The Diocese of London is looking forward to the next phase of its shared life in 2012 and beyond as it seeks to honour Jesus Christ in the capital. Key to this will be reviewing its long-term strategic framework, the London Challenge. As part of this process, Bishop Richard asked Bob Jackson and Alan Piggot to re-examine the themes of the 2003 report *A Capital Idea*, which noted exceptional church growth within the diocese.

Their report, entitled *Another Capital Idea*, updates the progress and patterns of growth up to 2010, and makes further suggestions for the future growth and flourishing of the churches. This paper summarises the findings and recommendations of *Another Capital Idea*.

The full report may be viewed on the Diocese of London website www.london.anglican.org/CapitalIdea.

**IS THE CHURCH IN LONDON STILL GROWING?**

In a word ‘Yes’, but it depends what you look at.

### Membership

**Electoral Roll Numbers 1990–2010**

London of Church of England

Membership numbers continue to rise strongly. Numbers recorded on churches’ Electoral Rolls are growing on average by around 2.5% each year.

### Attendance

**Usual Sunday Attendance 1990–2009**

London of Church of England

Numbers actually attending church services have risen since 2003, but by a much smaller amount. The ‘Usual Sunday Attendance’ measure peaked in 2007, since when it has fallen back by 2%. The ‘October Count’ measure (which includes attendance at weekday services) peaked in 2006. It has fallen back by 4% since then.

### Giving

**Tax Efficient Planned Giving 2000–2009**

Giving to the church has risen, in real terms, by more than 50% over the decade, though with a slight tailing off since 2008. This reflects an increase in both the number of signed-up givers and in the amount given per head.

With membership continuing to grow strongly while attendance has begun to fall slightly, committed people may be coming to church less often. It will be important to explore this trend more fully over the coming years.
**PATTERNS OF GROWTH**

**IN INNER**

**ELECTORAL ROLL GROWTH BY DEANERY**

2003–2010

**Percentage Growth**

- 0–15 (7)
- 15–20 (4)
- 20–25 (4)
- 25–35 (5)
- 35–55 (5)

Churches in the inner-London deaneries continue to show a much better growth trend (red on the map) than churches in the outer deaneries.

**START SIZE**

**USUAL SUNDAY ATTENDANCE 2003–2009**

**ANALYSED BY CHURCH SIZE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start Size</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Grew</th>
<th>Same</th>
<th>Shrank</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>+35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–74</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75–99</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>+11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100–124</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125–199</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200–299</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300–399</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400–899</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 900</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Churches with small congregations to start with generally grow the fastest. The rate of growth slows the bigger the church: churches with Sunday attendances of over 125 show an overall decline in numbers. Only with the very biggest churches is the upward pattern resumed.

**VACANCIES**

**VACANCIES IN LONDON PARISHES SINCE 2003**

**Change in Usual Sunday Attendance during and after Interregna**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long Vacancies (&gt;6mnths)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Vacancies (&lt;6mnths)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During Vacancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Vacancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Churches between ministers appear to keep growing if the vacancy is six months or shorter. Longer than six months then numbers fall off, although all churches can expect some recovery in numbers once a new incumbent arrives.

**CHILDREN**

Churches grow fastest when they have a high proportion of children—25% or more is best. To achieve this, a high priority and realistic resources need to be devoted to high-quality children’s and families’ ministry.

**NEW CONGREGATIONS**

Churches which plant or start new congregations are more likely to be growing; those which don’t show overall numbers flat or declining.

*A small church in inner London without a vacancy but which has started a new congregation, perhaps on a weekday, and invested in children’s and families’ ministry is highly likely to have grown in recent years. A larger church in outer London with a vacancy, a constant service pattern and a small or average proportion of children is highly likely to have shrunk.*
All congregations should be linked into the wider mission and work of the church across London. Aimlessness and disconnectedness should be challenged through networking and Mission Action Planning.

In a changing and fast-moving urban environment, the church must cope quickly and effectively when people move on. This applies equally to both parishioners and ministers. Strategies must be devised to counter losses from long clergy vacancies as well as congregational turnover.

