass Ceiling'

1996 ER	2002 ER
142	233
138	221
132	285
121	234
120	238
105	211
76	408
70	307
904	2137

help for glass ceiling churches, perhaps as part of a wider package helping the larger churches.

But in the Diocese of London there are also examples of churches that have expanded through the glass ceiling quite dramatically. This is so unusual that the whole Church of England could benefit from a study of how these churches managed it. **Table 18 (opposite)** gives some of the more dramatic examples. Perhaps a first stage in a 'glass ceiling process' in the diocese would be to get these churches together in order to listen to their stories and learn their lessons. These can then be used as part of a training package for others.

The increase in ER in just the eight churches listed in Table 18 is 1,233 (136% growth from 1996 to 2002). This growth

represents 30% of the entire ER growth in the whole diocesan sample of 336 churches. Clearly, the fact that a few churches have managed to break through the glass ceiling is a major reason for the overall membership growth. Their success should be examined, celebrated and disseminated in order to help other churches in similar situations.

Research Finding 4 -

Occasional Offices

The Church of England has traditionally been part of the fabric of society for the whole community – conducting its baptisms, weddings and funerals. These are often seen by the clergy as important evangelistic opportunities as well as pastoral ones. It is sometimes suggested that churchgoing is just the tip of the ‘Christendom’ iceberg, implying that as society generally calls on the Church less and less, actual Sunday attendance is also bound to decline.

However, I have been struck by a number of London clergy who have indicated that, far from being a problem to them, the lack of occasional offices in their parish has enabled them to concentrate time, energy and focus on building the gathered community. In this view, the loss of the ‘Christendom’ role, is actually good for church growth.

It seems fairly well accepted in London Diocese that ‘Christendom’ in London is effectively dead and that a pastoral ministry and way in to the local community based on conducting occasional offices is not the way forward. It is certainly true that the London clergy are performing on average very few occasional offices. Yet church attendance is rising. For example, London has 5.8% of

the clergy of the C of E, but in 2000 they conducted only 3.6% of the baptisms, 2.8% of the marriages, and 2.9% of the funerals. So, on average, the London clergy are performing only half the number of occasional offices as elsewhere.

Table 19:
Average number of funerals taken by a member of the parochial clergy in 2000

Diocese	Funerals
Sheffield	40
Durham	37
Birmingham	36
Newcastle	36
Southwell	36
Lichfield	35
Porstmouth	35
Rochester	33
Worcester	33
Sodor & Man	32
Coventry	31
Norwich	31
St Albans	31
Derby	30
Liverpool	30
Chester	29
Wakefield	29
York	29
Chelmsford	28
Winchester	27
Blackburn	26
Bristol	26
Gloucester	26
Ripon & Leeds	26
Carlisle	25
Chichester	25
Exeter	25
Hereford	25
Lincoln	25
Manchester	25
Canterbury	24
Leicester	24
St Edmundsbury	24
Ely	23
Guildford	23
Southwark	23
Bradford	22
Salisbury	21
Bath & Wells	20
Oxford	20
Peterborough	20
Truro	20
London	13

Church of England 27

Table 20 Membership trends in parishes with many funerals

church	number	no. grew	no.shrank	1996 total	2002 total	% change
50+ funerals	27	16	11	5803	5541	-5%
Others	309	104	205	39,606	43,884	11%

Table 21 Membership trends in parishes with many baptisms

church	number	no. grew	no. shrank	1996 total	2002 total	% change
20+ bapts	66	44	22	14,901	16,407	10%
Others	270	172	98	30,508	33,018	8%

A funeral is liable to entail a series of initial phone calls, a pre visit, preparation time, the funeral itself, an appearance at the ‘do’ afterwards, and a post funeral visit. The total time spent will be between half a day and a whole day, which is a substantial part of the ‘discretionary’ time left to an incumbent after they have done the weekly necessities. Someone conducting one funeral a month therefore has significantly more time free for other matters than someone conducting one funeral a week.

Table 19 details the situation with funerals, where there is a remarkable contrast between London and every other diocese in the country. It may well be asked – ‘Who buries the dead in London?’ I am not quite sure of the answer to this question, but suspect part of it is ‘The retired clergy’. In some dioceses the working clergy are put under pressure from diocesan authorities to conduct funerals and to squeeze out retired ‘freelancers’ in order to collect the fees to contribute to the diocesan budget. In London there is no pressure to do this, and retired clergy are free to retain their fees. It may well be, of course, that this policy, though it loses some fee income in the short term, is much the better from the purely financial point of view, because it frees the clergy to spend time growing their churches. Fierce ‘you must collect and remit all your fees’ policies may in fact be contributing to church decline in some dioceses.

If there is a causal link between lack of

occasional offices and the opportunity to grow the gathered congregation, then churches in the Diocese of London that still conduct a lot of occasional offices will, on average, have a weaker growth trend than the others. **Table 20 (page 26)** shows the trend in the 27 parishes that in 2000 conducted at least 50 funerals, one per week. Their membership trend –losing 5% of their ERs between 1996 and 2002- is close to the national average, and a significant contrast with the 11% growth in other parishes in the Diocese. So, this evidence confirms the theory that freedom from the need to spend a lot of time on funerals is a significant factor in explaining the comparative growth of the Church in London.

Table 21 (above) makes a similar comparison in respect of churches conducting an exceptionally large number of baptisms. Here, however, there is no evidence of such a link. The churches conducting larger numbers of baptisms if anything grew slightly more, though the difference is too small to be of any significance.

The conclusion to this is that the evidence gathered so far is highly suggestive of a link between freedom from occasional offices, especially funerals, and church growth. However, the finding on baptisms means that the theory is still far from proven, and further work is indicated. At the very least, however, the experience of London is demonstrating that loss of Christendom does not necessarily mean loss of Church,

Table 22**Electoral Roll growth 1996-2002 by tradition of incumbent's training institution**

College trad	churches	no. grew	no.shrank	1996 total	2002 total	% change	96	02
	av'ge						av'ge	av'ge
Evan-Charis	88	56	32	13,846	15,374	11%	157	175
High	105	62	43	12,285	13,250	8%	117	126
Midd/Liberal	32	21	11	3928	4353	11%	123	136

and in fact could be associated with church growth.

In order to capitalise on the growth potential of declining occasional offices and other 'Christendom' indicators, however, dioceses need to help their clergy re-direct their efforts. Clergy need to be seen primarily not as 'pastors to the congregation' or 'chaplains to the community', but as 'leaders in mission' enabling the church as a whole to grow its capacity to evangelise and to serve the community.

Research Finding 5 - Clergy Training and Tradition

Nationally, congregations in churches of the evangelical tradition are around 50% larger than those of other traditions. There is also a general sense that the proportion of evangelicals and charismatics among Anglicans has been increasing in recent years. So is the church membership growth in London being delivered mainly by the charismatic-evangelicals, or is it across the board?

