

A TIME TO SOW

Anglican Catholic Church Growth in London

*By Tim Thorlby
October 2017*



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Canon Dr Angus Ritchie

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“holiness rather than peace”
Cardinal Newman

FOREWORD

Anglican Catholics, as this timely report points out, have an honourable history of social engagement and evangelism. It is not just a nineteenth century phenomenon. I recall in the early 1970's the potent drama and panache of outdoor processions through the streets of Portsea led by Bill Sargent, with a passion for mission that took the gospel to the people. Yet today we have a crisis of confidence in the whole movement as well as a reluctance among some Catholic parishes to engage with what can seem an instrumental attitude to church growth. What is so heartening about 'A Time to Sow' is that the seven churches surveyed have not watered down their faith or even engaged in anything particularly revolutionary. Instead they have assumed that the good news is for sharing, engaged with their local communities, been imaginative about children's work, especially through choirs and music – very traditional modes of outreach - and stewarded their resources. And common to most of these examples is a setting in a parish of great deprivation, so we are not talking about the professional classes of the London mega-churches.

From the practice demonstrated here, growth does not come from panic, or targets, or a fixation upon numbers, but from a natural process. Like God himself, who creates and sustains us not from any need but out of inexhaustible, overflowing love, so growth is the outcome of energetic priestly ministry, which does what it does out of the love of people and a desire to bring them into communion with God and his Church. It is clear that parish priests in this survey do not patronise lay people but engage them in this task: they share their ministry with others.

What is paradoxically most encouraging here is the modest nature of the growth reported, which is evidence of its rooted and authentic nature. It is truly parochial in the best sense, being the result of a responsiveness to emplacement and service to the whole community. But as Angus Ritchie reminds us: 'parishes are at their strongest when they are open to new ideas'. Our world is crying out for sacramental, holistic ways of living which unite body and soul to mediate the

transcendent. May this report engender energy and confidence among Catholic Anglicans and suggest new ways in which we can share the beauty and truth of our charism with others.

The Rev'd Dr Alison Grant Milbank
Associate Professor of Literature and Theology
University of Nottingham
Canon Theologian of Southwell Minster

'God gives the growth'

(1 Corinthians 3.6 ff.)

This study helps us see the Spirit working in seven Anglican Catholic parishes established in poorer communities. It identifies 'habits of growth', such as ensuring a welcome to newcomers, worship which is accessible but with depth, a focus on work with children, new services mid-week and later on Sunday, community ministry, and clergy who are focused on growth. Such growth is not just numerical. It is about growth in discipleship e.g. two parishes have begun adult education on a Sunday morning in addition to worship. It is seen in serving the community; several have connections with the community organising of London Citizens. Churches in these poorer parishes have large opportunities for service and then a live Gospel story to tell which can resonate with those on the fringe.

The study concludes with four challenges. I would reflect as follows:

Re: clergy - Most parish priests would say they want their churches to grow. Studies such as this help. Many clergy have learned to preach, teach and pastor but not how to run an effective organisation where their people feel they are hosts not guests.

Re: building capacity - These seven growing churches exploit better their property inheritance to raise income; their congregations are vision-inspired to give more generously and the churches have found ways to increase 'staffing'. Many of these incumbents have pastoral assistants and have been interns themselves, imbibing good practice

as they became ordinands. The 19th century tradition of settlements is revived in the community at St George's in the East. Pembroke College Cambridge Mission at St Christopher's Church, Walworth is an interesting example of a settlement which has endured. The youthful energy and vision of these incumbents is recognised but major growth at St John's, Catford came through a former diocesan missionary in the golden autumn of ministry showing how it can be done. Can these younger clergy be followed up later so that we learn whether the growth continues and how they retain their morale and resilience? It is interesting too that the majority were appointed at the initiative of bishops exercising patronage creatively.

Re: larger Catholic parishes - What would be helpful would be a further study of such parishes to see how they have coped with going beyond the 'glass ceiling' of 100-150 people attending church where the parish priest knows everyone. The only larger church studied is St Mary's, Tottenham and the reopening of the Good Shepherd hall but St Mary's was the catalyst for diocesan investment in the major Tottenham Hale development in its parish to achieve St Francis at the Engine Room, the first new-build church in the Diocese of London for forty years, dedicated in October 2017.

There's a great history in Anglo-Catholicism and hope for the future too.

The Rt Revd Peter Wheatley

Bishop of Edmonton 1999 - 2014

Hon. Asst. Bishop in the Dioceses of London, Southwark & Chichester

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the stories of seven Anglican Catholic churches in London which have been growing within the last five years. The report explores the nature of this growth. It also considers how these seven stories of growth fit within the wider picture of church growth and decline in London and identifies a significant challenge for Anglican Catholics in multiplying such stories. The case studies show what is possible - but they are not typical.

Much of the research and discussion about church growth in London in recent years has related to the growth of evangelical churches. Our own recent report 'Love, Sweat and Tears' explored the nature of evangelical church planting in east London¹. The new research in this report shows that church growth is also a current reality in the Catholic tradition too, at least in some parishes. However, our research also identifies a significant challenge for Anglican Catholics, as such growth remains far from being the norm, and so we also reflect on the implications of our findings for the future of Anglican Catholicism.

This research has been designed and delivered independently by the Centre for Theology & Community (CTC) and has been grant funded by The Mercers' Company, the City of London's Premier Livery Company.

WHAT IS ANGLICAN CATHOLICISM?

Within the Church of England, and indeed the worldwide Anglican Communion, there is an understanding of the Church and an approach to worship and theology which is described as 'Anglican Catholic' (or sometimes 'Anglo-Catholic'). Anglicanism has always understood itself as both reformed and catholic – breaking from the Roman Catholic church at the Reformation, but retaining the threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons.

There was a significant revival in Catholic doctrine and practice in the 19th Century, led by a group of priests and academics at the

University of Oxford who helped to spark what became known as the "Oxford Movement". The revival which began in earnest in 1833 continues to influence the Church of England, and many other parts of the Anglican Communion, to this day.

Anglican Catholicism emphasises the continuity of the Church's teachings and traditions from the earliest days. Like the early church, it emphasises the Eucharist as the heart of worship and its liturgy reflects the conviction that Christ is truly present in the Sacrament.

As you would expect, Anglican Catholicism covers a spectrum of practice and has rather blurred edges, with liturgies, rituals and the level of formality varying from church to church. Nevertheless, there are parishes within the Church of England which identify themselves as 'Anglican Catholic' and are recognisably different in their approach to church from their evangelical neighbours, or even from what is sometimes referred to as 'broad church' Anglicanism.

METHODOLOGY

This report is based on new primary research mainly undertaken during the spring of 2017. It focuses on seven parish case studies, drawn from five different Episcopal Areas across the Dioceses of London and Southwark. The two Dioceses cover much of Greater London between them. We have sought out churches which:

- describe themselves as 'Anglican Catholic' by tradition, whether pursuing 'Traditional Catholic' or 'Modern Catholic' practices
- have experienced church growth recently, within the last five years
- are in some way 'typical' parishes pursuing approaches which might be relevant for other parish churches
- serve more deprived areas

The case studies in this report are deliberately drawn from across London and different kinds of neighbourhoods, as well as differing parts of the tradition, in an attempt to illustrate the breadth and reach of Anglican Catholicism in London today. The case studies in this report are not the only Anglican Catholic churches which are growing in London, there are certainly others – so this report should not be understood as an attempt at a comprehensive list. Our chosen parishes are also not necessarily the largest or most well-known Anglican

¹ 'Love, Sweat and Tears: Church planting in east London' was published in 2016 and is available on CTC's website at www.theology-centre.org

Catholic churches in London. Our selection is intended simply as an illustrative snapshot of life today in a diverse mix of growing Anglican Catholic parishes in London.

The research for the case studies included face to face semi-structured interviews undertaken with the church leaders and also members of their congregations in some cases. We also undertook desk research for each parish. In addition, in one parish we oversaw and analysed a 'snapshot congregational survey' on one Sunday.

The case studies have been complemented with wider research as well to enable us to adopt a broader perspective. This has included priests from other parishes and church leaders in other positions, analysis of Church of England Sunday attendance statistics and wider desk research.

PART A – SEVEN STORIES

In Part A, we tell the stories of seven parishes from across London, each of them an Anglican Catholic church which has been growing within the last few years.

ST LUKE, HAMMERSMITH

Location: London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
Diocese: Diocese of London, Kensington Area
Tradition: Traditional Catholic

The Parish of St Luke is a largely residential area in Shepherd's Bush, west London. St Luke's is a 1970s church building. The current priest has been in post for just over 4 years and is in his first incumbency as a Vicar. He has overseen a significant increase in children's attendance at the church, a growth in typical Sunday attendance from 60 to 75 and is more actively managing the church's property assets for mission and income. The Parish is also an active member of West London Citizens.

ST BENET'S, KENTISH TOWN

Location: London Borough of Camden
Diocese: Diocese of London, Edmonton Area

Tradition: Traditional Catholic

The Parish of St Benet's is a primarily residential neighbourhood in Kentish Town, north London. The church has worshipped in the Anglican Catholic tradition since it was founded in the late 19th Century. The current priest has been in post for just over 4 years and is in his first incumbency as a Vicar. The congregation has grown from a typical attendance of 40 to 60, reflecting in particular a more family-friendly welcome on a Sunday and more children's work through the week. The church's income has grown through more active stewardship.

ST MARY'S, TOTTENHAM

Location: London Borough of Haringey
Diocese: Diocese of London, Edmonton Area
Tradition: Traditional Catholic

The Parish of St Mary's serves part of Tottenham, in north London. The church was considered for closure in the mid-1980s but over the subsequent twenty years, under new leadership, its congregation has been rebuilt and its buildings repaired. In 2010, the Good Shepherd Mission Church, a mission hall within the Parish, was repaired, modernised and re-opened for worship for the first time in 70 years. A new small congregation of c40 people has developed there over the last seven years, serving the southern part of the Parish in particular.

ST ANNE'S, HOXTON

Location: London Borough of Hackney
Diocese: Diocese of London, Stepney Area
Tradition: Modern Catholic

The Parish of St Anne's serves part of Hoxton, a lively but deprived neighbourhood just north of the City of London. After years of decline, the church's congregation has been growing gradually in recent years. The current priest has been in post for nearly four years and is in his first incumbency as a Vicar. The Sunday congregation has grown from a typical attendance of c45 to c65, nearly one third of them children. Church members are involved in a growing number of midweek

activities, including missional work, and the church has joined Citizens UK as a member.

ST JOHN'S, CATFORD

Location: London Borough of Lewisham
Diocese: Diocese of Southwark, Woolwich Area
Tradition: Modern Catholic

The Parish of Catford (Southend) and Downham is a team ministry with four churches in the London Borough of Lewisham. This case study considers the recent story of the church of St John the Baptist, one of those churches. The Parish is a commuter suburb built in the 1920s and today is one of the most deprived Parishes in the country even though many households are in work. After a period of significant decline, St John's has grown again over the last decade under a succession of Rectors from c50 to c150 on a Sunday morning. A new Sunday 4pm service has been started and midweek activities now include Messy Saints and Choristers Club. The current Rector has been in post since 2015.

ST LUKE'S, WOODSIDE

Location: London Borough of Croydon
Diocese: Diocese of Southwark, Croydon Area
Tradition: Modern Catholic

The Parish of St Luke's is a largely residential area in Croydon, south London. St Luke's is a large 19th Century church with a long tradition of Anglican Catholicism. The ill health of a previous incumbent had led to the decline of the church and the possibility of merger. The current priest has been in post for just over a year and is in his first incumbency as a Vicar. Since his arrival, typical Sunday attendance has risen from c60 to c90, and 'Young Church' for children has re-started, as well as a number of midweek services and activities. The Parish is also an active member of Croydon Citizens.

ST GEORGE-IN-THE-EAST, SHADWELL

Location: London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Diocese: Diocese of London, Stepney Area
Tradition: Modern Catholic

The Parish of St George-in-the-East is located just to the east of the City of London and includes part of the historic east end. St George's is an 18th Century church which was partially rebuilt in the 1960s. In 2015, after the retirement of the previous Rector and an interregnum, the PCC embarked upon a novel pilot arrangement, with the Centre for Theology & Community providing two part-time priests to lead the Parish. A new Lay Community has been established, the church's Sunday attendance has grown from c20 to c50 and two new midweek expressions of church have been started. Having become a member of TELCO, the east London chapter of Citizens UK, the church has led a number of initiatives to serve those in need and challenge injustice.

PART B – REFLECTIONS

In Part B, we reflect upon the seven stories of growth as a set of parish experiences and identify some common themes and patterns. In the final section, we seek to place our stories in perspective by considering the wider trends of church growth and decline in London and identifying what lessons we might draw from this work.

LESSONS AND REFLECTIONS

Clearly, the research we have undertaken is not a comprehensive consideration of Anglican Catholic practice in London today, and therefore we must be careful not to view findings from seven case studies as definitive or universal conclusions. Nevertheless, where strong patterns are evident across the case studies, they may be indicative of helpful practices and worth reflecting upon.

THE NATURE OF CHURCH GROWTH

In each of the seven parishes, we explored the growth in the regular

worshipping congregations, whether on a Sunday or midweek. The table below summarises the evidence gathered.

Parish	Change in typical Sunday Attendance (adults & children) at main act of worship				Change in attendance at other midweek worship or new services to Spring 2017
	Start	Spring 2017	Net Growth	Growth period	
St Luke, Hammersmith Kensington Area, Diocese of London	60	75	+15	4 years	-
St Benet's, Kentish Town Edmonton Area, Diocese of London	40	60	+20	4 years	New 'Messy Church' 2-3 times per term attracts c30 children & adults
Good Shepherd Mission Church at St Mary's, Tottenham Edmonton Area, Diocese of London	0	25	+25	7 years	c15 different people also attend a Tuesday Mass at the same church
St Anne's, Hoxton Stepney Area, Diocese of London	45	65	+20	4 years	-
St John's, Catford Woolwich Area, Diocese of Southwark	c50	c150	+100	10 years	Sunday 4pm Service attracts c40-50 people of whom c20-25 are new to St John's Choristers Club attracts c20 children every week

St Luke's, Woodside Croydon Area, Diocese of Southwark	60	90	+30	1 year	Midweek services have re-started
St George-in-the-East, Shadwell Stepney Area, Diocese of London	20	50	+30	2 years	Choir Church attracts c15-20 children weekly and up to c50 children and adults for Mass once a month 'English, Prayer, Action' attracts 7-8 people weekly
Totals	275	515	+240	various	Additional c100 – 110 people per week

With caveats noted, the data from these parishes is encouraging:

- Across the seven parishes, the total typical attendance at the main act of Sunday worship each week has grown from 275 to 515 overall, a rise of over 80% (over varying time periods)
- Most of these parishes have been growing at an average annual growth rate of 5-10% per year, which (for these parishes) is equivalent to c3 – 15 net new people each year.
- In addition to the growth in attendance at the main Sunday act of worship, four of the seven parishes have also seen significant growth at newly started services at other times or other acts of worship during the week. The scale of this growth is nearly 50% of that seen at the main act of worship.
- De/unchurched? – From the qualitative evidence we have, it seems that the growth in congregations is very much a mix of existing church members transferring from other churches together with some people returning to church after a few years away and some people who are new to church. The one robust source of quantitative data we have – from our 'snapshot survey' of St John's, Catford morning congregation – suggested that of those who are not

transferring from other churches, the 'returners' are likely to be far more numerous than those completely 'new to church'.