In 2010, a quarter of new church members were signed up by just 17 parishes. The experience of churches which successfully attract and retain new members needs to be shared more widely, and good practice established and reviewed.

Assistance must be given to help medium and larger sized churches grow through the glass ceiling of congregational size. Through small group networks for both clergy and laity, church leaders should be encouraged to learn from each other and share experience of pastoral care systems and welcome strategy.

The variety and potential of church life in the diocese should be fully explored. For example: fresh expression activities should be surveyed; service times reviewed; experiments conducted with midweek main services; church planting initiatives supported. Lessons learned as well as successes should be shared within deaneries and the diocese at large.

Positive strategies are available to combat the forces of decline and generate new growth in the twenty-first century. The most powerful of these include better welcome, better vacancies, removing glass ceilings, encouraging connectedness groups, new service times, planting new worship events and transplanting from the large into the small.
The report has collected and presented information and key perspectives on the mission and ministry of the church in London. It will be an important resource for planning the next stage of the London Challenge – the diocese’s strategic framework for its life and work together. It also gives rise to new questions and potential areas of research. In taking forward these themes, diocesan senior staff have endorsed the Action Plan in the full report (Appendix A).

Key points from the Action Plan are as follows:

**INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**

**Painting the picture**
Through selecting an authoritative range of measures relating to membership, attendance, finance, giving, personnel, demographics and community outreach and reporting these at parish, deanery, area and diocesan level.

_Diocesan Response: Immediate action_

**Capturing data**
Through review and refining of the diocese’s online data capture system based on parishes’ annual returns.

_Diocesan Response: Immediate action_

**Assisting mission planning & review**
By trialling early return of October count and annual attendance figures from the parishes, bringing this forward to the period immediately after the end of the calendar year.

_Diocesan Response: To be addressed in the coming year_

**Investigating attendance patterns**
Through a detailed survey of selected churches across the diocese.

_Diocesan Response: Medium term aspiration_

**SUPPORTING & RESOURCING EXISTING MINISTRIES**

**Supporting children’s ministry**
Through reviewing resources available at both parish and diocesan level, including a review of grant conditions for projects involving young people and children.

_Diocesan Response: Immediate action_

**Expediting parishes through vacancies**
Through trialling the prioritisation of short (under six month) vacancies in a selected Episcopal Area and building up a fuller picture of attendance change through vacancies in the diocese at large.

_Diocesan Response: To be addressed in the coming year_

**Encouraging welcome & integration of newcomers**
Through promoting resources such as ‘Everybody Welcome’ and encouraging parishes to review existing provision, particularly those challenged by a ‘glass ceiling’ effect.

_Diocesan Response: To be addressed in the coming year_

**EXPLORING & EVOLVING NEW MINISTRIES**

**Experimenting with midweek evening main services**
Through sponsoring these in selected parishes and disseminating results and lessons learned within the diocese.

_Diocesan Response: Medium term aspiration_

**Promoting church planting & transplanting**
By appointing a replanting officer with a remit to lead on strategy and coordinate with stakeholders across the diocese.

_Diocesan Response: Immediate action_

**Surveying fresh Expressions**
Through deanery-led research and information sharing, to build up a comprehensive picture of activity across London as a whole.

_Diocesan Response: Medium term aspiration_

Most of the suggested actions set out above are focussed on the parish and are offered for consideration and response by them. In addition, the diocesan leadership, as part of its desire to encourage each and every parish to thrive, has begun to consider how best to respond to the insights of the report. To contribute to this discussion, please contact your Area Bishop, your Archdeacon or Andy Brookes, the diocese’s General Secretary andy.brookes@london.anglican.org.

**THE AUTHORS**

**BOB JACKSON**
The Ven Bob Jackson
Church Growth Consultant
venerablebob@googlemail.com

**ALAN PIGGOT**
The Revd Dr Alan Piggot
Consultant Mission Researcher
alan.piggot@london.anglican.org