I have no data source from which to classify the church tradition of individual churches. This is in any case a problematic exercise these days as some churches are quite hard

to pigeon-hole, and fewer people wish to be interested in churchmanship divisions. The only data available to me is the training institution of the incumbent or priest in charge. Although most colleges have a clear tradition of one sort or another, this does not mean that all their students followed that tradition in their later ministry. Also, many clergy are called to churches that do not entirely fit with their previous tradition. However, for what it is worth, the results of this enquiry are shown in **Table 22 (page 27)**.

The main conclusion is that there is no statistically significant difference in the growth trend of churches with incumbents from colleges of different traditions. Whether an incumbent went to a flagship evangelical college or trained part time on a course or went to a long-closed liberal college appears to make no difference whatsoever to the electoral roll growth in their church. There is, however, one caveat - as evangelical congregations are larger (and larger churches have on average done less well for growth) then for the evangelicals still to come out with 11% growth does suggest some significant difference between clergy of similar sized churches. In fact, the 88 evangelical-charismatic incumbents in the sample (37% of the whole) between them contributed

Table 23 Electoral Roll growth 1996-2002 by age of incumbent or priest in charge

Year born	number	no.grew	no.shrank	1996 total	2002 total	% change	96	02
							av'ge	av'ge
'46 & before	88	56	32	14,336	15,273	7%	163	174
'58 & after	69	45	24	8186	9925	21%	119	144

50% of the ER growth. On average they added 18 people to their ERs, and the others added 10 people.

Nevertheless, the broad truth is that growth now seems to be happening across the traditions and is not confined to one or another. As it was reported under 'Research Finding 2' that smaller congregations are growing best, it must also be true that net growth is widespread among many churches. About 62% of all the churches in the diocese had some ER growth between 1996 and 2002, and this big majority clearly must represent churches across all the traditions. It seems that, when it comes to the leading of church growth or decline, the personal characteristics of the clergy are more important than their training-tradition.

Research Finding 6 - Age of Clergy

National research suggests that younger clergy are more likely to be associated with growing churches, and older clergy with shrinking churches. There could be all sorts of reasons for this – having smaller congregations to start with, ability to relate to younger adults, energy levels, burnout, ability to keep up with changing times, the growing burden of extra jobs loaded on to senior clergy, etc. The diocesan situation is summarised in **Table 23 (below)**. It can be seen that the younger clergy are indeed the ones associated with the best ER growth, although the older clergy also have seen some more modest growth. I did not analyse

in detail the results for the 'middle aged' clergy, but their total result is easy to estimate as a residual. The answer is that they have a combined ER growth about the same as the older clergy. The distinctive growth-association appears to end at the age of somewhere around 45.

The average age of the working clergy nationally is around 51, in the Diocese of London it is 46. This is a considerable difference and must be a significant explanatory factor for London's comparative success.

I believe there is also some anecdotal evidence to suggest that older incumbents with younger members of their staff team are also more likely to sustain ER and attendance growth. But I have no systematic data on this.

The average age of those accepted for ordination training nationally is now 41. Yet it looks important to find and appoint clergy in their 20s and 30s to key positions. There is obviously an implication here for the recruitment policy for ordinands – a diocese or national church serious about future growth must go looking for young ordinands.

The average age of clergy ordained in the Diocese of London in the years 1999,2000 and 2001 was 35 years and nine months. Almost half of recommended candidates from the diocese in recent years were aged under 30, and most of the rest were in their 30s. Most London deacons were London ordinands, as are many London incumbents.

Table 24 Electoral Roll growth by length of service of incumbent or priest in charge

in post up to four years by 2002 = short stay
in post five to ten years by 2002 = medium stay
in post eleven years or more by 2002 = long stay

clergy	number	no. grew	no.shrank	1996 total	2002 total	% change	96 av'ge	02 av'ge
short stay	84	43	41	11,587	11,807	2%	138	141
medium stay	108	85	23	13,629	16,525	21%	126	153
long stay	70	45	25	10,603	10,846	2%	151	155

The clear picture is that London Diocese does have its own conveyor belt of significant numbers of young ordinands, deacons and incumbents who are able to deliver the church growth goods in today's fast moving world.

Other dioceses wishing to generate new church growth may need to take active steps to create their own conveyor belt.

It is also important to acknowledge that older clergy are not 'washed up' – some are associated with significant growth. The appropriate policy conclusion is that strategies need to be developed for helping older clergy stay fresh and for accompanying them with younger colleagues. Part of a 'staying fresh' strategy might be improving employment conditions, for example through a sabbaticals policy or through a longer time allowance between jobs to allow clergy to recover from the last one before being expected to plunge into the next. Part of it would also be a stronger CME input to experienced clergy to help them stay in touch with a changing world and a changing church.

Research Finding 7 - Clergy Length of Stay

National research suggests that church growth is much more likely to happen under clergy who have been leading a church for a medium length of time – say around 5 or 10 years – than under either newly arrived or long-stay clergy. What sort of clergy are leading the growth of ERs in the Diocese of London? The answer given by **Table 24 (below)** is crystal clear – 86% of the net growth in ERs between 1996 and 2002 was in parishes with an incumbent who had been put in place between 1992 and 1997. This means an incumbent (or priest in charge) who had been in post for between five and ten years by the ER re-signing date in 2002.

Many churches can, of course, grow at other stages in the incumbent cycle. And it is

possible that some of the growth in these parishes was in the early years after 1996 before incumbents had been in post for five years. But the general conclusion remains. Although putting in new clergy can sometimes result in an almost instant turnaround in a church's fortunes, on average it is not a short-term church growth solution. There can be initial decline as well as initial growth. London Diocese appears currently to be growing mainly in the parishes of those who were instituted between 1992 and 1997.

One consequence of this is that putting people in for short stays, for example as priest in charge for five years, in order to retain flexibility against future financial problems is very bad for church growth. By disabling the growth possibilities it may even *cause* the financial crisis such a policy is designed to manage.

I have no data on the prevalence of freeholds versus contracts in the Diocese of London compared with the national figure. I have a feeling that freeholds and long-term thinking are more common in London than is usual today, and, if so, this would clearly be one of the reasons for London's comparative success. It would be interesting to explore this further, especially bearing in mind the current national review of freehold and contracts.

A better policy than five-year contracts would be to grant a ten or twelve year licence. This would encourage clergy to think in the long-term way that is important for solid growth to come through, while ensuring they did not stay too long. A 'renewable' five or six year licence, given on the understanding it would be renewed just once if all was well, would be a reasonable compromise, but even this might still be insufficient psychologically to encourage all concerned to work together for long-term growth.

It has been said to me that it was about 1992 when the diocese began to look for a new breed of clergy to fill vacancies – those

more likely to be leaders in mission, to prioritise the growth of their congregations. If that is the case, the figures might suggest the success of such a policy, rather than some immutable length of stay law, as the cause of the growth surge. However, this would not explain why clergy appointed since 1998 have not, so far, on average kick started much of a growth process in their parishes. It is more likely that it is to these clergy, already in post for a few years, that the diocese should look most optimistically for its growth in ERs over the next five years.