CHURCH GROWTH IN THE LONDON CONTEXT

This research report is focused entirely on parishes in Greater London and so readers outside of London will need to interpret any findings for their own context. Demographic and socio-economic factors can play a role in influencing the prospects for church growth.

With respect to this report, there are two key aspects of the London context which we would like to comment upon – population growth and deprivation.

● **Population growth** - We know from official data that the population of London has been rising in recent decades and has certainly been rising during the last decade, the main period under consideration in this report. Rising population and the nature of recent immigration does help to explain some of the recent church growth in London, and we have seen that noted in some of the case studies in this report. However, we should be very wary of writing off the growth of these parishes as 'just population growth' for two reasons. Firstly, most of the parishes in London have exactly the same 'opportunity' of this helpful demographic context but many have continued to decline in numbers in the last decade and so the churches in the case studies are clearly doing something different to most. Secondly, the rate of church growth in these case studies (typically c5-10% per year) is much higher than the overall rate of population growth (typically c5-10% over a decade).

● **Deprivation** - Every single one of the seven parishes in this report is within the 15% most deprived parishes in England, four of them are within the 10% most deprived and one is within the 5% most deprived. All of these churches have seen net growth within the last five years. Some church leaders persist in using an area's deprivation as a reason for a lack of church growth. These case studies strongly indicate that such arguments are excuses rather than explanations. It is entirely possible to grow churches in deprived areas and their congregations are capable of both leadership and generosity. All church members are a gift to the

church, regardless of their ethnicity, education or income.

HABITS OF GROWTH

Across the seven growing parishes there are also some common practices in evidence. We could perhaps tentatively describe these as 'habits for growth'. In all, or most, of the parishes we observe these practices:

1. Growth-minded priests - Priests who want to see their churches grow and are prepared to lead in this direction. For them, growth is part of their mindset. Their leadership often sees much continuity with previous practices, but they are also prepared to make changes where necessary.
2. Maximising resources – where churches own assets (particularly property) they are actively managed and income is secured where possible – flats are not left empty, rents are reviewed, halls are let out. Even parishes in deprived areas can have a surprising number of property assets. Congregations are also encouraged to give to the church through stewardship campaigns.
3. Building leadership capacity – the priest recognises that he cannot do everything and seeks to encourage volunteering from the congregation, takes on interns where possible, accepts help from retired clergy and recruits staff where resources allow. (We reflect on this point further below).
4. Hospitality – Sunday services are deliberately designed to be welcoming to newcomers, with a well-run service of worship and with visitors being greeted, children and families accommodated and refreshments served at the end.
5. Children welcome – all of the growing churches have activities on Sundays and during the week which are designed for children and young families, including Sunday school, choir clubs and Messy Church.
6. Open to working with local partners – most of these churches work closely with their primary school or a local nursery or are part of Citizens UK (four out of seven of the parishes are members of Citizens UK). They are connected into their local community and work alongside others where there is mutual benefit; they are

part of the 'give and take' of local community life.

7. Midweek encounters – all of the churches run or host activities during the week which lead to encounters between the priest and church members and people who are not church-members and where there is the possibility of conversation and relationship. This is more than just letting out the church hall to another group, these are activities with a 'missional mindset', usually serving a local need and with time for conversation. Typical examples are 'stay and play' activities for parents and children, craft clubs and choirs. Such activities ensure that the church is 'porous' through the week – providing scope for people outside of the church community to become involved with it on its 'edges'.

It is fascinating to note how similar these observed 'methods' are to the practices of many growing evangelical churches in London. It is possible that the underlying habits of church growth may be rather more universal and not owned by any particular tradition.

CAPACITY AS A KEY FACTOR

No parish relies entirely on its priest to run all of its activities – all churches rely on lay people to some extent. Generally speaking the churches in our case studies have few paid members of staff apart from the clergy and most do not have a significant income to afford many extra staff. In order to find extra capacity, most of these parishes do benefit from the unpaid services of a Non-Stipendiary Minister or a retired priest for at least a few hours each week. Several of our case study parishes also benefit from various intern schemes. Also of note is that all of these parishes recognise the value of lay leadership – i.e. members of the congregation setting up and running activities in collaboration with the priest, or sometimes even just with his blessing.

These stories of growth are clearly not ones where 'Father does everything'. The wider evidence suggests that such practices are neither likely to lead to sustained growth nor likely to be healthy for the priest. A key role of the priest is to identify how to unlock the latent capacity within the church so that the church can grow and flourish.

GROWTH IN PERSPECTIVE

This final section takes a step back and attempts to put our research into the broader perspective of Anglican church growth and decline in London. We conclude the report with a challenge.

OVERALL GROWTH AND DECLINE IN LONDON

The most recent available data published by the Church of England for church attendance in the Dioceses of London and Southwark (whose 688 parishes cover a large part of Greater London) shows a modest decline in both Dioceses in 2014 and 2015 at a time of ongoing population growth across London.

The full story is of course more complicated as there are two quite different trends at work at the same time – some churches and parishes are growing, whilst others are in gradual decline.

Our own analysis of both London and Southwark parish level data suggests that in both Dioceses in recent years (that is, to 2015) the number of parishes which are declining still significantly outweighs the number of parishes which are growing. Decline is still more common than growth. Although much work is now in train to promote church growth in London, it is clear that there is still a long way to go.

GROWTH AND DECLINE IN ANGLICAN CATHOLIC CHURCHES IN LONDON

So, how do Anglican Catholic churches fare within this overall picture?

It is currently not possible to give a conclusive answer to this question, as there is no published list of which parishes could be classified as 'Anglican Catholic'; the Church of England and the Dioceses in London do not publish attendance data according to the 'tradition' of churches and producing such a list would not be a trivial task.

If Anglican Catholic parishes were simply following the 'average' trend of all other Anglican parishes in London then we would expect them to be displaying the same overall trends that we have just outlined – a pattern where there are more parishes in decline than are growing.

However, there are three reasons which suggest that growth is

currently less likely to be found amongst Anglican Catholic parishes in London, on average:

- **Much church growth in London is driven by large evangelical churches and there are no corresponding large Anglican Catholic churches doing the same** – in London there is no equivalent in the Anglican Catholic tradition to the evangelical ‘mega churches’ with 2,000+ members which are driving much of the evangelical growth and which are actively church planting. There are, however, a number of large and lively Anglican Catholic churches of 200 – 400 members in London but few seem to be growing consistently over time or actively facilitating the growth of other parishes.
- **The growth of new Anglican Catholic worshipping communities appears to be modest in scale** – With no mega churches and little church planting, are there new ‘fresh expressions’ being initiated by Anglican Catholic churches? Indicative evidence from the research on fresh expressions suggests that, nationally, Anglican Catholics have been less likely to lead new initiatives to grow churches than other Anglicans (on average). It is not unreasonable to expect this pattern to be broadly reflected in London.
- **Our own research in London found few growing parishes** – In the absence of any large churches driving growth, with little evidence of church planting and with modest involvement in new ‘fresh expressions’ the only other possible source of growth would be a broad landscape of gently growing parishes. In our trawl for ‘growth case studies’ for this research in London we had great difficulty in finding many Anglican Catholic parishes which had grown consistently in the last five years. Clearly, we found some and there are certainly more than seven in London, but our own research experience suggests that these examples are neither typical nor plentiful. Given all of this evidence, it is hard to see where significant Anglican Catholic growth in London might be.

So, at the very least, if Anglican Catholic parishes are the same as all other parishes in London then we can confidently say that the majority are in decline today. Taking all of the above evidence into account,

however, suggests to us that Anglican Catholic parishes are less likely to be growing than other kinds of parishes in London and where growth is occurring, those parishes are likely to be making a relatively smaller contribution to overall growth. We believe that our case studies of parish growth are therefore unusual, rather than typical, examples of Anglican Catholic parishes in London. This prompts the question as to why this might be the case.

FOUR CHALLENGES?

Our case studies reveal a set of church leaders positive about growth and pursuing it in different ways. We have tentatively identified a set of ‘habits of growth’ drawn from their experiences.

From our wider research we have tentatively identified a corresponding set of ‘habits of decline’ which may be particularly prevalent amongst those Anglican Catholic parishes which are not growing. We present these below as four challenges. They are presented for discussion, rather than offered as firm conclusions, but some common themes and patterns from our research discussions with a range of interviewees do seem evident.

We are not persuaded that much, if any, of the challenge is theological but rather more likely to be cultural – habits acquired at some point during the 20th Century and which are no longer serving the tradition well.

i) Are parish priests ‘minded to grow’?

All of the priests in our case study parishes had one thing in common – they are all interested in seeing their congregations grow and are active and intentional in working towards this. It is equally clear that not all parish priests are as positive about ‘growth’, with some ambivalent at best about the whole idea.

Some of our interviewees suggested that the traditional mindset for a parish priest seems to be very much about being faithful in ‘running a parish’, ‘administering the sacraments’ and ‘praying for the world’ and relying upon the local community to faithfully respond to this by attending services. This may have been an appropriate stance when churchgoing in Britain was more prevalent but in a post-Christendom culture, they argue that the role of the parish priest has changed

– it needs to be reimagined and the priest must become more of a ‘missionary’ to a sceptical community. A time of declining congregations requires a greater sense of urgency.

ii) Should parishes place more emphasis on building leadership capacity?

We have already seen that a key factor in growing churches is the leadership capacity to enable this, in all its forms– including clergy as well as paid staff and lay leaders within the congregation. There are certainly limits to how large a congregation a single priest can realistically lead and care for.

Our discussions have identified two issues here. Firstly, where there is an undue emphasis on the priest playing his role rather than seeing the roles of others developed, the burden of work in the parish will not be shared and growth will be limited. Secondly, to expand capacity through additional clergy and paid staff roles (e.g. a children’s worker or an intern), resources are a key factor. Many parishes own a surprising number of property assets but do not manage them well. Many also have very modest congregation giving, but have never really asked their congregations to give or sought to develop those habits consistently. In a number of our case studies it is interesting to see how significantly congregational giving increased when proper attention was given to this. Giving is also a key part of discipleship. Many Anglican Catholic churches do not have well developed programmes of midweek fellowship and catechesis within their congregations and so it is perhaps hardly surprising that congregational giving suffers as part of this.

How can priests work with their congregations to deepen their commitment to discipleship and develop more leaders? What does a faithfully catholic approach to this look like? Are priests being trained to develop others?

iii) Could larger Anglican Catholic churches play a greater role in church growth?

A significant element of the growth of evangelical Anglican churches in London is led and supported by a handful of large churches. They have not only grown themselves but they are actively supporting and resourcing other parishes in London to grow as well.

There is no Anglican Catholic church of this scale playing such a role in London. If there was widespread growth amongst parishes, this might not matter – it could be argued that Anglican Catholic growth might simply look different. However, there is no such widespread growth either.

Some argue that ‘mega churches’ and ‘church planting’ are ‘not very Anglican Catholic’. Given the Catholic Revival and the subsequent growth of Anglican Catholic churches and their long and rich history of church planting in the 19th and early 20th Century it is not obvious where this reticence has come from – it is certainly a modern reticence.

There are a number of lively Anglican Catholic churches with regular Sunday attendances of 200 – 400. Our research did not identify significant growth amongst this group nor did it find much evidence of systematic church planting or growth initiatives to benefit other parishes. It raises the question as to whether these larger, better resourced, Anglican Catholic churches could play a more active role in promoting growth within the tradition. Is it time for a new wave of Anglican Catholic church planting – whatever this might look like?

iv) Do Anglican Catholics need to collaborate more?

In the face of significant challenges, is it time for greater collaboration between Anglican Catholic churches – to be more open to learning and sharing from each other and other traditions? The case studies in this report alone have identified quite a range of good habits and initiatives which could be an encouragement to many parishes - and there are undoubtedly more to be found and shared.

A RADICAL HISTORY

To any readers in doubt about the links between Anglican Catholicism, church growth and mission, even a cursory examination of the history of the tradition over the last two centuries reveals a remarkable story. Anglican Catholicism was originally typified by a deep commitment to personal holiness, a confident approach to church planting and a selfless and sometimes courageous commitment to living amongst, and serving, the poorest members of society.

The Catholic Revival saw a renewed sensitivity for social concerns and

gave a new impetus to serving the poor (complementing the work which the Evangelicals had been doing to abolish the Slave Trade at the same time). In the 19th and early 20th Century, a number of Anglican Catholic priests led the way in publicising the horrors of the slums and working to improve the housing conditions for the residents of those areas.

Anglican Catholics were no less active in planting and building new churches. Many parishes in London today owe their very existence to the fundraising, hard work and leadership of previous generations of Anglican Catholics who were determined to see new churches established. Some of the case study parishes in this report are included amongst them.

CONCLUSIONS

The history of Anglican Catholicism is full of inspiring stories of growth, mission and service. Today, our own case studies have found encouraging stories of growth across London – and there are other stories too which we have not had space or time tell.

In particular, the tradition's profound understanding of the importance of incarnational ministry and the rootedness of its worship in age-old truths is surely more relevant than ever in a city typified by constant change and rootlessness.

Yet it is clear that the tradition has a challenge on its hands to recover the vision and energy it once had for growth and mission.

As a new generation of priests take up the challenge of working out how to care for their parishes in the 21st century could this herald a new moment for the tradition? Is there the confidence and energy to renew the movement?



1 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the stories of seven Anglican Catholic churches in London which have been growing within the last five years. The report explores the nature of this growth. It also considers how these seven stories of growth fit within the wider picture of church growth and decline in London and identifies a significant challenge for Anglican Catholics in multiplying such stories. The case studies show what is possible - but they are not typical.

Much of the research and discussion about church growth in London in recent years has related to the growth of evangelical churches. Our own recent report 'Love, Sweat and Tears' explored the nature of evangelical church planting in east London¹. The new research in this report shows that church growth is also a current reality in the Catholic tradition too, at least in some parishes. However, our research also identifies a significant challenge for Anglican Catholics, as such growth remains far from being the norm, and so we also reflect on the implications of our findings for the future of Anglican Catholicism.

This research has been designed and delivered independently by the Centre for Theology & Community (CTC) and has been grant funded by The Mercers' Company, the City of London's Premier Livery Company.