Finally, rather than accept the inevitability of this finding being replicated in the future, perhaps the diocese could consider ways of encouraging parishes to grow in the early years of an incumbency, and also in the later years of a long-stay one. Some induction training, concentrating on strategies for growth, for clergy in their first year in a new post could pay dividends. Similarly, a '3 line whip' course for clergy who have just completed ten years in post could help set them on their way again. I suspect that it would also be important to offer such training and guidance to a PCC or whole church leadership rather than just to the incumbent.

Research Finding 8 - Process Evangelism Courses

It is generally considered today that it is often more realistic to do evangelism as a process through a course than as an event

through a mission. The most widely used course throughout the country is Alpha, developed and run by Holy Trinity Brompton in the Diocese of London. Could Alpha and the other courses have gained an earlier and wider acceptance in London churches, and be more suited to the London culture, and so be a cause of the growth of the church here?

I have found it frustratingly difficult to obtain a full list of churches using Alpha and the other courses in the Diocese. This is partly because not every church that uses Alpha actually registers with HTB, and partly because the PMDAs have not all been able to come up with lists from their own areas to help me. So I am still not sure whether a higher percentage of London churches than the national average are using Alpha, though I suspect this is the case. The other way of getting a handle on this is to compare the growth of churches using evangelism courses with those not using them.

Unfortunately, only one area – Willesdon - has been able to come up with a list of churches doing courses. This is divided between Alpha, Emmaus and 'Others'. However, as there are very few churches using Emmaus, I have bracketed these with 'Others'. This lack of information from the other areas is not just frustrating for my research, it also makes it impossible to monitor and pursue progress towards one of the major objectives of the London challenge. The first of the 11 challenges is to 'Encourage the development of a course in the spirit of Alpha and Emmaus in every parish by 2004.' Moreover, it appears from

Table 25: Process Evangelism Courses in Willesdon

Course type	no.ch's	no. grew	no.shrank	av start	1996 tot	2002 tot	change	% change
Alpha	22	15	7	159	3492	3693	201	6%
Other	21	10	11	180	3776	3889	113	3%
None	27	14	13	143	3852	3840	-12	0%

the Willesden list that there are still, at the last count, forty churches (43%) in the area without any sort of course. With only a year to go, a major drive of some kind will be needed to set up courses for all these forty churches.

The situation for those churches in Willesdon for which we have ER data for both years is summarised in **Table 25**. It can be seen that churches not using an evangelism course had static electoral rolls, whereas those using courses had a modest increase. The contrast is probably a little greater than meets the eye because the average starting size of the churches using courses was greater, and so they would, other things being equal, have had a worse trend than the churches not using courses. Although the sample sizes are too small to draw any reliable conclusions to apply elsewhere, the result does at least fit with the findings from the national sample of churches responding to the 1998 Church Attendance Survey. Data from this suggested that churches using Alpha had a clear but modest growth advantage compared with others. So, it does look as though encouraging the use of courses is probably a helpful policy for growth. However, data is needed from all the Episcopal areas before any firm conclusions

can be drawn.

Research Finding 9 – Diocesan Initiatives

Diocesan leaders trace the turnaround in attendance and membership trends to the launch of ‘Agenda for Action’ in 1993. In this initiative, the Bishop of London asked every parish to produce a Mission Action Plan (MAP) containing priorities and objectives for the years 1993-98. The use of MAPs has continued, and further initiatives, of which ‘The London Challenge’ is the latest, have maintained the impetus.

Being the Church of England, not every parish has responded to the diocesan initiatives or produced a MAP. Frustrating as this may be to the diocese, it is marvellous news for me because those churches that have not responded form a good ‘control group’. If the diocesan initiatives and the production of MAPs are at the heart of the turnaround then those parishes that have MAPs will have been growing relative to those that have not.

Only two area PMDAs were able to come up with a list of churches responding with MAPs and in other ways to the various

Table 26 Diocesan Initiatives in Stepney

Agenda for Action and Parish MAPs 1993 onwards

response	no.ch's	no.grew	no.shrank	av.start size	1996 tot	2002 tot	change	% change
YES	30	21	9	92	2761	2988	227	8%
NO	22	15	7	88	1943	2339	396	20%

All three initiatives - Agenda for Action; London Bridges; Ministry Audit

response	no.ch's	no. grew	no.shrank	av.start size	1996 tot	2002 tot	change	% change
YES to all	10	6	4	115	1151	1240	89	8%
NO to all	8	7	1	90	718	918	200	28%

initiatives.

The results from one area for which I have received data – Stepney – are summarised in **Table 26 (below)**. The 22 churches that did not respond to Agenda for Action and did not produce a parish MAP saw ER growth from 1996 to 2002 of 20%. The 30 churches that did respond and produce a MAP saw growth of only 8%. That the two groups are fairly similar is suggested by their very similar average start size.

Of the 22 non responding churches, eight also failed to respond to the two later initiatives, ‘London Bridges’ and ‘Ministry Audit’. These serial non-joiners did the best of any group, recording a total ER growth of 28%. Of the 30 churches producing a MAP, 10 also responded to London Bridges and Ministry Audit. These 10 had an ER growth of 8%, the same as the whole group of 30.

In Willesdon, almost every church has a MAP and so there is no control group available. Again, however, it is not good news for MAP-enthusiasts that the area where everyone did a MAP grew its ER by only 2%, whereas the area with a lot of resistance to MAPs grew 9%.

This evidence, therefore, suggests that the MAPs initiative was not instrumental in generating exceptional growth – in fact those churches that did not take part did better than those that did. Those that declined to respond to any initiative did best of all.

This finding is not conclusive because it is mainly from one area and the sample size is not great. It is sufficiently clear-cut, however, to be taken seriously. It is important to gather the relevant data from the other areas to check it out. If it holds true that churches not responding to diocesan initiatives are growing faster than those that do respond then a review of the policy of initiatives would seem to be indicated.

Research Finding 10 –

Church Planting

I indicated earlier that I have not been able to make a full list of church plants and transplants, partly because I have been unable to find anyone in possession of such a list, and partly because attendance and ER data is not always available. But the vital question remains – how much of the growth in attendance and membership in the

diocese has come through newly planted or reinforced churches?

The only set of churches I have been able to identify and find the relevant data on is a group of six churches into which a team has been transplanted, four of them from Holy Trinity Brompton. The total increase in their ERs 1996-2002 is about 750, out of a total diocesan increase of 5000. In addition the three planting churches themselves increased their ERs by a further 300. There are also a number of transplants for which there appears to be no 2002 ER data, plus several newly planted congregations also lacking in data. All I can conclude at the moment is that at least 20% of the total ER growth is associated with transplants. When all are added in, the percentage associated with new churches and transplants together is likely to be significantly higher than this. There is, of course, no systematic information on growth associated with new congregations within the boundaries of existing churches and their buildings. Anecdotal evidence, however, suggests this factor is at least as significant (see the case studies). It is easily possible, therefore, that new congregations, new churches, and transplants together are associated with a net ER increase of more than half the diocesan total.

As this factor is potentially so important, especially with a number of new plants in the pipeline at the moment, the diocese would benefit from developing a systematic database. Perhaps an official in the diocesan office could be charged with setting up such a database and with keeping it up to date. It would consist of a list of plants and transplants, together with a record of attendance and ER trends and any other relevant data. As planting looks one of the most powerful and promising future policy options for church growth in London it is important to monitor it and to ensure that lessons are learnt along the way.

Main Conclusions

- 1. Recent ER Growth has been widespread geographically, but concentrated on the inner deaneries, UPA areas, and three of the five Episcopal areas.**
- 2. More importantly, it has been concentrated on smaller churches, specifically those with an ER of under 100 in 1996. Leadership teams of larger churches would benefit from help in understanding and overcoming their special problems.**
- 3. Many of the smaller growing churches are brushing up against the 'glass ceiling' and could do with diocesan help in growing through it. Assistance should be sought from the handful of churches that have broken through this size barrier successfully.**
- 4. Churches with few occasional offices and other 'Christendom duties' are doing as well as or better than those still conducting them. Clergy able to concentrate on being leaders in mission are more likely to lead growing churches. The help of retired clergy, readers and specialists in the taking of funerals should be encouraged.**
- 5. Clergy training and tradition have little impact on growth and decline. Churches of all types and traditions appear almost equally likely to be able to grow.**

Part 5: Church Visits

6. Younger clergy are more likely to lead church growth. Young ordinands and young incumbents should be sought as a priority, but older clergy should be better resourced and nurtured to help prevent burnout.
7. Growth seems to be maximised by clergy spending ten or twelve years in a post. Steps should be taken to encourage this and to refresh the vision of long stay clergy.
8. Process Evangelism courses appear to generate new growth, but more information is needed to provide a full picture.
9. Diocesan initiatives such as parish MAPs, on the evidence available so far, do not seem to have stimulated growth as parishes without MAPs have grown faster than those with them. However, much more work needs to be done on this to establish all the facts.

The diocese has put large resources into this programme and it would be sensible to evaluate it further.

10. Much of the growth is associated with planting and transplanting, which should be monitored and developed as a future strategy.

There are also a number of other diocesan policies that would be helpful in sustaining and stimulating growth in attendance and membership. I have only mentioned here those that I have some direct diocesan statistical evidence on. A number of other growth strategies are mentioned in my book 'Hope for the Church'. Some of these, for example, relate to ways of winning back children and young people.

During the winter of 2002-3 I was able to visit six churches recommended to me by Area Bishops and Archdeacons. The aim of each visit was to hear the story of a church that had been through a period of

exceptional growth. In each case I spent several hours with the incumbent, and sometimes with other members of the team. The reports below have all been checked out with the incumbents.

Each report lists a set of reasons for or ways of growth in that particular church. The main significance of these lists is their length – growth is quite a complex process and is dependant sometimes on quite detailed things. Also significant is that each story is unique – general lessons can be drawn but one of those general lessons is that no two situations are the same so that formulaic approaches are usually inadequate.

The lists of factors describe the visible, human side of the spiritual activity of evangelism and growth. This is not to minimise God's role in the growth of His church, rather it is understood that He is working in and through every growth factor.

The one major factor common to all is that the current phase of growth and development began at the appointment of the present incumbent. Five of the six were in their 30s when appointed and the other was 41.

In four of the six churches, the starting of new congregations was mentioned as part of the story.

In general, the incumbents do not see 'The Diocese' as a major player in the growth of

their churches. One mentioned the positive effect of doing a parish MAP. However, most of the comments related to the negative effect of large increases in Parish Share threatening future growth, or of withdrawal of assistant stipendiary posts. However, the main point was that the churches were *successful* at staving off diocesan requests for greater share until a later date. In other dioceses they would not have been, and their growth may have become stunted as a result.

LONDON CHURCH VISIT NO 1

St Gabriel's Cricklewood — Mark Aldridge

FIGURES:

ER 1996 105; 2002 211

Adult attendance 1994 50, today 200 adults, 40-50 children, 15-20 teens.

IN THE BEGINNING...

Mark arrived in 1994. Morale was low and relationships not very healthy. A transient area so many people tried the church briefly and left. Some ethnic mix but blacks sat one side and whites the other. Welcome had been poor – one black member said, ‘nobody spoke to me not even the vicar’. Mark began by changing the worship style – less communion, more informality and modern music. Some people left, but growth began. Growth has been mainly from people who live up to three miles away – about 50% live in the parish. Mostly it has been from people who tried the church once, liked it and stayed. However it is a very transient area so the church loses many people each year as well as gaining them. Most of the growth is not transfer growth from other local churches.

HOW AND WHY HAS IT GROWN?

Rather than try to tell the story year by year (which I can't do) I here list the factors that have contributed to the growth. The story should become clearer through these. However, a long listed is given rather than a brief summary because it would be misleading to suggest growth is all down to one or two factors. The real world is more complex than that.

1. The initial change in the worship style, continued thereafter, to become charismatic and informal. Little liturgy. Blocks of worship.
2. In the early years after 1994 a few key individuals arrived who helped, with the vicar, to change the atmosphere from one of private Sunday attendance to that of a caring and fun loving place to be.
3. Led by the vicar, the church began to welcome cultural diversity and find it a strength. Attitudes were transformed – there are now 23 different nationalities in the church and the percentage of Afro-Caribbeans has risen from 30% to 45%. Biggest groups are from Nigeria and Ghana.
4. Some detailed attention was given to improve the church building in the early stages of growth, the building was re-ordered in 2000. Having a warm and welcoming comfy building has been an important factor.