¹ 'Love, Sweat and Tears: Church planting in east London' was published in 2016 and is available on CTC's website at www.theology-centre.org

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The aim of this report is to explore experiences of church growth in Anglican Catholic parishes in Greater London within the last decade.

Relatively little research has been published in recent years about the current nature and extent of church growth in Anglican Catholic parishes, so this report seeks to contribute new evidence on this important subject.

Our research is based on new case studies of seven parishes from across the Dioceses of London and Southwark. The two Dioceses cover much of Greater London between them. We have sought out churches which:

- describe themselves as ‘Anglican Catholic’ by tradition, whether pursuing ‘Traditional Catholic’ or ‘Modern Catholic’ practices
- have experienced church growth recently, within the last five years
- are in some way ‘typical’ parishes pursuing approaches which might be relevant for other parish churches
- serve more deprived areas

The case studies in this report are deliberately drawn from across London and from different kinds of neighbourhoods, as well as differing parts of the tradition, in an attempt to illustrate the breadth and reach of Anglican Catholicism in London today.

The case studies in this report are not the only Anglican Catholic churches which are growing in London, there are certainly others – so this report should not be understood as an attempt at a comprehensive list. Our chosen parishes are also not necessarily the largest or most well-known Anglican Catholic churches in London. Our selection is intended simply as an illustrative snapshot of life today in a diverse mix of growing Anglican Catholic parishes in London.

This report is also not able to present a comprehensive and definitive view of the state of the Anglican Catholic tradition in London today, as the data for such conclusions is not presently available and generating such evidence would have been well beyond the resources of this present project. What we do know from existing research is that in this

tradition – as with all parts of the Church of England – there are two stories running in parallel, a story of growth and one of decline; the question is which one is more significant? Drawing on our case studies and the many interviews undertaken for this project, together with published research, we have attempted to frame a tentative view on this key question in Part B of this report.

1.2 WHAT IS ANGLICAN CATHOLICISM?

Within the Church of England, and indeed the worldwide Anglican Communion, there is an understanding of the Church and an approach to worship and theology which is described as ‘Anglican Catholic’ (or sometimes ‘Anglo-Catholic’). Anglicanism has always understood itself as both reformed and catholic – breaking from the Roman Catholic church at the Reformation, but retaining the threefold ministry of bishops, priests and deacons.

Throughout the Church of England’s history, different wings of the church have stressed either the reformed or the catholic element, but there was a significant revival in Catholic doctrine and practice in the 19th Century, led by a group of priests and academics at the University of Oxford in 1833. Men such as a John Henry Newman, Edward Pusey and John Keble helped to spark a catholic revival in the Church of England – through their words and actions - which became known as the “Oxford Movement”. The movement spread far beyond that city, even to some of the poorest parishes in the country.

The revival which began in 1833 continues to influence the Church of England, and many other parts of the Anglican Communion, to this day.

Anglican Catholicism emphasises the continuity of the Church’s teachings and traditions from the earliest days. Like the early church, it emphasises the Eucharist as the heart of worship and its liturgy reflects the conviction that Christ is truly present in the Sacrament. As one priest put it (in one of our research interviews):

“The Eucharist lies at the heart of Christian life...it is where we encounter Christ”

As you would expect, Anglican Catholicism covers a spectrum of practice and has rather blurred edges, with liturgies, rituals and the level of formality varying from church to church. Nevertheless, there are parishes within the Church of England which identify themselves as ‘Anglican Catholic’ and are recognisably different in their approach to church from their evangelical neighbours, or even from what is sometimes referred to as ‘broad church’ Anglicanism.

It is important to note that within the Anglican Catholic movement there has been a difficult and distinct rupture in recent decades between those parishes who have accepted the ordination of women as priests and those who have not – even though they may have much else in common. Those parishes who do not accept women priests have tended to identify as ‘Traditional Catholics’ and in London most have opted to put themselves under the authority of the Bishop of Fulham. Those parishes which do accept women priests are often identified as ‘Modern Catholics’. We have used both terms in this report, and indeed our set of case studies includes parishes of each variety.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

This report is based on new primary research mainly undertaken during the spring of 2017. It focuses on seven parish case studies, drawn from five different Episcopal Areas across the Dioceses of London and Southwark. The map in Figure 1 shows the location of the seven case studies. The case studies have been complemented with wider research as well to enable us to adopt a broader perspective.

Figure 1 - Map of Greater London showing the location of the case studies



Our set of case studies was deliberately selected to include a diversity of parishes and places from across London but, as already noted, is intended to be illustrative rather than comprehensive. We are indebted to the various Bishops, Archdeacons and Area Deans who kindly suggested lists of potential case studies to us – although the final selection was entirely ours.

The research for this report included:

- Face to face semi-structured interviews undertaken with 14 different people, including:
 - the church leaders from seven parishes and some of the members of their congregations also.
 - a number of church stakeholders from other parishes and in other positions which has helped to give us a broader perspective. A full list of all participating interviewees is provided at the back of the report for transparency
- Reviews of relevant local or parish documents including annual reports and any other recent reviews undertaken
- Analysis of Church of England Sunday attendance statistics as collated by the relevant Diocese
- For one of the parishes, a ‘snapshot congregational survey’ of all adults present on one Sunday service in July 2017 was also undertaken to enable in-depth analysis of the congregation’s social profile

1.4 THE STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

The rest of this report is structured as follows.

In Part A, we tell the stories of seven parishes from across London, each of them an Anglican Catholic church which has been growing within the last few years.

In Part B, we reflect upon the seven stories of growth as a set of parish experiences and identify some common themes and patterns. In the final section, we seek to place our stories in perspective by considering the wider trends of church growth and decline in London and identifying what lessons we might draw from this work.

PART A

SEVEN STORIES OF GROWTH



2 ST LUKE, HAMMERSMITH

Summary

Parish:	St Luke, Hammersmith
Location:	London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
Diocese:	Diocese of London, Kensington Area
Tradition:	Traditional Catholic

The Parish of St Luke is a largely residential area in Shepherd's Bush, west London. St Luke's is a 1970s church building. The current priest has been in post for just over 4 years and is in his first incumbency as a Vicar. He has overseen a significant increase in children's attendance at the church, a growth in typical Sunday attendance from 60 to 75 and is more actively managing the church's property assets for mission and income. The Parish is also an active member of West London Citizens.

2.1 THE PARISH

The Parish of St Luke, Hammersmith is located on the busy Uxbridge Road, which leads west out of Shepherd's Bush. It serves an area in the heart of west London and is a diverse and vibrant place. The Parish is also one of the 15% most deprived in England¹.

Shepherd's Bush itself is mainly residential, but includes a large BBC site and Queens Park Rangers Football Club nearby and the many shops and cultural facilities of Shepherd's Bush Green serving this part of London. The Parish serves the primarily residential area to the west of Shepherd's Bush.

As with many parts of London, the local population has been growing significantly in recent years and its ethnic diversity has also been increasing. The established community has continued to move 'up and out', especially those of White British and Afro-Caribbean background— and other communities have been growing. The local Muslim community is increasing in particular, with arrivals from the Middle East and East Africa.

Although the Parish remains deprived overall, there are also some signs of modest gentrification, not least as house prices in London continue to rise.

2.2 THE CHURCH

St Luke's was originally established in the 1870s with the first church building a large redbrick Victorian 'barn' which was never finished. Following bomb damage during the Second World War which was never fully repaired, the church slowly deteriorated until it was finally demolished in the early 1970s and the site completely redeveloped to give the present arrangement. The project was funded by the sale of part of the site to a developer to redevelop for housing.

The 'new' St Luke's reopened in 1978 and is a modern church building normally seating 120 people (with capacity for almost 200)

¹ Index of Multiple Deprivation data in this and subsequent chapters report is drawn from the Indices of Deprivation 2015 published by DCLG, accessed through the Church Urban Fund's 'Poverty Look-Up Tool'

with an adjacent Vicarage and church hall, above which is a parish flat. The block of flats next to the church is the redeveloped housing.

The first priest to lead the reopened church, Father Malcolm, began to move the congregation towards a more catholic tradition and this shift was continued under subsequent priests. Today it has a firmly catholic identity. In the 1990s the PCC took the decision to move the Parish to be under the pastoral care of the Bishop of Fulham.

The Revd Richard Bastable was appointed as Vicar in April 2013, over four years ago, at the age of 29, having previously served for five years as a curate in two different parishes in London.

Richard grew up in Worcestershire in a family who were not regular church-goers, but he decided as a teenager to try it out. He joined his local church, joined the choir and developed a firm faith. Whilst at University he felt a draw to studying theology and as his faith continued to develop, began to feel a call to become a priest. This was confirmed during a year working as an assistant in the Chaplaincy at King's College, London and then a year working as a pastoral assistant within the Parish of Old St Pancras. Richard went to train for ordination and served his two curacies in west London and central London.

When Father Richard arrived at St Luke's in 2013, the Sunday attendance was approximately 60 children and adults, as it had been for some years.

2.3 GROWTH

In the last four years, the church has:

- Grown its Sunday attendance from 60 to 75
- Seen a significant increase in children from just a handful to 15, with a newly organised Sunday school
- Significantly increased its financial income through more pro-active property management and increased congregational giving
- Expanded its activities serving the local community
- Begun to grow its staff team, giving it capacity to run more activities

CHURCH STAFF

Father Richard is the only full-time member of staff, but he is assisted by a Non-Stipendiary Minister who has a full-time media job but contributes the equivalent of a day per week. There is now also a part-time Parish Administrator (two mornings per week) and a part-time Director of Music (6 hours per week). A number of volunteers also undertake a wide range of tasks around the church.

CHURCH RESOURCES

The church building has benefited from some repairs and refurbishment in the last few years, including roof repairs, new windows, new seating and redecoration. The sanctuary has also been made more presentable, with some investment in various items helpful for worship.

The church's other built assets – its hall and parish flat – are also being more actively managed, in a way which more strongly supports the life and mission of the church:

- The parish flat had been let out at a rent which had not been reviewed for many years and was providing little benefit to the church. The rental income had fallen to a level which was some 85% below the local commercial level. Following a review, the flat is now home to the church's Director of Music and is rented out at 20% below the market rent, which is both a reasonable rent but has also provided a significant increase in income for the church (over £10,000 more income each year).
- The Church hall is rented out on a long lease to a Montessori Nursery and following a rent review, the income for this has also increased to a more commercial level.
- The church also has five parking spaces which are rarely used through the week, so three of these are now rented out – either to local people or through JustPark (an online service which allows people to book and pay for parking spaces). This now brings in £2,500 each year.

A stewardship campaign with the congregation also yielded a

significant increase in regular giving from the congregation, with a generous collective commitment to give 60% more.

CHURCH LIFE

The church congregation is ethnically diverse, including many older people of Afro-Caribbean heritage. It is also very mixed in terms of socio-economic background, although slowly gentrifying, reflecting the changes in the neighbourhood.

The main act of worship is the 10am Sung Mass on Sunday, which currently attracts about 75 people (including 15 children). The Parish Choir sing most weeks and are joined by the Children's Choir once a term.

Father Richard also leads a four week series of half-hour 'teaching sessions' after the Sunday service at various times of the year, with each one on a different topic of Christian spirituality. This time seems to suit the congregation better than midweek evenings and typically draws 20-25 people.

Through the week, there is a time for silent prayer, Morning Prayer and Mass every morning from Wednesday to Sunday. Evening Prayer is also said every day from Wednesday to Sunday. There is also a 'Holy Hour' (including Evening Prayer) and a Mass every Tuesday evening. On Saturday morning, the church is open for confessions after Mass. Normally, a handful of church members attend these midweek services.

The children's work on a Sunday has been reinvigorated with new leadership, more structure and more resources. Young families are seen as a key potential growth area for the church. There are now (typically) 15 children in 'Sunday Club' each week. In an effort to integrate children into the life of the church, they are also invited to talk about what they have done each week when they come back into the service and there are several All Age Masses through the year when the whole church community worships together.

MISSION

The Parish undertook a Community Audit a couple of years ago and identified a range of local needs which it is interested in becoming more involved in addressing, particularly in relation to supporting young families.

Every fortnight the church now runs an after-school 'CRAFTernoon TEA' session, where children and adults can participate in various craft activities, with tea and cake, and sometimes including a talk or discussion on a topical issue – e.g. someone from the Citizens Advice Bureau talking about how to manage debt. Participation is often about 20 people. Some half of the families who attend this are completely new to St Luke's and one family now attend church on a Sunday.

The church was already a member of West London Citizens – a branch of London Citizens - when Richard arrived, although not particularly active. Now, with the enthusiasm of several members of the congregation, together with some support from their local Community Organiser, the church is actively participating in local community organising. This involves contributing to local campaigns on issues like the Living Wage.

The church runs a 'Yard Sale' several times a year, usually timed to coincide with Match Days at the local Loftus Rd (QPR) Stadium. This involves a table-top sale at the front of the church and providing drinks and burgers and leads to new people connecting with the church.

The church actively supports the local Foodbank and a homeless shelter. It also has a new logo and website to help advertise its services to the local community.

2.4 FUTURE PLANS?

Father Richard hopes to see the church continuing to grow and develop and connect more with its changing neighbourhood. Possibilities for the future could include a pastoral assistant when resources allow, greater provision for children's and family work, more investment in music and exploring different ways of delivering teaching within the church.



3

ST BENET'S, KENTISH TOWN

Summary

Parish:	Parish of St Benet, Kentish Town
Location:	London Borough of Camden
Diocese:	Diocese of London, Edmonton Area
Tradition:	Traditional Catholic

The Parish of St Benet's is a primarily residential neighbourhood in Kentish Town, north London. The church has worshipped in the Anglican Catholic tradition since it was founded in the late 19th Century. The current priest has been in post for just over 4 years and is in his first incumbency as a Vicar. The congregation has grown from a typical attendance of 40 to 60, reflecting in particular a more family-friendly welcome on a Sunday and more children's work through the week. The church's income has grown through more active stewardship.

3.1 THE PARISH

The Parish of St Benet's, Kentish Town is located in the heart of north London, just north of Camden Town. It is a residential area in inner London and the Parish is one of the 15% most deprived in England.

The population in Kentish Town is diverse, as in much of London, although with more than 50% of residents being White British, it is less diverse than the average inner London neighbourhood¹. There is a lot of social housing and deprivation but the area is also experiencing gentrification, as house prices in north London continue to rise.

There are several primary schools in the Parish, including the church's own primary school, and the area is well served by a number of Underground and railway stations.

3.2 THE CHURCH

The Parish was founded in 1881, with the first worship taking place in a temporary tin mission hut. At that time Kentish Town was not a wealthy area. A rather grand permanent church was designed and partially built and consecrated in 1885, with the rest of the building completed in 1909. In the 1920s subsidence led to most of the original building being demolished and replaced, so the current church building dates mainly from the 1920s. It is Grade II Listed. St Benet's is a large, high ceilinged church with a more intimate side chapel used for daily services. The church has always worshipped in the Anglican Catholic tradition.