5. The church now seats 250, even with chairs, and so capacity has not been a problem yet. The Sunday morning service gets about 175 people or so and is beginning to feel full, so that is an issue for the near future.
6. Although there are 12,000 people in the parish, they make few demands on the clergy – there are mosques, a synagogue, and a large Hindu Temple in the area, along with a large Roman Catholic population. This freed – or forced – the vicar and curate to concentrate their time, energy and focus on building the gathered community. There was nothing else to do.
7. Mark does not accept ‘extra’ jobs either in the community (school governor etc) or in the C of E. This enables him to continue to concentrate focus on the church and not to burn out.
8. A staff team has been grown – there is a ‘training’ curate, a black African NSM, a youth worker and, now, a part time administrator.
9. The NSM is important because his existence says to the ethnic groups that they are welcomed into leadership.
10. The youth worker works both with church young people and with others as outreach. There is a Friday night youth club where relationships are being built. The diocese is asking whether St Gabriels could start a youth church for the Brent area, and thought is being given to it. One major issue is what should the music culture of such a youth church be – each grouping of young people have their own music.
11. There has been a clear policy of reaching out to younger age groups. This is inevitably helped by the fact that Mark was ‘only’ 36 in 1994. Ten of fourteen current members of the PCC are in their 20s or early 30s.
12. The church has broken through the ‘glass ceiling’ size of around 130 adults at which many churches stop. Partly this is because a team developed (so no one-man band problem) partly because culturally many of the members are ‘low maintenance’ people – lacking high expectations of the pastoral care and involvement of the vicar in their lives. Thirdly, the church operates a mental health drop-in centre funded by Brent Council. The workers here can take on some of the more demanding pastoral problems.
13. The problem of a wide-open back door as well as front door was tackled with a welcome team, and newcomers lunches. The development of a small group network gives relational glue.
14. Congregation-planting has played a part. A new Sunday evening service was begun geared at young adults and young people. The local core group were not large enough so Mark wrote to HTB for help. A group of 21 people committed themselves to 6 months to get the service going, along with a small local group. After the 6 months, 15 of them stayed. The congregation has now grown to about 50, although it has stayed steady for the past year. During the last twelve months the growth has again happened in the morning service.
15. Mark has a policy of investing time in developing a group of high quality young leaders.
16. The church does parish MAPs and finds them a help for strategic planning.
17. Alpha was first used in 1995, since when over 20 courses have been run. Alpha groups are linked in to the next stage when the course is over – 17 out of 18 on the last course joined a home group at the end of it. The present Alpha group has 27 outsiders or new fringe church-goers.

18. Today the small groups take one of two forms –home group and cell. As the church congregation has got larger and so more impersonal so some members are beginning to see cell or home group as their first home and priority. The existence and quality of these groups sustains high quality relationships within the new larger-scale church.
19. Money has been a key factor. The church was dark and cold. The fact that it is now warm and welcoming is a key reason why people stay. The congregation has spent £0.5m on the church building in recent years. Giving has doubled in the last two years – in 2001 it was £150,000 plus tax recovery. But the Common Fund was only £27,000, leaving the church with the money to do the job. Mark has told the diocese –‘If you want us to grow, you must let us invest in growth’. However, the church has been asked for a 61% increase next year, and this is a potential threat to growth.
20. Mark’s main support network is not the deanery but the New Wine network, which shares his values. This is important not only for fellowship-support but also for ideas and examples of how to go about growing the church.

WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

Future growth looks set to come from the work with young people, and the possible planting of a new youth congregation; from developments at the evening service; from exploration of cells; from a Friday worship event.

My comment: The Sunday morning service is getting ‘full’ and will stop growing soon – so it needs to be divided or something else new started. And how should the response develop to the challenges both of the social problems of the other religions around?

LONDON CHURCH VISIT NO 2

St Paul's Northfield, Ealing - Mark Melliush

FIGURES

ER	1996: 199
	2001: 369 <i>but don't bother much with ER and don't get everyone on the roll</i>
Adult attendance <i>guess</i>	1993: 60 adults & few children <i>av age 55-60</i>
	2002: 650-700 adults 300 children <i>av age of adults much younger</i>
Giving	1993 £8
	2002 £400 <i>but Parish Share is only £60</i>

IN THE BEGINNING...

Mark Arrived in 1993. Congregation small and elderly. Many people on the ER never came to church. Finances were a big mess with a debt of £50th and a deficit budget of £16th. The fabric was in a poor state and the church was freezing.

The initial moves were to get the church warmer for services, to serve nice coffee, to start giving away 10% of income, and to lift vision from maintenance to kingdom in a series of bible studies and prayer meetings. The vicar and his wife had church members round to dinner every night for a time to build relationships and share vision.

HOW AND WHY HAS IT GROWN?

These factors are in no particular date or importance order as I don't know these:

1. Initial start-up phase as above –relational work, warmer building, give 10% away, maintenance to kingdom.
2. New style of leading – no dog collar, vicar and wife known as the 'church leaders' not as 'vicar and vicar's wife'. Ministry is then not seen as the preserve of the ordained.
3. New style of worship – organ and robes replaced by radio mike and worship band. Traditional evening service closed down. Done with some care, not in a hasty, confrontational way. Tradition changed from middle of the road to charismatic-evangelical.
4. Two new services planted. Main am divided into 2, and a new evening service started which is loud and rocky, led by someone in their 20s, and appealing to a much younger age group.
5. Decision to reach out to men and to young people, so have appropriate targets. Eg fathers and sons weekends away, eg breakfast and big screen for world cup.

6. Heavy investment in work with children and young people.
 - a. Have outreach groups in the church on weeknight evenings eg Tuesday is for 8s-11s with games and a thought for the day. Use of premises for self-financing playgroups using paid staff. Practical help offered to local schools, so now doing assemblies. Parenting courses offered. So good contacts developed into the local community.
 - b. Emphasis on high quality Sunday provision. Eg 11s-14s meet in a nearby youth centre (don't attend the adult church service). About 70 of them have their own worship and teaching event, starting with breakfast at 10.30. The church provides a good quality keyboard, and music lessons for guitarists etc. About 50 14s-18s meet on Wednesday evenings and have their own worship, ministry, teaching, and outreach programme. They also attend the evening service, and are involved in worship-leading at it.
 - c. Youth and children's work is run by a FT worker plus part time CYM student assistant, plus five young adults doing a gap year with the church.
7. Teaching and policy of generous giving – tithing – plus growth in numbers transformed the finances. Availability of money then facilitated further growth. The diocese was told 'Unless you moderate the parish share increases you will strangle the growth of this church' so parish share is not a dominant proportion of income. 25% is given away.
8. Regular giving has paid for re-ordering (£120,000) and other building work – new chairs, new sound system, new lighting etc. Replacing the pews with chairs was a key move because it made the worship space available during the week eg for children's clubs.
9. Giving has financed a growing staff team – at least 11 on the church staff at the last count. Curate, admin, prison visitor, youth worker, etc.
10. A policy of involving everyone in ministry. If everyone has a job they are more likely to stay and be committed. Eg 210 people in the hospitality team (Sunday refreshment rotas etc).
11. A policy of excellence – if we are going to do it we'll do it well. Eg Sunday hospitality budget is £6thpa for decent coffee and food. New sound system will be high quality, worship leaders get the best equipment.
12. A policy of generosity to each other, the community and the church. Eg new parents will have meals prepared for them by church members for the first two weeks the baby is out of hospital.
13. A policy of 'blessing the community' eg practical support (holidays) to single mums, help with gardening to pensioners.
14. Pastoral care and fellowship is organised in a system of 28 homegroups. These are arranged into clusters in groups of 4 with a max of 70 people in a cluster. People not in homegroups are all allocated to one group or another for the purposes of pastoral care. The cluster leaders report to a staff member with overall responsibility. Clusters do meet as such from time to time. In this way the large church is broken down into small units, there is a reporting system, and pastoral care is spread around.
15. The growth has been mainly from the local community by conversion – 98% can walk to church. However, some people now try to move into the area because of the church, thus pushing up house prices even further. Potential transferees from other churches are discouraged.

16. There is an atmosphere of outreach – people have learnt to talk happily about their faith. There is testimony in every service. Mostly they are about what God has been doing ‘this week’.
17. There is an ethnic mix – about 30% black, the same as the population of the parish. There is also an Arabic speaking congregation that uses the church building on a Sunday afternoon.
18. The vicar has a clear but limited role. His task is to be in touch with staff, cluster leaders and other leaders of significant ministries –up to about 80 people. His job is to give vision and strategic leadership and ensure programmes happen properly.
19. The church has a funerals and bereavement ministry, but this is done by a Reader who is a trained bereavement counsellor rather than by the vicar. The theory is that occasional offices are conducted by specialists within the church team rather than by the vicar, who is the leader of the church not the pastor of the people.
20. The church has a number of ‘touch points’ with the local community eg Burns Night Supper, Jazz lessons, gardening to make relationships.
21. Alpha courses are used, but usually only inviting people the church has already made some sort of relationship with eg from a touch point. They currently run 6 courses a year in the church, 2 in schools, 3 in prisons and 1 in a local company building. Groups are kept small to ensure intimacy. Alpha is part of a process of going from belonging to believing not a stand-alone.
22. Prayer underpins everything and is seen as key to church growth. Eg every Alpha course has prayer support eg all nights, half nights of prayer, prayer breakfasts.
23. Mark is a leading member of the New Wine Network (its offices are over the church hall) and this is helpful for fellowship and the sharing of ideas and policies.

WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

The next move might be to divide the evening congregation (now about 300) by starting a 5pm service. Being a more local community church than something like HTB, St Paul’s would not so naturally offer transplants to other churches in London, except perhaps to next door churches if the opportunity arose.

My comment – before long it will be difficult to see where any future growth can come from without some sort of planting strategy. Would other churches benefit from learning from St Paul’s as a model of growing a large non-eclectic church through involvement in the local community?

LONDON CHURCH VISIT No 3

St Paul Tottenham - Andrew Dangerfield

FIGURES

ER	1996	229
	2002	48

Church Membership: *23 nationalities*

West Indian origin	133 (<i>8 countries – 79 from Jamaica</i>)
African origin	89 (<i>5 countries – 34 Ghana, 29 Nigeria</i>)
Asian origin	9
White European origin	19 (<i>various</i>)

Common Fund is about £25,000 (UPA)

St Paul's is a little different from the other churches I have visited in that its main growth is not in the last few years. But it is of particular interest both because of its ethnic mix and because it was a church that was rocked by the ordination of women controversies, and has recovered.

IN THE BEGINNING...

In the 1960s, Anglican churches like St Paul's did not always welcome immigrants. However, St Paul's had a black vicar for some years in the 60s, and that must have helped as Tottenham had a large immigrant population. By 1995 there was a mix of black and white, but the whites were the office-holders and established members. In that year, the vicar and most of the lay leadership and white faces left for the Roman Catholic Church. There was an 18 month

interregnum and some turmoil before Andrew was appointed. However, by then the jobs and offices had been taken up by the black members.

HOW AND WHY HAS IT GROWN?

1. Andrew has built up a new team, comprising a senior curate looking after next door parish, deacon, 1 non-stipendiary, 2 readers.
2. Although the congregation is now over 95% black, the ethos is not that of a 'black' church but of an 'international' church, so any nationality is welcomed.
3. Andrew has made a point of visiting his people's local families in their countries of origin. This strengthens pastoral ties, helps him understand the congregation, and reinforces commitment to the church family.
4. Much growth has come from new immigrants finding a home at St Paul's. However, this is not to 'explain away' its recovery, because every parish has new people moving into it all the time. Newcomers have to see the church as something worth joining.
5. With London becoming so diverse and the old sense of local community having broken down, the church is one of the few places where people can find community and

- belonging. St Paul's is good at this – eg members will visit each other when they are sick.
6. The leadership style is not the old fashioned one-man band but pastoral teams and groups. A new 'pastoral group' is in process of being formed in order to take on a more formal responsibility for pastoral care.
 7. The church primary school just across the road from the church is a key ingredient. The children come over the road each Thursday for a special service, and there are after-school clubs and facilities in the parish rooms. Up to a hundred children come to church on Sundays.
 8. The church building is fairly full now on Sunday mornings, and this is found to be a positive thing – success breeds success.

WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

1. Tottenham is still changing – as the whites moved further out in the past, so now some of the present church members are moving up socially and out geographically. However, many come back to St Paul's on Sundays as it is still their community. There are now more Turks and eastern European asylum seekers in the area, as well as Irish RCs. So the present church ethnic mix may not last for ever, and the newer people do not normally arrive as committed Christians or Anglicans.
2. I wonder how much future growth is possible while the main service is more or less 'full'. Could a new service be considered – perhaps in a different style to attract and hold the children as they grow into young adults?
3. The Common Fund is an important issue – its growing demands have the potential to strip the church of its financial resources, or to cause it to lose one of the team of stipendiary priests. This is made worse, Andrew feels, by many of the larger churches in the diocese under-reporting their true strength through ruses like half-hearted electoral-roll compilation. A UPA church like St Paul's needs financial help from the larger, richer congregations in order to sustain its life.

LONDON CHURCH VISIT No 4

St Martin Ruislip - Simon Evans

FIGURES	<u>1996</u>	<u>2002</u>
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ER	414	539
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Communicants:

8am Servic	35	35
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9.15am Service	130	160
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11.15 am Service	35	70
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plus children and non-communicant adults at both 9.15 and 11.15

significant growth in children numbers

small evening service

new youth fellowship

IN THE BEGINNING...

Simon arrived in 1996 to what was already a substantial church congregation, and in a middle class area where the old social institutions were still quite strong. The church and community felt rather old fashioned. The church was a going concern, but it was dominated by a small number of competing power-groups, there was a stifling reverence for the sacred museum of St Martin's, and a need for deepened spirituality and better pastoral care. Simon set out not to grow the church but to help it function better as a Christian community. He was quite surprised by the impact of this 'quality' programme on the 'quantity' of ER members in 2002.

HOW AND WHY HAS IT GROWN?