There is an adjacent vicarage, built more recently than the church and an adjoining church hall in daily use by the Rainbow Nursery.

The Parish used to have two other sister churches serving it, but they were both closed in the early 1990s. St John's is now used by another denomination and St Luke's, Oseney Crescent was unused for many years before re-opening in 2011 as an evangelical church plant. It has grown significantly and St Benet's has a good relationship with them and

¹ Data is for Kentish Town Ward, London Borough of Camden, from the 2011 Census (Office for National Statistics)

sometimes joins in some of their activities.

The previous Vicar was in post for over 20 years. During the last few years of his incumbency he was in declining health and he sadly died very shortly after retiring. The Parish experienced a protracted period of interregnum, partly because it was difficult for the grieving church community to select a new priest so soon after the passing of the previous incumbent.

The Revd Dr Peter Anthony was appointed as the Priest in charge at St Benet's in 2013 and was subsequently installed as Vicar in 2017.

Peter grew up in the Catholic tradition in Bolton and began exploring his vocation in earnest whilst a student. He worked as a Pastoral Assistant for a year at St Paul's, Tottenham (a large, diverse church in north London) before training for the priesthood at St Stephen's House, Oxford. Peter served his curacy in Hendon before returning to Oxford to study for a PhD, during which time he also worked at St Stephen's as a junior dean and as a junior chaplain in his college. The Parish of St Benet's is Peter's first position as a Vicar.

When Father Peter began work in the Parish in 2013, typical Sunday attendance was c40 people, including a committed core of about 15-20 long-standing worshippers and also a more transient mix of young families, some of whom were attracted by the church's primary school but often did not stay for long.

3.3 GROWTH

Over the last four years, the church has changed and grown in several ways:

- Sunday attendance has grown from being typically c40 to being more typically c60 adults and children
- There is a more welcoming and open church culture, particularly for families with children
- Strong links have been re-established with the primary school
- The church's buildings are more actively managed, delivering £20,000

more income each year and congregational giving has doubled

Average Sunday attendance at St Benet's has grown gradually over the last four years from a typical congregation of c40 (but sometimes as high as c60) to a number which is usually c60 and often rises to c80 for a Children's Mass. Attendance at the various Advent and Christmas services has also risen significantly; for example, the Carol Service increased from 85 in 2013 to 136 in 2016.

CHURCH STAFF

In addition to the Vicar, the only other staff are the part-time Director of Music (for a few hours per week) and a Pastoral Assistant – the church takes an intern each year through the North London Pastoral Assistant Scheme. In the summer of 2017, a Non-Stipendiary Minister was also due to begin work as curate, which will make a significant difference to the church.

CHURCH RESOURCES

Over the decades, the Parish had acquired a number of assets, and also had some reserves, but in recent years they were not being very actively managed. A flat owned by the Parish had been so poorly managed that it eventually had to be sold for half of what its value might have been. The Common Fund contribution had fallen to a low level too. Some of Peter's early challenges were to make better use of the resources available to the Parish.

The most urgent task was to (literally) fix the church roof. The church had secured a substantial Lottery grant of £250,000 for this and this required urgent action to secure the grant and spend it appropriately. The church building itself was also de-cluttered and tidied up, with a number of modernisations and repairs undertaken. A handful of valuable antiques owned by the church were sold to raise money to renew the fabric.

The church hall had been rented out to the Rainbow Nursery for many years but the rental level had been allowed to fall well below market value. The rent was reviewed and increased to a level which is still below market value, but more than double the previous amount, increasing the church's income by £20,000 per year.

With respect to congregational giving, it remains modest, but after a concerted effort to promote the importance of supporting the church's mission, more people have set up standing orders and giving has doubled. The PCC is now increasing its Common Fund contribution each year, with an aspiration to pay it in full.

CHURCH LIFE

The church congregation is a diverse mix. There are some longstanding members who have lived in the area for many years who are being joined now by more recent, and younger, arrivals to the area. The number of young families in the church has grown in particular in the last few years. Reflecting the wider changes in the area, the new arrivals are more likely to be middle-class but are culturally diverse, including a range of nationalities.

The main act of worship in the Parish each week is the 11am Mass on a Sunday morning. Although there was a lot of continuity in the style of worship upon Peter's arrival, a key change that he made was to make the service much more welcoming for children and families. Quite a few families had come but not stayed, so the aim was to make them feel at home in the church. Father Peter re-established a Sunday school and the children also come back into the service before it ends, to share what they have been doing. A lot of parents volunteer to help with the Sunday school, the revival of which they have warmly welcomed. Most families which come to the church now tend to stay on.

The church also runs a 'Children's Mass' several times a year, where children have a more prominent role in the service and the worship is more reflective of their needs, including children's songs.

The welcome for families is part of a more general intention to develop a welcoming culture at St Benet's. There is also now tea and coffee after every service to encourage people to stay and get to know each other, which many do.

The church has also explored different ways of doing adult catechesis (learning for discipleship). Over the last few years this has included a Lent group, joining in with an Alpha course run by St Luke's and also a monthly lecture series, with outside speakers, run jointly with the Parish of Old St Pancras.

During the week, there is Morning and Evening Prayer and a Mass

every day from Tuesday to Friday. These attract a handful of people each day. On Saturday, a Vigil Mass is held in a local retirement home for the residents and their visitors and this is well received.

Although there has been a lot of continuity at St Benet's since Father Peter's arrival, he has led a number of key changes as well, as described. A handful of the longstanding members found these changes rather difficult to accept and so some have moved on, although most have stayed.

MISSION

The church has rebuilt a strong relationship with its primary school. The Vicar chairs the Governing Body, leads worship at school assemblies every week and teaches lessons at the school or hosts classes at the church every fortnight. The school holds services in the church at Easter and Christmas too, with the various Christmas services attracting hundreds of children and parents.

In 2016, the church began running a 'Messy Church' service 2-3 times per term in the primary school (and sometimes in the church itself). This involves 90 minutes of activities, Christian worship and refreshments after school and regularly attracts c30 children and parents - a mix of church members and families which do not attend church. A future development may be to include Mass sometimes, after some discussion about how best to do this.

The church also provides volunteers to a local winter night shelter based in a nearby URC church.

and developing Messy Church and running more work with children and families.

There is also some interest in exploring the feasibility of running a Sunday Mass in German, as there are several German speakers in the church.

3.4 FUTURE PLANS?

Various aspirations and plans are afoot at St Benet's.

The church would like to continue the refurbishment of the buildings, improving the heating and redecorating. This may also help with securing greater community use of the buildings.

There is the ongoing challenge to keep growing the congregation and also to secure greater participation from members in volunteering and mission to the local community. The progress made in attracting, and keeping, more young families has inspired discussions about expanding



4 ST MARY'S, TOTTENHAM

Summary

Parish:	St Mary the Virgin, Tottenham
Location:	London Borough of Haringey
Diocese:	Diocese of London, Edmonton Area
Tradition:	Traditional Catholic

The Parish of St Mary's serves part of Tottenham, in north London. The church was considered for closure in the mid-1980s but over the subsequent twenty years, under new leadership, its congregation has been rebuilt and its buildings repaired. In 2010, the Good Shepherd Mission Church, a mission hall within the Parish, was repaired, modernised and re-opened for worship for the first time in 70 years. A new small congregation of c40 people has developed there over the last seven years, serving the southern part of the Parish in particular.

4.1 THE PARISH

The Parish of St Mary the Virgin is located in Tottenham, north London. It is close to the Tottenham Hotspurs FC Stadium on White Hart Lane and is a largely residential neighbourhood, with some local shopping areas. It has a population of just over 10,000 and is within the 5% most deprived parishes in England. The parish is very diverse ethnically with significant white and black populations.

Tottenham became associated in the public mind with poverty and social unrest in the 1980s, and more recently in 2011 when riots broke out there. There is, of course, much more to Tottenham than this, and it is also changing.

The local population has been growing in recent years, and its ethnic mix has been changing with the rapid growth of communities from eastern Europe. Tottenham Hale is also only 15 minutes walk from the Parish and is an area undergoing major redevelopment, with the expansion of the railway station, redevelopment of a retail park and a lot of new housing being built.

4.2 THE CHURCH

St Mary's was founded in the 1884 in response to the rapidly growing population in Tottenham as London continued to expand. It was initially founded as a 'Mission' within the historic parish of Tottenham and was funded and supported by the local Bishop's 'East London Churches Fund' (a church planting fund) and also Marlborough College, a public school in Wiltshire. In fact, the generosity of Marlborough College's teachers, pupils and alumni over the years led to the Parish being given a generous estate of land and buildings.

The church of St Mary's on Lansdowne Road was built in 1887 and over the years the Parish also acquired a vicarage, three church halls (Kemble Hall, Marlborough Hall and the Good Shepherd Mission Church) and three houses in various locations, all of which remain in church ownership.

The area has obviously changed greatly since the 1880s and the

church's own congregation and fortunes have waxed and waned over the years. After a long period of gradual decline after the First World War, there was some discussion in the 1980s about whether St Mary's should close. The appointment of the Fr Christopher Tuckwell in 1988 proved to be a turning point and he led the recovery and renewal of the congregation from a few dozen back to c100 people. He was succeeded by his curate, the Revd Luke Miller in 1995 who continued this growth and also oversaw the renewal and redevelopment of some of the buildings too.

The Parish was led by Father Luke from 1995 to 2011, when he then moved on to become the Archdeacon of Hampstead. The Revd Simon Morris served as the Curate at St Mary's for the period 2008 – 2011.

Simon grew up in Kent, worked at Southwark Cathedral for a year and after studying History at University, he trained to become a priest at St Stephen's, Oxford. In September 2011, after serving his curacy, Father Simon was appointed to be the Vicar after a brief interregnum following Luke's departure. He became one of the youngest Vicars in the Church of England at the age of 28. He took on the role in the immediate aftermath of the 2011 summer riots, some of which had occurred within the Parish.

4.3 GROWTH

Although there is much that could be written about the revival of St Mary's since the 1980s this report is concerned with church growth in the last 5 years in particular, and so we have focused here primarily on the more recent initiative taken to re-open the Good Shepherd Mission Hall. Below, we provide a brief current portrait of St Mary's, by way of context, before telling the story of the Good Shepherd.

PARISH LIFE AT ST MARY'S

The Vicar has recently been joined by a new full-time Children's Worker and a Curate (both from 2017) and is also assisted by a retired priest and a Pastoral Assistant (part of the North London Pastoral Assistant Scheme) who serves the church for a year, living in the

Vicarage. There is also a part-time Parish Administrator and a part-time organist.

Two of the three Parish houses are currently rented out, generating an income, and all three of the church halls are leased out or hired out in different ways, also bringing in funds. The gross income from the Parish's management of its buildings is over £100,000 per year. This is complemented with some congregational giving and enables the Parish to pay much of its Common Fund contribution and cover its other running costs.

The main act of worship every week is the 10am Sunday Mass at St Mary's, which typically attracts up to 200 children and adults each week. The congregation is predominantly drawn from the various Black communities in the area. During the week, Morning Prayer and Mass are said every day.

Across the Parish there are a number of midweek activities run by the Parish or hosted by it, in addition to the pastoral work of the priest. There is a lunch club every week in Kemble Hall, two different companies of the Boys Brigade meet each week and there are various fellowship groups which meet from time to time, including a men's group and the Mother's Union. During the winter, volunteers run a nightshelter in Kemble Hall. There are regular parish social events through the year, particularly marking the various Christian festivals through the year.

RE-OPENING THE GOOD SHEPHERD MISSION CHURCH

One of the three church halls owned by the Parish is the Good Shepherd Mission Church Hall, located in the southern part of the Parish on Mitchley Road. It was built in 1891 and was originally used to reach out to this part of the Parish through services and Sunday schools.

The hall ceased to be used by the church as long ago as 1939 when it was used for civil defence purposes during the Second World War. After the war, it was leased to a number of different organisations for various purposes. During the 1970s and 1980s the Parish's management of the building lapsed and it allowed an organisation to continue using it without paying rent or maintaining the building. Eventually, in the early 2000s, Father Luke Miller – the Vicar at the time – took some bold decisions to resolve the situation and secured the vacant possession

of the halls and a court settlement for unpaid rent. These funds were invested back into the halls to modernise them and give them a new lease of life.

The Good Shepherd has two adjacent hall spaces. They were repaired and redecorated, with new heating, new toilets and a kitchen installed.

From 2010, one of the two hall spaces was then leased to Tottenham Hale International Studios. The income from this arrangement covers the running costs of the other hall which is used by the church. The Studios is a non-profit organisation which uses the hall to provide studio space to 22 artists.

The hall which was retained for use by the church is used for various purposes, including a Boys Brigade company each week and also lettings. In September 2010, a new Sunday evening service was started here too – Mass at 5pm. This was led by Father Simon Morris (then a Curate, now the Vicar). It was the first time in 70 years that the Good Shepherd had been used for Sunday worship.

There are now two services held each week at the Good Shepherd. A 5pm Sunday Mass attracts about 25 people and a lunchtime 12.15pm Mass on Tuesdays attracts a similar number. Some people attend both services, so overall the number of different people attending one or other service at the Good Shepherd each week is c40. The Tuesday Mass is followed by a hot lunch provided by volunteers and is usually well attended.

The congregation which has developed here over the last seven years is largely distinct from the congregation at St Mary's (there are few transfers) and the church very much serves the southern part of the Parish where it is located, as it was originally intended to do when it was built in the 19th Century. The congregation includes people of different ages, although there is currently no Sunday school at the Good Shepherd. It includes some people returning to church after some years away.

4.4 FUTURE PLANS?

The arrival of new staff in the Parish should enable further development and growth at both St Mary's and the Good Shepherd.

At the time of writing, there was interest in establishing a new Sunday school at the Good Shepherd and encouraging a wider range of activities within the church community which has formed there. This might help the Good Shepherd to develop a stronger identity of its own, and also with more leadership taken by people within the congregation.

Father Simon has also been exploring the possibility of starting a Turkish speaking congregation in the Parish.



5 ST ANNE'S, HOXTON

Summary

Parish:	Parish of St Anne, Hoxton, with St Columba
Location:	London Borough of Hackney
Diocese:	Diocese of London, Stepney Area
Tradition:	Modern Catholic

The Parish of St Anne's serves part of Hoxton, a lively but deprived neighbourhood just north of the City of London. After years of decline, the church's congregation has been growing gradually in recent years. The current priest has been in post for nearly four years and is in his first incumbency as a Vicar. The Sunday congregation has grown from a typical attendance of c45 to c65, nearly one third of them children. Church members are involved in a growing number of midweek activities, including missional work, and the church has joined Citizens UK as a member.

5.1 THE PARISH

The Parish of St Anne is relatively small in size (with an official population of less than 6,000) and it serves the northern part of Hoxton, which is just north of the City of London and adjacent to Shoreditch and Haggerston.