These factors are a mix of organisational changes and a concerted programme for deepening the spirituality of the church:

1. Effective and well organised children's work run by a very dedicated team. Done without a professional worker as this can de-skill the lay people and absolve them from responsibility.
2. In 1996-7 a team of lay people was trained as area pastoral group leaders. There are now 52 of them. Each has about 10 adults and some have 'home group' style meetings, but only if they want to. Apart from keeping an eye on the members in their small neighbourhood, the team also disseminate newsletters and other church information. This is an example of a philosophy of having necessary structures but making them 'light' so the church leadership is not burdened with weighty administrative procedures.
3. The 11.15 service was dysfunctional – people sat round the edge of the church, didn't join in the hymns. So the music became jollier, a nave altar was put in place and the people were successfully encouraged to sit near the front. Lay members were involved in leading the service, eg as lesson readers. The liturgy was changed round so that the children gathered at the front at the start, went out for the liturgy of the word, and returned for communion. Soft drinks and wine were served at the end of the service and the congregation encouraged to stay and get to know each other. This service has seen the largest percentage growth.
4. Early on a new look at church life involving the whole congregation meeting in neighbourhood groups resulted in an agenda from the grass roots rather than from the PCC.
5. An emphasis on confirmation and post-confirmation groups.
6. A 'Fan the Flame' Mission in 2000 using outside help. This brought people involved in preparation for it into the general church leadership, brought some in from the fringe to the core, helped the commitment level of the core group, and brought in some new music.
7. New prayer-support group to pray for the church both at home and when come together. The foundation of prayer is seen as the absolute key to growth, together with trusting and releasing the spiritual gifts of the laity.
8. Emphasis on weekday worship – daily morning and evening office and daily mass. Now 10-30 attend this daily.
9. A lay pastoral visiting team set up to visit the sick, elderly and house-bound. Had to set up

lay ministry at first as no curate.

10. Now there are two curates, but they have not taken back to themselves what the lay people have grown into doing.
11. Visits to Walsingham have been sources of spiritual renewal for all ages.
12. Although the church had some teenage servers, there has been a weakness among this age group. Simon has recently started a teenage 'housegroup' on a Sunday evening with about 18 members, where questions can be asked and a sense of belonging developed.
13. There are one or two new socially-orientated strands to church life – a drop in club for the elderly, and a link with a diocese in Rumania.
14. Links with C of E primary and secondary schools in the parish are important. Some parents will come to church to get their children into school.
15. The three clergy and a reader between them do about 40 baptisms, 30 weddings, and 80 funerals a year – unusually high numbers for the London area. The church gains some members through the baptisms – toddler group and 'toddler praise' route.
16. Links with catholic renewal movements – Cursillo, Society of the Holy Cross, Caister retreats and conferences, Society of Our Lady of Walsingham. Several individuals are linked to religious communities.
17. Church building – has been re-ordered to create a high quality liturgical space at the front, narthex facilities, glass doors, disabled access. Two six-week closure periods broke old traditions and so proved very valuable.
18. Finance is an issue as 80% of income goes on Common Fund payments. The church has just had a successful stewardship renewal campaign and Simon reckons they have a two-year window until the diocese catches up with them and asks for the money. In the meantime they will use the new money to do some necessary building work, especially on the curate's house.

WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

1. There is a concern to develop Christian nurture in the context of the home and family life. How can the church help parents teach and model Christian faith and values in the home?
2. I see the young people as the key group needing attention – what is the point of all the effort on children (Sunday groups, schools, family nurture) if they leave the church and the faith in their teens? I'm not sure Simon can sustain being the youth-leader as well as the vicar in the long term. Sensibly, he has started recruiting other leaders now that the group has gelled. If enough volunteers cannot be found then perhaps a new model is needed –either working with other churches to provide a leadership team and a larger peer group, or a paid youth minister to develop and grow the existing group.
3. Partly through whether the number of paid assistant staff will be cut or can grow, finance is a key future issue. This is both in respect of congregational giving and of division of common fund between parishes.

LONDON CHURCH VISIT NO 5

St Paul's Hammersmith - Simon Downham

FIGURES

HTB plant January 2000.

Church had 10 Anglicans and 10 URC;
about 7 stayed and 180 came from HTB,
75% under 40.

9am BCP/ASB HC they said it had grown to from 6 on first day to c45 attendance
mainly aged over 45, includes originals

11am Family Service attendance started at 150, now c300.
140 children on the membership roll.

7pm Charismatic worship & evangelistic
started at 100, now 400.

So numbers up from 20 to 190 at start, and to 750 after 2½ years

IN THE BEGINNING...

The previous vicar had been ill for some years, and the congregation dwindled away. Simon was curate with responsibility for pastoring the home congregation at HTB. He had a feeling for St Paul's but the initiative came from the diocese – could Simon lead a transplant team from HTB to revive it now there was a vacancy? It seemed like one of God's coincidences. He gathered a team of volunteers from HTB and started in Jan 2000.

HOW AND WHY HAS IT GROWN?

1. The size of the transplant team. The church was a substantial going concern, an attractive magnet, had a critical mass, straight away.
2. The nature of the transplant team. A lot of young families, not just singles who tend to move on after a couple of years. Had a big enough core of families to spark off a high quality families work straight away.
3. The quality of the transplant team. It included a high proportion of leaders, eg a number of PCC members and 40 home group leaders. It was as though HTB gave away a generation of leaders.

4. The age of the transplant team – 75% were under 40 so lots of energy.
 5. The location of the transplant team – most lived in Hammersmith borough so minimal long-distance Sunday commuting.
 6. The wealth of the transplant team – a number of leaders on city bonuses, and some substantial givers.
 7. Seven of the original 10 Anglicans, including one or two key opinion-formers, stayed, and also some who had previously left started to return.
 8. Organic growth – 32 church babies were born in the first 2.5 years.
 9. Local families from social housing estates. Key moment when a godmother was converted through a baptism service. She brought her three children, and a large number of other families have followed.
 10. The children's work has a large number of volunteers (helped by age profile of congregation) but also has professional support – a Sunday School Administrator and half the time of the Associate Vicar. No 'children's worker' as it was felt this post might dis-empower the congregation and fuel consumer-attitudes to church ('we expect a good show for our money'). The administrator organises and so releases the volunteers simply to work with the children.
 11. There are 17 schools within a few minutes' walk of the church, both state and public. Links have been developed, and some local teachers as well as pupils have joined the church.
 12. A philosophy of doing things well – 'first class Christian ministry will always draw people'.
 13. Alpha was offered from the start, and many conversions have happened through the course, including local estate families where the first contact may have been through the children.
 14. There has been some transfer from other churches, and St Paul's has also attracted a number of young adults moving into London.
 15. There have been a number of key individuals who arrived and enabled others from their community to find a way in to the church eg a local headmaster at the 9am service, eg the godmother above, eg black chair of tenants association.
 16. The church is building a coalition of language groups – a recent church weekend away included 27 different first languages. About 15% are black, and the % is rising. Important that some leadership faces are also black eg leader of intercessions ministry, eg pa to vicar. Asians from local language schools, and east European asylum seekers are other elements in the coalition.
 17. The vision of the church is to be a transforming community for Hammersmith. Its aim is not to be a piece of church-theatre for one social grouping who commute in for a bless-up. The church sees its primary call to be working for the 'transformation' of the local area. This may give it a distinctive ethos within the 'HTB family' and may have helped attract younger adults with a concern for social justice and the local area. Ministries so far include a night shelter, debt counselling, breakfast club, open youth work, hospital visiting. Decisions are based on a mission imperative to resource and serve the local community. There are high levels of participation in this from the congregation.
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18. The church is able to finance a substantial and high quality assistant-staff team, all aged under 40.
19. Store is set by finding out good practice and linking in with networks, eg the CA Cptn in charge of work with families in the community has been researching high quality projects around the country.
20. The church has attracted a number of artists, dancers and classical musicians. They are using their talents not just on Sundays but with arts workshops & then performances for local young people. These have brought a lot of parents into the building for the first time.
21. So far there have been very few teenagers in the church as the parents were all too young. However, youth work has recently begun on local estates and 60-70 are coming to a Friday night youth club.
22. The diocese has allowed St Paul's a three year 'tax window' so that it can finance its initial growth. Common Fund payment this year is £43th, a small fraction of income. However, this is likely to rise significantly in the future. The church is not pushing people into joining the ER for fear of this triggering too fast a rise.

WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

1. The church is looking to re-order its building, possibly with help from the sale of the old vicarage, which still belongs to it.
2. It is looking at the possibility of planting worship events in local pubs. I suspect that the two main existing congregations are approaching their maximum size ('church full' problems) so I suspect that planting new congregations is the best route for future growth.
3. They recognise that the teenagers may not even relate well to the 7pm worship-culture, and so are considering forming a youth-church as a next step. This could be seen as a resource church for young people from a wider area.
4. I am sure that making high quality provision for young people is essential both to the existing church fellowship as the children get older, and to the outreach into the local community. This may need a specialist youth minister to sustain it.
5. I would also be concerned at the sustainability of the amazing energy levels so far displayed in the initial burst of new life. The vicar and other leaders will need to be protected from burn-out. Difficult priority-choices may have to be made if growth levels off and the congregation begins to age a little. If growth continues then the responsibilities of the staff and volunteer teams will have to be constantly reviewed and divided up.

LONDON CHURCH VISIT NO 6

St Michael Camden Town - Nicholas Wheeler

FIGURES

ER	1996	15
	(2001	132)
	2002?	

Attendance at the four churches in the team

1996: 75

2002: 225 *all 4 significant growth but St Michael's is the most.*

IN THE BEGINNING...

The parish dates from 1876 when Father Penfold came as a church-planter, starting with no building, no money and no people but with energy for mission. A shop was bought, internal partitions knocked down, and F Penfold lived over the shop. This shop is now a bookmakers! A growing congregation worshipped in the shop for 5 years until the church building was finished in 1881, funded at least partly by money raised locally. By 1888 the church hall was opened near by. As well as worship activities the church in those days was active in social projects like a soup kitchen and work with alcoholics.

It remained a lively church at the centre of the community until after the second world war. Sociological change began to weaken it – the old constituency started to move further out through north London, and newcomers tended to be Irish (RC), Greek Cypriots (Orthodox- 2 orthodox cathedrals in Camden), Bengali/Bangladeshi (Muslims). The building was built on the cheap and began to wear out. There was a subsidence problem, mains water flooded the building, the wood block floor rotted, and the heating packed up about 1980. Work on building Sainsbury's next door put the one toilet out of action. The priest there for 25 years had a broken and ineffective ministry. By 1996 the congregation was down to 12 people max who met in the choir stalls. The hall was occupied by squatters for 12 years, and the church school kept the vicar away from it, so the link withered. Local people thought the church had been closed down – in fact the small back door was just open for an hour on Sunday mornings. Yet the road and district swarm with people, and Camden market brings thousands in to the area, especially at weekends.

So by 1996 the church had a protracted near-death experience.

Nicholas came in 1996 as head of a team ministry including three other churches and three curates on second posts. Soon after he arrived, one warden left and the other became sick.

HOW AND WHY HAS IT GROWN?

1. They reclaimed the space – got confident again about inhabiting the building, went back to the nave and put out just enough chairs for the size of congregation. Later started worshipping in the round.
2. They opened the front doors as often as possible so people would come in off the streets – a haven of peace in a busy urban area. Made an attractive little garden down the side of the church.
3. They made the church space available again to the community. Meetings, concerts etc. Sale of charity Christmas cards.
4. Next door to a supermarket with 55,000 shoppers a week.
5. The attitude of the congregation was opened up. From a secretive, private chapel to being determined to welcome whoever came in.
6. They sought partners in the local community. Eg hall had to work hard to get the squatters removed. Then entered into partnership with Camden Council and a Housing Association to rebuild it –sold a long term lease to the council. Built a floor on top which is the church's new hall, and the rest is a day centre for the homeless. Opened by Princess Anne in autumn 2002.
7. Staffing – in 1999 one of the three curate posts was removed so Nicholas has to look after another church as well – only 50% of his time is St Michael's – the rest is the team and St Paul's. But the spare clergy house was put to good use – 3 full time volunteers live there, funded by grant making bodies. So has assistant staff.
8. Relations with the church primary school recovered, one of the teachers started worshipping at St Michael's and started a Sunday School, which has thrived. School families started coming on Sundays.
9. People just arrived. God seemed to send the right people at the right time eg two weeks after the organist died, a young journalist came to a service and mentioned she was an organist. However, for this to work the vicar does need to be able to recognise and employ newcomers' gifts.
10. Ethnic Mix. Asylum seekers from Ethiopia, Ecuador, you name it, started coming and this gives an introduction into many communities. Also, a good percentage of men, most in their 20s and 30s. Bible readings are printed with the notices in Spanish.
11. Warmth of welcome has been proved to overcome lack of warmth of building. A policy of visiting after someone has come 2 or 3 Sundays, and having newcomers lunches.
12. Training – vital to train the people in different jobs and ministries. Eg the servers are all asylum seekers. There is a place and role for everyone.
13. It is a post-denominational environment. Not labelled as C of E. Members have origins in many different denominations – Ethiopian orthodox, RC, Quaker, Methodist, & a few Anglicans! Most live fairly locally. Aim is a diverse community that offers all a vision of the Kingdom of God.
14. The life of London is becoming more friendly to faith-communities. The Government is engaged in neighbourhood renewal and wants to work with the churches. As their contribution is recognised they gain in status and respect in the community. Richard Chartres helps give the churches vision and confidence to be significant players. And

there is no lack of opportunity to share the gospel in a multi-cultural society. The 'Anglicans' may have all left for leafier suburbs but the new worshippers will join in without first being 'Anglicans'.

15. Links have been built through community arts (largest open space in Camden, actors have devised and performed plays); community ministry (using the hall and also volunteers working alongside other agencies); community engagement (the vicar of a very diverse community can be the only natural leadership-figure, election hustings, exhibition of plans for the new Underground Station, etc).

16. Qualities needed of the priest:

- a. **Flexibility** – in worship, in use of building
- b. **Spontaneity** – ability to work in this way
- c. **Stamina** – run an office in the day, visit and run meetings in the evenings.

WHAT ABOUT THE FUTURE?

1. Midweek lay-led study groups.
2. Diversifying opportunities for worship – healing service, midweek communion, Taize on Sunday evenings, Jazz Vespers about to start with a couple of jazz musicians recently joined the church.
3. St Paul's and others having growth potential as well.