Hoxton has been famously gentrifying for a number of years, and is a byword for 'hipster' London. The southern part of Hoxton has many bars, restaurants, art galleries and independent coffee shops serving a growing population of young professionals. There is also a lively market which has grown up along Hoxton Street.

The northern part of Hoxton, however, which is served by the Parish, is more residential in character and retains much of its social housing and some long-term residents alongside the more transient renting households. The Parish itself remains one of the 10% most deprived in England. There are three primary schools in the Parish.

There is a significant Turkish community in the area, some linked to the local mosque and others following the Alevis tradition. So, as with most neighbourhoods in London, there is more to Hoxton than meets the eye and a number of quite different communities sharing the same area.

5.2 THE CHURCH

The church of St Anne is located in the heart of Hoxton, just by Hoxton Market. It was built in 1870 and has an adjacent hall and vicarage. (There is a second church in the Parish, St Columba's, but this was closed in 1980 and is rented out to a Pentecostal church.)

The church draws its congregation from the local community and is "unpretentiously catholic" in its approach.

The previous Vicar served the church for a number of years and helped it to begin growing again after a long vacancy and a period of decline. She moved on in 2012. The Revd Christopher Woods was appointed as Vicar in October 2013, after an 18 month interregnum.

Christopher grew up in Northern Ireland, studied at University in Scotland and, after working as a Pastoral Assistant in an Anglican

church in Paris, he trained for the priesthood in Dublin with the Church of Ireland. He served his curacy in East Belfast. He then moved, with his wife, to Cambridge where he was Chaplain to Christ's College for four years, followed by a few years working at Westcott House and also serving the Church of England's Liturgical Commission. His role as Vicar of St Anne's is his first incumbency and it is part-time as he also works for two days per week as the Stepney Area's Adult Education and Professional Development Officer.

When Father Christopher was appointed, the church had a regular congregation of c45, adults and children, including a fair number of families.

5.3 GROWTH

After nearly four years under the new Vicar, the church has seen a number of changes:

- The Sunday congregation has grown from a typical attendance of c45 to c65, currently including up to 20 children
- The number of midweek activities involving church members has grown
- Missional activities have also increased, including youth work
- The church has begun to get involved in community organising

In his first year in the post, Father Christopher spent a fair amount of time meeting people, getting to know them and listening. There was therefore a lot of continuity in the life and worship of the church rather than lots of change at first. Over time, of course, Father Christopher has overseen the introduction of a number of new activities and practices.

CHURCH STAFF

The Parish has few staff. In addition to the Vicar, there is currently only a part-time organist. A Non-Stipendiary Curate served the Parish for a few years but moved onto a new role in 2015. During the summer, there is often a student on placement for a month from Westcott House, Cambridge and in 2015/16, the church benefited from an intern from the Stepney Intern Programme for a year.

CHURCH RESOURCES

The church has modest resources although after a recent Stewardship campaign congregational giving has increased. The church hall generates a modest income too, from lettings.

CHURCH LIFE

The main act of weekly worship in the Parish is the 11am Sunday Mass. The service is fairly formal in its liturgy, vestments and ceremony but all undertaken with a degree of informality. Different styles of music might also be used in addition to playing the organ. There is a Sunday School for the children and a 'micro Sunday school' for toddlers.

After the service, tea and coffee are served and the congregation stay on to chat. The congregation is mostly Afro-Caribbean and African and many live locally. As the congregation has grown in the last few years, a few more professionals have joined. All of the church's services and activities are actively publicised through signage outside the building as well as on the updated website and through social media.

Through the week, Morning and Evening Prayer are said each day, with a few parishioners usually attending and a midweek Mass at 12.30pm on Wednesday attracts a variable congregation, from c5 – 15 people.

Various festival services and social events are held through the year also, including a Mass and a parish picnic in the park on St Anne's day in July, which attracts over a hundred people.

The Vicar has also led, or facilitated, a number of different midweek study groups in the last few years. A small Lent group meets each year and sometimes a similar Advent group meets as well. A new Young Adults Bible Study (for people under 30 years old) meets each week and attracts up to 10 people. A new evening Rosary Group also meets through the year in term time for more contemplative prayer. A member of the congregation, with encouragement from the Vicar, also initiated a weekly study and reflection group which addresses addictions and supports those in various forms of recovery.

An Anglican church plant, Grace Church Hackney, also meets at St Anne's on a Sunday evening and has done for some time.

MISSION

The church has hosted the Hackney Winter Nightshelter for a number of years; volunteers from the congregation (and others) help with hosting guests for one night of the week in the church hall through the winter as part of a rota of local churches. In 2015, a group of these volunteers from the congregation met with the Vicar to discuss how the church might continue to serve the homeless community through the year. Since then, the church has run a weekly Soup Kitchen on Saturday evenings providing a three course meal for the homeless and people on low incomes. There are usually 40-45 people who come to this throughout the year, and more in the winter. Many of the guests have mental health issues or struggle with addictions.

The church also set up a new youth club in 2015 to serve the needs of young people aged 8 to 16 – StAYG (St Ann's Youth Group). The project was initiated and led by a member of the congregation who wanted to serve the needs of local young people. The youth club meets on Friday evenings for two hours, runs a range of activities, and currently attracts c15 local young people, mainly aged 8 to 12 years old. About half are connected with the church and about half have no church connection. The project was assisted in its first year with support and advice from Urban Hope, a local Christian youth charity based at St Stephen's Canonbury nearby.

Most recently, the church has joined TELCO (The East London Citizens Organisation) which is part of Citizens UK, the community organising alliance. This is still a relatively new development for the church. The Vicar and a few members of the congregation have participated in activities so far, with a view to increasing participation over time.

5.4 FUTURE PLANS?

Further growth at St Anne's probably relies on being able to find the resources to employ further members of staff – whether a Curate or an Associate Priest or even an intern. The Parish still largely relies upon one part-time priest for much of its leadership and organising capacity. Father Christopher has been exploring how this might be achieved – more staff would be invaluable. A first step towards this has been in securing a grant from the Bishop of London's Mission Fund to support a Youth Apprentice in the parish from the autumn of 2017.



6 ST JOHN'S, CATFORD

Summary

Parish:	Parish of Catford (Southend) and Downham (Team Ministry)
Location:	London Borough of Lewisham
Diocese:	Diocese of Southwark, Woolwich Area
Tradition:	Modern Catholic

The Parish of Catford (Southend) and Downham is a team ministry with four churches in the London Borough of Lewisham. This case study considers the recent story of the church of St John the Baptist, one of those churches. The Parish is a commuter suburb built in the 1920s and today is one of the most deprived Parishes in the country even though many households are in work. After a period of significant decline, St John's has grown again over the last decade under a succession of Rectors from c50 to c150 on a Sunday morning. A new Sunday 4pm service has been started and midweek activities now include Messy Saints and Choristers Club. The current Rector has been in post since 2015.

6.1 THE PARISH

The Parish of Catford (Southend) and Downham lies between Catford, Bromley and Beckenham in Lewisham in south London.

The Parish is largely residential – a commuter suburb – consisting of streets of suburban terraced or semi-detached housing, but with a fair number of shops and businesses along the main roads. Perhaps surprisingly, the Parish is one of the 10% most deprived in the country – although many people in the area are in work, they are often not earning much.

Along with much of London, this area, and Lewisham more widely, has seen modest population growth in recent years¹.

The community is ethnically diverse, although with a predominance of white British and African and Afro-Caribbean households.

6.2 THE CHURCH

The Parish includes four churches across Catford and Downham – St John the Baptist, St Mark, St Luke and St Barnabas – joined together in a Team ministry. Three of them were built in the 1920s and one in the 1960s. Although the four churches are joined together in one parish under one PCC and Rector, and the clergy do work together, each church does have its own District Church Council (DCC), its own bank account and a fair amount of autonomy.

This case study focuses on the recent story of just one of the churches – St John the Baptist.

The church of St John the Baptist was built in the late 1920s, on a piece of land donated to the Church of England. The church was built to serve the new council homes being erected by the London County Council on the Downham Estate at the time – providing new homes for families being relocated from London's inner-city slums. There is also a vicarage, a church hall and the St John the Baptist CofE Primary School adjacent to the church. There is a house for a curate nearby.

St John's has been worshipping in the Anglican Catholic tradition

¹ St John's is located in Whitefoot Ward, Lewisham which saw 5% population growth from 2001 to 2011 (Census data from ONS)

for many years. It had been a thriving church until the 1980s, but entered a period of significant decline to less than c50 people on a Sunday. A couple of Rectors then came and went, and eventually the Revd Clive French, assisted by his Curate the Revd Sheridan James, led the church back into a period of growth again from 2006 – 2009 and also re-ordered the church, overseeing a number of renovations to the buildings. The Revd Michael Hart then took over as the Rector from 2010 – 2015, in his last full-time role before retirement, and continued this trend of growth from c110 people on a Sunday to c150. He also oversaw a number of improvements to the church buildings. He was assisted by the Revd Sam Dennis, his curate from 2011-2015 (and now Priest in charge at St Luke's, Woodside).

The Revd Dr Martin Thomas was appointed as Rector of the Parish in the autumn of 2015.

Martin was not from a church-going family but found faith and a love of music, especially choral music, whilst a student. After travelling abroad and working as a music teacher in various settings, he began to explore his vocation to be a priest and whilst in his mid-30s went on to train as a priest at Ripon College, Cuddesdon in Oxford.

Father Martin served his curacy in a large and active 'High Anglican' parish church in Norfolk. His first incumbency as a Vicar was in a parish in Fulham, in south west London, where he worked for five years, leading a period of growth and development. Subsequently, he served in a number of shorter-term roles (moving for family reasons) leading parishes for short periods in Lambeth (as a Vicar) and then Newham (as a Team Rector) and also working a brief stint as an Anglican Chaplain in Madrid. The move to Catford was very much intended as a long-term commitment and the chance to settle once again into a parish.

6.3 GROWTH

Over the last decade or so, the attendance at St John's has recovered from a low point of perhaps c50 to c150. Since 2015, when Father Martin was appointed as Rector, there have also been some new developments at St John's. Key points in relation to growth include:

- Our 'snapshot survey' of the morning congregation showed that approximately one third of the congregation class themselves as

‘returning to church’ or ‘new to church’, with the vast majority of these being ‘returners’, half of whom have joined the church in the last decade. The returners are mainly elderly and White British

- A new 4pm Sunday service has attracted a diverse mix of c40-50 people, half of whom were new to St John’s and some of whom were not church-goers
- A new Choristers Club at the local Primary school attracts over 20 children and brings them and c30 parents into church for Sunday morning Mass once a month

Since Father Martin’s arrival at St John’s there has been much continuity – with many activities being long-standing and continuing to run – but also new developments in addition to these. In particular, he has sought to encourage and support those in the congregation who want to begin new activities within the church and so many of the newer activities are very much lay-led (“I try to find a way to say ‘yes’ to people”).

It is clear that that some of the changes in recent years have been difficult for some of the church’s long-standing members to accept, but most appear to have recognised the value of the church’s growth and development.

CHURCH STAFF

The Rector is based at St John’s and spends most of his time working there, with some time spent overseeing the whole Parish and supporting the two Team Vicars who work in the other churches.

There is usually a curate, although there was no-one in post at the time of writing. Courtesy of a local retirement home for clergy in nearby Bromley there are also currently seven Non-Stipendiary Ministers serving the four churches of the Parish on a part-time basis.

There is a relatively new part-time organist.

Father Martin has also set up, with the approval of the DCC, a new strategy group which includes the Rector, Church Wardens and a few other lay leaders. The group discusses the key issues around finance, management and mission which face the Parish and they provide advice to the DCC.

CHURCH RESOURCES

The church hall has contained a nursery for many years which has generated an annual income for the Parish of c£40k. It is also used for a number of midweek activities – Brownies, Guides and social activities.

The church has been largely unused through the week, partly because the heating has not worked well and is expensive to use. A new heating system being installed in 2017 will enable greater use of the church through the week, with the funds primarily raised from the congregation.

The Parish pays about half of its Parish Support Fund contribution to the Diocese.

CHURCH LIFE

St John’s is a lively and well organised parish church, with the 10.30am Sunday Mass usually attracting c150 people, including many families. There are a fair number of children and the Sunday school has three different age groups.

The older, long-standing members of the congregation tend to come from the local white working-class community which used to be predominant in the area, but many of the families and church members who have joined St John’s in the last decade or so are from the area’s Black communities, very much reflecting the wider social changes in this part of London. The church now has a Black majority congregation.

According to the ‘snapshot survey’ of the morning congregation (conducted in July 2017 as part of our research) the vast majority of church members are local (nearly 90%). A relatively high proportion are retired (43% of the adults are 65 or over). An unusually high proportion are female too – women make up nearly 80% of the adult congregation.

The morning service at St John’s is in the Modern Catholic tradition with a formal liturgy but it is delivered in a relatively relaxed style. The music is mainly led by the church’s part-time organist, and there is a choir, but once a month the church band leads worship. With his love of music, Father Martin has been keen to deepen and expand the church’s musical tradition.

There used to be an 8am Mass on a Sunday morning, which was attended by only a few people and which Father Martin stopped running

during the summer of 2016.

In October 2016, a brand new 4pm Sunday service was started, styled as “St John’s @4”. The development of this service was very much led by members of the congregation. It offers a different style and liturgy and also caters for families who may be busy on Sunday mornings. The process of working with lay members of the church has not only led to new ideas coming forward and a lot of lay engagement in running the service, but it has also enabled those people to learn more about liturgy and how services are put together.

The 4pm Sunday service is c45 minutes long and is informal in its style, with a mix of worship, prayer and teaching and with children very much welcome. The service has grown to c40-50 people each week, with many young families. It includes some church members who also attend the morning Mass but also people who are new to St John’s and some who are even new to church altogether.

During the week, four Masses are held at St John’s at various times, each attracting a handful of worshippers, with the Wednesday morning Mass usually attracting the most, with c15 people.

The church regularly runs social events and celebrates festivals and gets involved in local events in the local area. Recent events have included the church’s own 90th birthday in 2016, a “70s and 80s night” and regular lunches. The church also takes church groups on pilgrimages.

A Romanian Evangelical church also meets in the church hall each week, reflecting the growth of the eastern European community in the area in recent years.

MISSION

The church has sought to strengthen its relationship with the Primary school. The various school services through the year have been moved into the church now rather than taking place in the school. There is a weekly service and a termly Eucharist, with growing participation in the latter from both pupils and teachers.

In late 2016, a new Choristers Club was established at the church’s Primary school, led by the church’s new organist. It is an after-school club which meets weekly for rehearsals and then sings in Mass at St John’s on one Sunday of the month. The Club attracts over 20 children, many of them unchurched, and also often attracts some of their parents

(c30) on the Sundays when they are singing.

Also at the school, the church runs a ‘Clay Play’ after-school club where children are encouraged to use their creativity to make things out of clay which help to tell (Christian) stories.

During school holidays, the church has recently begun running ‘Messy Saints’, two-hour sessions of creativity and crafts with a Christian theme.

The church has hosted a ‘Pram Club’ for a number of years, led by members of the local community and providing a ‘stay and play’ session for parents and toddlers every Wednesday morning. Father Martin encouraged this group to shift from meeting in the church hall to the main church building itself and they also recruited a Christian storyteller to run a ‘story time’ as part of the session, with a Christian theme or story. The group has doubled in size since these changes to nearly 30 parents. The Vicar usually participates in the group each week and conversations have led on to children being baptised, home visits and new relationships.

The organist began performing lunchtime recitals at St John’s in 2016 and these were well attended. A programme of lunchtime and evening recitals, by various musicians, has been developed and contributes to opening up the church during the week to the local community.

The church also runs, or hosts, a number of other groups which meet through the week. There is a youth group, the Mothers Union and a Senior Social Club, which attracts 60 elderly folk, including many who do not attend church.

The church also works with secular partners in the area. Phoenix Community Housing Association are located very close to the church and also provide much of the social housing in the Parish, including for many church members. Father Martin has sought to work more closely with them and they have since held joint events, including a Christmas Fair, some of which have been held at St John’s.

6.4 FUTURE PLANS?

In any busy church there are many plans for the future and St John's is no exception. Given how busy St John's feels on a Sunday morning, future congregational growth is expected to come outside of Sunday mornings through other services on Sunday or other days of the week or through midweek 'social or serving' activities which help to 'break down walls' between the church and the local community.

When the church's heating is finally fixed, there are aspirations to use the church for more activities through the week. There have been discussions about establishing a 'Buggy Church' during the week which would be a short church service with 'stay and play' afterwards. There are hopes to develop the youth work further and expand the church's arts and music offering to the local community.



7 ST LUKE'S, WOODSIDE

Summary

Parish:	St Luke's, Woodside
Location:	London Borough of Croydon
Diocese:	Diocese of Southwark, Croydon Area
Tradition:	Modern Catholic

The Parish of St Luke's is a largely residential area in Croydon, south London. St Luke's is a large 19th Century church with a long tradition of Anglican Catholicism. The ill health of a previous incumbent had led to the decline of the church and the possibility of merger. The current priest has been in post for just over a year and is in his first incumbency as a Vicar. Since his arrival, typical Sunday attendance has risen from c60 to c90, and 'Young Church' for children has re-started, as well as a number of midweek services and activities. The Parish is also an active member of Croydon Citizens.

7.1 THE PARISH

The Parish of St Luke's, Woodside is in South Norwood, just north of Croydon. The Parish serves a primarily residential suburb of London, consisting of streets of Victorian terraced houses and more recent semi-detached houses. The area was dominated by local brickworks until the 1970s. It is well connected with both Croydon and central London via local rail links but remains one of the more affordable parts of the Borough of Croydon.

In recent decades the area's profile has been changing, as it has been "gently gentrifying", with the lower house prices attracting young families. This has given the Parish an increasingly youthful population as well as a growing ethnic diversity. However, the Parish remains amongst the 15% most deprived in England.

The Census¹ shows that – along with much of London – the population of the area increased from 2001 and 2011 (by 6%) and that the ethnic composition of the area has also been changing dramatically, from 58% White British to 38% as the white working-class communities have continued to move 'up and out' of the area and be replaced by others – part of a wider pattern across London.

7.2 THE CHURCH

The church of St Luke's is a relatively large parish church – it can seat 500 – and was built in the middle part of the 19th Century, although it has been extended and rebuilt several times since. The church is Grade II Listed and is in reasonable condition, although in need of a more effective heating system. There are also three small church halls close by, in rather less good condition, and a vicarage adjacent to the church.

St Luke's has followed the Anglican Catholic tradition since its foundation. Attendance has waxed and waned since the 1970s but from 2000 onwards, attendance waned significantly and almost halved to c60 adults and children. By the time the previous Vicar retired, church activities had been cut back to just one Sunday service and one midweek

¹ Data is from the 2001 and 2011 Census statistics for the ward of Woodside, London Borough of Croydon (Office for National Statistics)

service. When he retired, the option of merging the Parish with another was discussed.

During the interregnum, a local Non-Stipendiary Minister (NSM) Revd Jean Yearwood faithfully kept the Sunday services running each week and maintained the pastoral links with the congregation, keeping the church community going.

It was decided to give the Parish another chance. The Revd Sam Dennis was appointed Priest-in-charge of St Luke's in February 2016. He was 31 years old and had just served as a Curate at St John's, Catford.

Sam grew up in a family which attended a charismatic evangelical church but had, from a young age, felt a particularly strong connection with God through Communion and was very interested in the history and traditions of the church. Whilst a History student at University, he attended both evangelical and Anglican Catholic churches, but felt an increasingly strong attraction to the more catholic traditions. He worked for a year as a Pastoral Assistant at the chaplaincy at King's College, London and was accepted for ordination at this time – at only 23 years old – moving on to train at Westcott House, Cambridge.

When Father Sam arrived at St Luke's, Sunday attendance was approximately 60 people, including just a handful of children, and very few parish activities were running.

7.3 GROWTH

After just over a year with Sam in post as the church's new priest, it feels as though the church has turned a corner:

- Sunday attendance has risen from c60 to c90 people (all ages) on a regular basis, although (of course) numbers vary from week to week and not every member attends every week
- There are now c20 children, with up to 12 meeting in 'Young Church' each Sunday
- Congregational giving has risen nearly 40%, boosted by both a growing congregation and more generous giving
- Midweek services and activities have grown again

Much of the growth happened fairly soon after Father Sam's arrival

and has been sustained over the last year or so. It comprises people returning to St Luke's who had either stopped coming to church in recent years or who had become rather sporadic in their attendance - but it also includes people who are completely new to St Luke's as well.

The rapid revival of the church's fortunes appears to vividly illustrate the difference that a positive and active priest can make in a parish where church life had waned. It is still early in the new priest's ministry in the Parish, but as new initiatives and activities take root it is reasonable to expect further growth in the next few years.

CHURCH STAFF

The only paid member of staff in the Parish is the Priest-in-charge, although Father Sam is assisted by the NSM Mother Jean Yearwood who has served the church for many years, as well as Father Roy, another NSM.

CHURCH RESOURCES

The Parish generates some income from renting out its three small halls and also earns a modest annual income from a previous investment, but the majority of its income comes through congregational giving. Although this has risen in the last year, it remains modest, not least as the congregation is not wealthy.

CHURCH LIFE

The church congregation is very diverse and has become more diverse in recent years, reflecting the shifting nature of the local population.

The main Parish gathering is the 10am Parish Eucharist every Sunday morning, which also includes Young Church for children. It is a formal service with "robes and rituals" but done in a way which is warm, friendly and relaxed.

Through the week, there are short services for Morning and Evening Prayer every day from Monday to Thursday and two midweek Eucharists at Tuesday 7.30pm and Wednesday 10am. Midweek services are much less well attended than those on Sundays but often attract c20-30 across the two Eucharists, also often including the occasional passer-by.

A midweek study group has also been established, which meets each

term and has been using the Church of England's 'Pilgrim' course. This has been attracting c20 people meeting across two evenings each week, with c30 people attending the Lent course.

A Craft Club meets every month too, bringing together a group of people to share in creativity.

MISSION

The priest is developing relationships with all three primary schools which are located in the parish, two of which are Oasis Academies. The schools visit the church and Sam also now speaks in school assemblies regularly.

St Luke's is part of the North Croydon Deanery, a group of a dozen parishes. The Deanery recently became a joint member of Croydon Citizens, part of the UK Citizens grassroots community organising alliance. Father Sam and some members of the congregation have been regular participants in the local campaigns and activities of Croydon Citizens, although it is still a relatively new departure for the church.

7.4 FUTURE PLANS?

It is still early days for Father Sam in his time at St Luke's. Future possibilities are many and various, including consideration of how best to develop ministries in the church – prayer, worship and music, children's work. If the congregation continues to grow, some new ways of working may also be required – there is a limit to how much one priest can do, so there will be questions of how to resource and expand the team of people to lead this work. Other issues on the horizon include how best to modernise or make use of the rather 'tired' church halls – both a challenge and an opportunity.



8

ST GEORGE- IN-THE-EAST, SHADWELL

Summary

Parish:	St George-in-the-East
Location:	London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Diocese:	Diocese of London, Stepney Area
Tradition:	Modern Catholic

The Parish of St George-in-the-East is located just to the east of the City of London and includes part of the historic east end. St George's is an 18th Century church which was partially rebuilt in the 1960s. In 2015, after the retirement of the previous Rector and an interregnum, the PCC embarked upon a novel pilot arrangement, with the Centre for Theology & Community providing two part-time priests to lead the Parish. A new Lay Community has been established, the church's Sunday attendance has grown from c20 to c50 and two new midweek expressions of church have been started. Having become a member of TELCO, the east London chapter of Citizens UK, the church has led a number of initiatives to serve those in need and challenge injustice.

8.1 THE PARISH

The Parish of St George-in-the-East is located on the eastern edge of the City of London and includes a small part of the City as well as the first part of the historic east end from Aldgate to Shadwell. Cable Street runs through the middle of the Parish. Wapping is immediately to the south, part of the redeveloped London Docklands and a popular place to live for workers in the City and Canary Wharf.

The Parish is a dense and lively mix of housing and businesses, and home to over 12,000 people. It has a large Muslim community, mostly Bengali. The housing in the area includes a lot of social housing and also some areas which are gentrifying, particularly those closer to the City.

Overall, the Parish is one of the 10% most deprived in England.

8.2 THE CHURCH

The church of St George-in-the-East was built in the early 18th Century church and is one of a handful of churches in London designed by the architect Nicholas Hawksmoor. It is now Grade 1 Listed. The roof and interior of the church were destroyed during the Blitz of 1941, although leaving the outer walls intact. In 1964 a new modern church was built inside the surviving walls and towers, together with four flats, one in each corner of the building.

There is a neighbouring rectory, with a small one bedroom flat in the basement, and the sizeable crypt was converted some years ago into two large spaces – one of which is let by the PCC to a commercial nursery (and includes a shared church hall space) and one of which is let to the London Diocese, who are currently sub-letting it to the Centre for Theology & Community (CTC). The church is linked to a local school - St Paul's Whitechapel CofE Primary School.

The church's congregation has had a bit of rollercoaster ride in the last couple of decades, experiencing periods of growth and decline. When the last Rector retired in the autumn of 2014, the congregation was typically c20 people on a Sunday, with few children. This included some longstanding church members who were deeply committed to the church.

The Bishop of Stepney put the Parish under review and suspended its living and began to explore various options for the future.

It was at this point that CTC, based in the East Crypt and led by its Director, Canon Dr Angus Ritchie, proposed a novel 'pilot' arrangement for the Parish with the aim of bringing about growth in the church again. The proposal was for the Rector's stipend to be used to fund two priests, each on a part-time basis – Father Angus and also a colleague at CTC, Father Tim Clapton – who would between them provide the leadership and pastoral care for the Parish. In addition, the Rectory (which neither of them needed) would be used to house a new Lay Community of young people who would devote part of their week to serving the Parish.

The proposal was put to the PCC in early 2015, with the Bishop's approval, to run as a pilot for 18 months and then to be reviewed. The PCC agreed and so Father Angus became Priest in charge at St George-in-the-East in May 2015 and Father Tim became the Assistant Priest, both of which were part-time positions. (They also both continued to work for CTC on a part-time basis).

Angus and Tim were in the same year at Westcott House, Cambridge. Both became involved in community organising in their ministries after ordination – Father Angus in TELCO (The East London Citizens Organisation), of which his training parish was a founder member, and Father Tim in Citizens:MK (in Milton Keynes) which he played a role in founding. Both recognised the value of a set of practices that emphasised face to face relationship building and the importance of individuals taking responsibility for their actions and which offered the prospect of tackling injustices together.

Father Angus stayed on in his training parish as a Team Vicar, and when he left in 2005, he wanted to find a way to encourage more churches to engage with community organising and do so in a Christian way. Along with a Roman Catholic colleague, he founded the Centre for Theology & Community (CTC) to do this. CTC is an independent, ecumenical Christian charity, and Father Angus has been its Executive Director since 2005. He also served for a few years as a part-time Assistant Priest at St Peter's, Bethnal Green, a cross-tradition church plant.

8.3 GROWTH

In the last two years, since May 2015:

- Regular Sunday attendance has grown from c20 in spring 2015 to c50 adults and children in spring 2017
- Two new midweek expressions of church have been started in 2017, with Choir Church seeing up to c50 adults and children meeting once a month and 'English, Prayer Action' gathering c8 people each week
- A new Lay Community of St George has been established, with four or five young people living and serving with the Parish for at least a year and providing 60-80 hours of service per week between them
- St George's has joined Citizens UK and begun to explore how to use community organising to serve the local community and grow as a church

The pilot arrangements began in May 2015 with the intention that the PCC would review them after 18 months.

During the summer of 2015 Father Angus and Father Tim began the new season at St George's with an extended period of 'listening' – involving lots of one-to-one conversations with church members, partner organisations and local people – to better understand the Parish and the various concerns and interests of all involved. The listening also included listening to God through the rhythm of regular daily prayer at St George's, which included silent prayer in the morning and self-reflection at night (and still does). This helped to shape the various plans and initiatives that have since been developed and implemented.

Towards the Christmas of 2015, the PCC decided to review the pilot early to allow for more secure forward planning, and they brought in an independent consultant to help with this process. In January 2016, the PCC agreed to a second phase of the partnership with CTC, in which a new Assistant Priest would be appointed. In 2-4 years, the new priest would in due course become Rector of the parish. In this second phase, the Rectory would once again house a priest – with the Lay Community being housed in flats around the church.

During Lent 2016, the PCC and the congregation were led through a process of 'Parish Listening and Visioning' to explore the question of

'where is God calling us?' This involved discussion about four themes – worshipping God, welcoming neighbours, challenging injustice and making new disciples – and has helped to shape the Parish's direction.

There has been significant change at St George's since 2015, although continuity of practice also. The church remains clearly in the modern catholic tradition. Some church members have found the changes difficult, although nearly all have stayed and participated in their church's new stage of life.

CHURCH STAFF

Both the Priest in Charge and the Assistant Priest positions have been part-time since May 2015 when the new arrangement at St George's began. Father Angus is the Priest in charge and Father Tim was the Assistant Priest from May 2015 to the summer of 2016. In September 2016, the Revd Richard Springer became Assistant Priest (and Rector-designate) and moved into the Rectory with his family. Father Richard had just finished his curacy in Hackney, having trained at Westcott House – and having previously worked with young people in Toynbee Hall, a short walk from his new parish. Father Angus and Father Richard between them work six days a week – the equivalent of a single full-time priest and it is funded by one stipend, so it costs no more than previous incumbencies. Father Richard spends the rest of his week as Director of CTC's Urban Leadership School, and is the Dean of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Ministry in the Stepney Episcopal Area. The Parish also has an Administrator, a new part-time Director of Music and a part-time cleaner.

One of the key features of the new arrangements at St George's was the introduction of the new Lay Community of St George from September 2015. Four young people in their 20s were recruited to join the Lay Community and for the first year they lived together in the Rectory, together with a young family, the parents of which took on the role of chaplain to the Lay Community. From the summer of 2016, when Father Richard joined the team and moved into the Rectory, the Community have lived in different flats, with three of them occupying two of the church's flats between them and one living outside the Parish. Participation in the Community is not time-limited, and in the summer of 2016, one member chose to stay on and three new members joined.

So far, all have been young women, but the Community is open to both men and women. The Lay Community members are deliberately drawn from different church denominations, not just Anglican and has included Pentecostals, Roman Catholic and others.

The purpose of the Lay Community is both to train and form the young people who join it and also to serve the Parish – indeed its members are formed as they serve. In the first year, members were effectively provided with free accommodation by the Parish in exchange for which they committed to participating in the daily worship of the church and also serving the Parish for 10-20 hours per week (varying between members).

Daily worship at St George's sees one of the Priests lead an 8am or 8.30am Eucharist every day (except Saturday) followed by silent prayer (often with Eucharistic Adoration) and also a short service of Compline by Candlelight some evenings at 9pm. The Lay Community normally attend these services, which are open to all. Compline attracts other worshippers, including some who do not otherwise attend church. Members of the Lay Community also meet regularly with a spiritual director.

In the second year of the Lay Community, the aims and daily rhythms have remained unaltered, but the practical arrangements have evolved. Each member now has a simple but formal job description linked to the new Parish Vision and all are trained by CTC in the practice of community organising, rooted in theological reflection and prayer. They also do not all live together and this has helped to encourage integration with the congregation. Most significantly, as they moved out of the Rectory into church flats, it was decided that they should pay rent (so that the PCC did not lose income) and so they are now paid a salary at £10 per hour, a 'living wage', the collective cost of which (£30,000 per year at present) is being met by fundraising and charitable grants.

The Lay Community is made possible in practical terms through the church's ownership of housing, which in turn enables the four members to release up to 60 hours of work between them in the Parish each week. Each member undertakes another paid job for the rest of the week.

CHURCH RESOURCES

The church has substantial cash reserves, although a significant part of this is set aside to cover the substantial costs of replacing the church's roof and some is also required for the regular expenses of maintaining a Grade 1 Listed building.

The church's four flats are normally rented out on a commercial basis and provide a significant income. The East and West Crypts also provide a regular income. Between them, these generate gross income for the Parish of over £150k each year. The PCC now pays its Common Fund contribution in full.

CHURCH LIFE

The main weekly act of worship is the 10.15am Parish Eucharist each Sunday. The service is relatively formal using modern Anglican Catholic liturgy and worship. Most Sundays there is now a Sunday school and once a month the Eucharist is all-age. There is always a positive welcome to visitors. On one Sunday each month the service is also followed by a 'congregational meeting' with group discussions about an aspect of 'faith and life' or issues of concern to the Parish.

When the congregation numbers were small, the church's seating was rearranged to form a semi-circle around the altar, in a style more appropriate for a smaller group of people. As the numbers have grown, the seating has been restored to its previous arrangement in rows.

The Sunday morning congregation is mainly local, with a few who travel in to the Parish from further afield. The proportion who live locally has risen as the church has grown. The congregation is socially and ethnically diverse. Those joining the congregation in the last couple of years have included people returning to church after a few years away and also some who are new to church. A growing number of young families have been joining.

During the week there is a regular rhythm of morning and evening prayer on most days. Members of the congregation are also encouraged to study the Bible and pray through the week. A 'Gospel pairs' initiative encourages people to pair up and meet to reach the Gospel of Mark together each week. This also encourages people to discuss their faith and learn from each other. In 2015, Father Tim and Father Angus also led a

midweek Sanctuary Course for four weeks, attended by c8-9 members of the congregation, looking at different kinds of prayer and with an emphasis on practice.

MISSION

A central feature of the new priests' approach to parish ministry is the recognition that they, and indeed the church, have a responsibility to not only serve the needs of the current church congregation but also "to care for the whole Parish".

A key part of making this a reality has been working with the congregation at St George's to explore the value of community organising in supporting this mission as well as in developing the congregation itself. After a period of exploring the practices of community organising in 2015, the PCC did agree that the church should join TELCO (the east London chapter of Citizens UK) in 2016 as a full member.

Community organising is at the heart of the ministry of the Lay Community, who often help to lead initiatives and campaigns, engaging a growing proportion of the congregation. At the time of writing, perhaps a third of the adults in the congregation are involved in one or more activities. Initiatives have so far included:

- a campaign against a new exploitative 'Jack the Ripper Museum' which had just set up in the Parish as well as the development of a temporary 'Exhibition of East End Women's History' created and hosted by the church, to celebrate the work of local women.
- a campaign to bring more affordable housing to the Parish, with a particular focus on a parcel of land owned by Transport for London
- a project to push for lighting in St George's Park, adjacent to the church, to make it safer for the community

In the spring of 2017, a new project called 'Open Table' started. Once a month, a hot meal is cooked at the church and a free open invitation is extended to local people, rich or poor, to come and take part. The aim is to be intentionally hospitable to those who may be homeless or on low incomes, but also any neighbour or church member who wants to participate. The meal is cooked by 'Meals on Heels' a social enterprise

run by a group of Muslim women which helps women to learn cooking skills and find employment. So far, Open Table has attracted a diverse mix of people, with up to 25 at each meal.

Support has also been received from the Diocese of London for St George's to plant two new congregations in the Parish. These are both at very early stages, but have had promising starts:

- Choir Church – from February 2017, the church's new Director of Music leads has been leading a weekly after-school choir at the church's primary school, St Paul's. This regularly attracts c15-20 children each week. Once a month, the rehearsal is followed by Mass for both the children and their parents and this has seen up to c50 adults and children participate. Some of these people are also getting involved in St George's wider life (e.g. the community organising campaign for affordable housing).
- English, Prayer, Action – from April 2017, a member of the Lay Community has been leading a weekly session from 7pm – 9pm aimed at low-paid workers in and around the Parish. Each gathering includes eating together, learning English and half an hour of collective worship. A listening process is also underway to identify issues of concern for community organising campaigns. So far, a group of c8 people, mainly Portuguese-speaking, has been gathering regularly.

8.4 FUTURE PLANS?

St George's has seen quite a shift in direction since 2015 and is, by all accounts, growing and more vibrant than before. Given the changes, an important aim over the next year or so is consolidation, giving the various new practices and initiatives time to bed down and become established. St George's hopes to see continued growth at existing services and in new congregations, greater lay participation and leadership in all aspects of church life and action beyond the church's walls 'to care for those in need and challenge injustice'.

PART B

REFLECTIONS



9 LESSONS AND REFLECTIONS

This section reflects on the seven case studies as a whole and attempts to identify any cross-cutting themes, lessons and insights from them. Clearly, the research we have undertaken is not a comprehensive consideration of Anglican Catholic practice in London today, and therefore we must be careful not to view findings from seven case studies as definitive or universal conclusions. Nevertheless, where strong patterns are evident across the case studies, they may be indicative of helpful practices and worth reflecting upon.

9.1 THE NATURE OF CHURCH GROWTH

In each of the seven parishes, we explored the growth in the regular worshipping congregations, whether on a Sunday or midweek. The table below summarises the evidence gathered.

Parish	Change in typical Sunday Attendance (adults & children) at main act of worship				Change in attendance at other midweek worship or new services to Spring 2017
	Start	Spring 2017	Net Growth	Growth period	
St Luke, Hammersmith Kensington Area, Diocese of London	60	75	+15	4 years	-
St Benet's, Kentish Town Edmonton Area, Diocese of London	40	60	+20	4 years	New 'Messy Church' 2-3 times per term attracts c30 children & adults
Good Shepherd Mission Church at St Mary's, Tottenham Edmonton Area, Diocese of London	0	25	+25	7 years	c15 different people also attend a Tuesday Mass at the same church
St Anne's, Hoxton Stepney Area, Diocese of London	45	65	+20	4 years	-

St John's, Catford Woolwich Area, Diocese of Southwark	c50	c150	+100	10 years	Sunday 4pm Service attracts c40-50 people of whom c20-25 are new to St John's Choristers Club attracts c20 children every week
St Luke's, Woodside Croydon Area, Diocese of Southwark	60	90	+30	1 year	Midweek services have re-started
St George-in-the-East, Shadwell Stepney Area, Diocese of London	20	50	+30	2 years	Choir Church attracts c15-20 children weekly and up to c50 children and adults for Mass once a month 'English, Prayer, Action' attracts 7-8 people weekly
Totals	275	515	+240	various	Additional c100 – 110 people per week

Before analysing the data, some caveats should be noted. The growth in attendance in these seven parishes has been over varying periods of time so any comparisons should be made with care. Growth has also, in most cases, progressed in 'fits and starts' over time – an uneven pattern which most Vicars will probably recognise. Trends from the past are also (obviously) not necessarily a reliable guide to the future.

With caveats noted, the data from these parishes is encouraging:

- Across the seven parishes, the total typical attendance at the main act of Sunday worship each week has grown from 275 to 515 overall, a rise of over 80% (over varying time periods)
- Most of these parishes have been growing at an average annual

growth rate of 5-10% per year, which (for these parishes) is equivalent to c3 – 15 net new people each year. The parishes which have grown from a small base in a short period of time obviously have higher annual growth rates of more like 50-60% but such rates of growth are very unlikely to be typical over time.

- In addition to the growth in attendance at the main Sunday act of worship, four of the seven parishes have also seen significant growth at newly started services at other times or other acts of worship during the week. The scale of this growth is nearly 50% of that seen at the main act of worship. This is a mixture of traditional services (as at the Good Shepherd Mission Church for example) as well as Messy Church and Choir Church/Clubs for children and their parents.
- De/unchurched? – From the qualitative evidence we have, it seems that the growth in congregations is very much a mix of existing church members transferring from other churches together with some people returning to church after a few years away and some people who are new to church. The one robust source of quantitative data we have – from our ‘snapshot survey’ of St John’s, Catford morning congregation – suggested that of those who are not transferring from other churches, the ‘returners’ are likely to be far more numerous than those completely ‘new to church’.

9.2 CHURCH GROWTH IN THE LONDON CONTEXT

This research report is focused entirely on parishes in Greater London and so readers outside of London will need to interpret any findings for their own context. Demographic and socio-economic factors can play a role in influencing the prospects for church growth.

With respect to this report, there are two key aspects of the London context which we would like to comment upon – population growth and deprivation.

POPULATION GROWTH

We know from official data that the population of London has been

rising in recent decades and has certainly been rising during the last decade, the main period under consideration in this report. All other things being equal, one would expect a rising population to feed into corresponding church growth. In London, we also know that the nature of immigration is such that – on average – those moving into London are more likely to be church-goers than those who already live here, particularly reflecting immigration from parts of Africa and Eastern Europe. So, rising population and the nature of recent immigration does help to explain some of the recent church growth in London, and we have seen that noted in some of the case studies in this report.

However, we should be very wary of writing off the growth of these parishes as ‘just population growth’ for two reasons:

- Most of the parishes in London have exactly the same ‘opportunity’ of this helpful demographic context but many have continued to decline in numbers in the last decade and so the churches in the case studies are clearly doing something different to most
- The rate of church growth in these case studies (typically c5-10% per year) is much higher than the overall rate of population growth (typically c5-10% over a decade) and the nature of new attenders is more ethnically diverse, suggesting that population growth may be a factor in church growth but not the only one

DEPRIVATION

Every single one of the seven parishes in this report is within the 15% most deprived parishes in England, four of them are within the 10% most deprived and one is within the 5% most deprived.

All of these churches have seen net growth in their congregations within the last five years, and some have established new congregations or midweek expressions of church.

Interestingly, five out of the seven parishes also noted that after stewardship campaigns their congregational giving had also risen significantly in the last few years too. All of these churches also rely on lay leaders to run activities in their parishes.

Some church leaders persist in using an area’s deprivation as a reason for a lack of church growth. These case studies strongly indicate that such arguments are excuses rather than explanations. It is entirely

possible to grow churches in deprived areas and their congregations are capable of both leadership and generosity. All church members are a gift to the church, regardless of their ethnicity, education or income.

9.3 HABITS OF GROWTH

Across the seven growing parishes there are also some common practices in evidence. We could perhaps tentatively describe these as 'habits for growth'.

In all, or most, of the parishes we observe these practices:

1. Growth-minded priests - Priests who want to see their churches grow and are prepared to lead in this direction. For them, growth is part of their mindset. Their leadership often sees much continuity with previous practices, but they are also prepared to make changes where necessary.
2. Maximising resources – where churches own assets (particularly property) they are actively managed and income is secured where possible – flats are not left empty, rents are reviewed, halls are let out. Even parishes in deprived areas can have a surprising number of property assets. Congregations are also encouraged to give to the church through stewardship campaigns.
3. Building leadership capacity – the priest recognises that he cannot do everything and seeks to encourage volunteering from the congregation, takes on interns where possible, accepts help from retired clergy and recruits staff where resources allow. (We reflect on this point further below).
4. Hospitality – Sunday services are deliberately designed to be welcoming to newcomers, with a well-run service of worship and with visitors being greeted, children and families accommodated and refreshments served at the end.
5. Children welcome – all of the growing churches have activities on Sundays and during the week which are designed for children and young families, including Sunday school, choir clubs and Messy Church.

6. Open to working with local partners – most of these churches work closely with their primary school or a local nursery or are part of Citizens UK (four out of seven of the parishes are members of Citizens UK). They are connected into their local community and work alongside others where there is mutual benefit; they are part of the 'give and take' of local community life.
7. Midweek encounters – all of the churches run or host activities during the week which lead to encounters between the priest and church members and people who are not church-members and where there is the possibility of conversation and relationship. This is more than just letting out the church hall to another group, these are activities with a 'missional mindset', usually serving a local need and with time for conversation. Typical examples are 'stay and play' activities for parents and children, craft clubs and choirs. Such activities ensure that the church is 'porous' through the week – providing scope for people outside of the church community to become involved with it on its 'edges'.

It is fascinating to note how similar these observed 'methods' are to the practices of many growing evangelical churches in London. Although worship styles and churchmanship may well differ, it is possible that the underlying habits of church growth may be rather more universal and not owned by any particular tradition.

As an encouragement to other parishes interested in seeing growth, it is worth noting two further points:

- relatively few of the activities or habits described in our case studies could be classed as novel or innovative – most are tried and tested, and some are truly ancient. It seems that the challenge is rarely to invent a brand new activity, but to do simple things well and be open to learning from the habits of others.
- five out of seven of the parish priests in our stories of growth are in their first postings as Vicars or Priests in charge. Most are young and relatively inexperienced priests.

9.4 CAPACITY AS A KEY FACTOR

No parish relies entirely on its priest to run all of its activities – all churches rely on lay people to some extent. Indeed, if the congregation are the ‘Body of Christ’ then it is important that they are involved in discerning their gifts and talents and using these in the service of others, in whatever form that may take. Some churches are also able to employ interns or paid members of staff to help develop and lead activities, adding to their capacity to run services and activities.

Generally speaking the churches in our case studies have few paid members of staff apart from the clergy – perhaps a part-time administrator and a part-time organist – and most do not have a significant income to afford many extra staff.

In order to find extra capacity, most of these parishes do benefit from the unpaid services of a Non-Stipendiary Minister or a retired priest for at least a few hours each week.

Several of our case study parishes also benefit from the North London Pastoral Assistant scheme or the Stepney Intern Programme, each of which provides interns for a year to various parishes, partly for the training and formation of the intern (some go on to become priests) and partly to provide assistance to that parish. St George-in-the-East has developed its own Lay Community which provides four part-time ‘interns’ to assist the church. These sorts of schemes clearly provide important extra capacity too, and on a significant scale in the case of St George’s.

Also of note is that all of these parishes recognise the value of lay leadership – i.e. members of the congregation setting up and running activities in collaboration with the priest, or sometimes even just with his blessing. Several of the stories in this report describe how the positive response of a priest to the passions of his congregation has seen new ministries released and even Sunday services established. As noted above, every single one of these congregations is rooted in one of England’s most deprived neighbourhoods, which suggests that such contexts are not a barrier to lay engagement; there may be less middle-class skills (accountants and lawyers) but these communities clearly possess other skills and abilities instead.

These stories of growth are clearly not ones where ‘Father does everything’. The wider evidence suggests that such practices are neither likely to lead to sustained growth nor likely to be healthy for the priest.

A key role of the priest is to identify how to unlock the latent capacity within the church so that the church can grow and flourish. When churches reach a plateau in their growth it seems that developing new capacity can often be a crucial factor in re-starting growth again.



10 GROWTH IN PERSPECTIVE

This final section takes a step back and attempts to put our research into the broader perspective of Anglican church growth and decline in London. We conclude the report with a challenge.

10.1 GROWTH AND DECLINE IN ANGLICAN CATHOLICISM IN LONDON

OVERALL GROWTH AND DECLINE IN LONDON

The most recent available data¹ published by the Church of England for church attendance in the Dioceses of London and Southwark (whose 688 parishes cover a large part of Greater London) shows a modest decline in both Dioceses in 2014 and 2015. This decline is evident regardless of which measure is used – whether Average or Usual Sunday attendance or even weekly attendance (which includes midweek church attendance). It also occurs at a time of ongoing population growth across London.

The full story is of course more complicated as there are two quite different trends at work at the same time – some churches and parishes are growing, whilst others are in gradual decline.

Our own analysis of both London and Southwark parish level data suggests that in both Dioceses in recent years (that is, to 2015) the number of parishes which are declining still significantly outweighs the number of parishes which are growing. Decline is still more common than growth.

The difference is most marked in the London Diocese where declining parishes outnumber growing parishes by a ratio of almost two to one – although some of the growing parishes are doing so robustly and include some of London's largest churches (such as Holy Trinity Brompton).

Although much work is now in train to promote church growth in London, it is clear that there is still a long way to go.

GROWTH AND DECLINE IN ANGLICAN CATHOLIC CHURCHES IN LONDON

So, how do Anglican Catholic churches fare within this overall picture?

It is currently not possible to give a conclusive answer to this question, as there is no published list of which parishes could be

classified as 'Anglican Catholic'; the Church of England and the Dioceses in London do not publish attendance data according to the 'tradition' of churches and producing such a list would not be a trivial task.

If Anglican Catholic parishes were simply following the 'average' trend of all other Anglican parishes in London then we would expect them to be displaying the same overall trends that we have just outlined – a pattern where there are more parishes in decline than are growing.

However, there are three reasons which suggest that growth is currently less likely to be found amongst Anglican Catholic parishes in London, on average:

- **Much church growth in London is driven by large evangelical churches and there are no corresponding large Anglican Catholic churches doing the same** – in London there is no equivalent in the Anglican Catholic tradition to the evangelical 'mega churches' with 2,000+ members which are driving much of the evangelical growth and which are actively church planting. There are, however, a number of large and lively Anglican Catholic churches of 200 – 400 members in London but few seem to be growing consistently over time or actively facilitating the growth of other parishes.
- **The growth of new Anglican Catholic worshipping communities appears to be modest in scale** – With no mega churches and little church planting, are there new 'fresh expressions' being initiated by Anglican Catholic churches? The 2005 English Church Census² suggested that 'Anglo-Catholics' accounted for 22% of Anglican churches in Greater London (223 out of 1017) with a combined Sunday attendance of 18,600. However, one of the few pieces of large-scale research on church growth which identifies church traditions suggests that the Anglican Catholic contribution was less than might be expected. According to George Lings³, of the 1100 Fresh Expressions initiated across 21 Dioceses 1992 - 2014, only 13% defined themselves as 'Anglo-Catholic', compared with 64% which described themselves as 'Evangelical'.

² Data drawn from Brierley, P (2014) *UK Church Statistics 2: 2010-2020* as well as email correspondence with Peter Brierley

³ Lings, G (2016) *The Day of Small Things: An analysis of fresh expressions of Church in 21 dioceses of the Church of England*, Church Army Research Unit (p200)

¹ Drawn from *Statistics for Mission 2015*, Church of England Research & Statistics

Although only indicative, it suggests that nationally, Anglican Catholics have been less likely to lead new initiatives to grow churches than other Anglicans (on average). It is not unreasonable to expect this pattern to be broadly reflected in London.

● **Our own research in London found few growing parishes**

- In the absence of any large churches driving growth, with little evidence of church planting and with modest involvement in new ‘fresh expressions’ the only other possible source of growth would be a broad landscape of gently growing parishes. In our trawl for ‘growth case studies’ for this research in London (using both parish attendance data and networking with Anglican church leaders) we had great difficulty in finding many Anglican Catholic parishes which had grown consistently in the last five years. Clearly, we found some and there are certainly more than seven in London, but our own research experience suggests that these examples are neither typical nor plentiful. Given all of this evidence, it is hard to see where significant Anglican Catholic growth in London might be.

So, at the very least, if Anglican Catholic parishes are the same as all other parishes in London then we can confidently say that the majority are in decline today. Taking all of the above evidence into account, however, suggests to us that Anglican Catholic parishes are less likely to be growing than other kinds of parishes in London and where growth is occurring, those parishes are likely to be making a relatively smaller contribution to overall growth.

We believe that our case studies of parish growth are therefore unusual, rather than typical, examples of Anglican Catholic parishes in London. This prompts the question as to why this might be the case.

10.2 FOUR CHALLENGES?

Our case studies reveal a set of church leaders positive about growth and pursuing it in different ways. We have tentatively identified a set of ‘habits of growth’ drawn from their experiences.

From our wider research we have tentatively identified a

corresponding set of ‘habits of decline’ which may be particularly prevalent amidst those Anglican Catholic parishes which are not growing. We present these below as four challenges. They are presented for discussion, rather than offered as firm conclusions, but some common themes and patterns from our research discussions with a range of interviewees do seem evident.

We are not persuaded that much, if any, of the challenge is theological but rather more likely to be cultural – habits acquired at some point during the 20th Century and which are no longer serving the tradition well.

I) ARE PARISH PRIESTS ‘MINDED TO GROW’?

All of the priests in our case study parishes had one thing in common – they are all interested in seeing their congregations grow and are active and intentional in working towards this. They recognise that the church’s mission to the world involves engaging with neighbours in the hope of ‘making more disciples’.

It is equally clear that not all parish priests are as positive about ‘growth’, with some ambivalent at best about the whole idea.

Some of our interviewees suggested that the traditional mindset for a parish priest seems to be very much about being faithful in ‘running a parish’, ‘administering the sacraments’ and ‘praying for the world’ and relying upon the local community to faithfully respond to this by attending services. This may have been an appropriate stance when churchgoing in Britain was more prevalent but in a post-Christendom culture, they argue that the role of the parish priest has changed – it needs to be reimagined and the priest must become more of a ‘missionary’ to a sceptical community. A time of declining congregations requires a greater sense of urgency:

“there is too much focus on saying Mass and expecting people to care...we need to change”

II) SHOULD PARISHES PLACE MORE EMPHASIS ON BUILDING LEADERSHIP CAPACITY?

We have already seen that a key factor in growing churches is the leadership capacity to enable this, in all its forms– including clergy

as well as paid staff and lay leaders within the congregation. There are certainly limits to how large a congregation a single priest can realistically lead and care for.

Our discussions have identified two issues here.

Firstly, in some parishes the way that the priest interprets his role can, in practice, militate against the development of lay leadership. Where there is an undue emphasis on the priest playing his role rather than seeing the roles of others developed, the burden of work in the parish will not be shared and growth will be limited.

Secondly, to expand capacity through additional clergy and paid staff roles (e.g. a children's worker or an intern), resources are a key factor. Many parishes claim poverty, but it seems that this can be partly self-inflicted. Many parishes own a surprising number of property assets but do not manage them well. Many also have very modest congregation giving, but have never really asked their congregations to give or sought to develop those habits consistently. In a number of our case studies it is interesting to see how significantly congregational giving increased when proper attention was given to this. Giving is also a key part of discipleship. Many Anglican Catholic churches do not have well developed programmes of midweek fellowship and catechesis within their congregations and so it is perhaps hardly surprising that congregational giving suffers as part of this.

How can priests work with their congregations to deepen their commitment to discipleship and develop more leaders? What does a faithfully catholic approach to this look like? Are priests being trained to develop others?

III) COULD LARGER ANGLICAN CATHOLIC CHURCHES PLAY A GREATER ROLE IN CHURCH GROWTH?

A significant element of the growth of evangelical Anglican churches in London is led and supported by a handful of large churches – particularly Holy Trinity Brompton, All Souls Langham Place and St Helens Bishopsgate. They have not only grown significantly themselves but they are actively supporting and resourcing other parishes in London to grow as well – including church planting initiatives.

There is no Anglican Catholic church of this scale playing such a role in London. If there was widespread growth amongst parishes, this might

not matter – it could be argued that Anglican Catholic growth might simply look different. However, there is no such widespread growth either.

Some argue that 'mega churches' and 'church planting' are 'not very Anglican Catholic'. Given the Catholic Revival and the subsequent growth of Anglican Catholic churches and their long and rich history of church planting in the 19th and early 20th Century it is not obvious where this reticence has come from – it is certainly a modern reticence.

There are a number of lively Anglican Catholic churches with regular Sunday attendances of 200 – 400. Our research did not identify significant growth amongst this group nor did it find much evidence of systematic church planting or growth initiatives to benefit other parishes. It raises the question as to whether these larger, better resourced, Anglican Catholic churches could play a more active role in promoting growth within the tradition. Is it time for a new wave of Anglican Catholic church planting – whatever this might look like?

IV) DO ANGLICAN CATHOLICS NEED TO COLLABORATE MORE?

In the face of significant challenges, is it time for greater collaboration between Anglican Catholic churches – to be more open to learning and sharing from each other and other traditions? The case studies in this report alone have identified quite a range of good habits and initiatives which could be an encouragement to many parishes – and there are undoubtedly more to be found and shared.

What are the processes for doing this? How do Anglican Catholic churches network with each other and learn? Could greater momentum for change be achieved by working together more?

10.3 A RADICAL HISTORY

To any readers in doubt about the links between Anglican Catholicism, church growth and mission, even a cursory examination of the history of the tradition over the last two centuries reveals a remarkable story.

Anglican Catholicism was originally typified by a deep commitment to personal holiness, a confident approach to church planting and a selfless and sometimes courageous commitment to living amongst, and serving, the poorest members of society. Anglican Catholics even developed a reputation for holding large national conferences to celebrate their work and worship together in their thousands.

In July 1933, to celebrate the centenary of the Oxford Movement, a national congress of Anglican Catholics was held in London over the course of a week. On Sunday 9th July, some 15,000 people celebrated solemn evensong together in the White City Stadium (Britain's first Olympic Stadium). The rest of the week saw thousands of Anglican Catholics descend on the Albert Hall for a programme of events, talks and worship. There was a Youth Pageant which attracted over 4,000 young people. On the final Sunday, between 45,000 and 50,000 people gathered in the Stadium in pouring rain for a high Mass.

At this Centenary Congress, one of its key speakers, Revd Professor Kenneth Kirk, celebrated the renewed passion for personal holiness which the Catholic Revival had brought about:

"If there was one thing in which the poetic vision of Keble, the burning zeal of Newman, and the grave earnestness of Pusey were unanimous, it was this conviction – that no one is incapable of sanctity, and that the Church which is not calling every man and woman to enter into this their true inheritance is a Church which is betraying one of its most sacred tasks"

The Catholic Revival also saw a renewed sensitivity for social concerns and gave a new impetus to serving the poor (complementing the work which the Evangelicals had been doing to abolish the Slave Trade at the same time). This renewed social concern was recognised and celebrated at the 1933 Congress:

What was distinctive about the Oxford Movement's contribution was the formation of religious communities, both for men and women, and the establishment of missions and settlements in the slums. The Tractarians' incarnational theology led them to see that no sphere of human affairs was without the possibility

of being sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and they taught that God's grace – especially his sacramental grace – was essential for those working for human equality and dignity⁴.

A number of Anglican Catholic priests led the way in publicising the horrors of the slums and working to improve the housing conditions for the residents of those areas.

For example, in 1856, Fr Charles Lowder, founder of the Society of the Holy Cross, was invited by the Rector of St George-in-the-East to become the head of a new mission to the poor in London's notorious Docklands. He attracted co-workers (men and women) and developed a remarkable mission which provided schooling, a hostel for homeless girls, a refuge for prostitutes and much general welfare for the poor. He also raised the funds to buy a plot of land and build a new church, St Peter's London Docks, consecrated in 1866 to serve this same community.

In the 1920s a young Father Basil Jellicoe, who was leading a Mission in the slums of Somers Town in north London, established the St Pancras House Improvement Society and raised funds nationally through Housing Bonds in order to build hundreds of new homes for local residents⁵.

Anglican Catholics were no less active in planting and building new churches. Many parishes in London today owe their very existence to the fundraising, hard work and leadership of previous generations of Anglican Catholics who were determined to see new churches established. Some of the case study parishes in this report are included amongst them.

St Benet's in Kentish Town was originally a 'tin mission hut' reaching out to the local community, then replaced with a permanent church. St John's, Catford was built on land donated to the Church of England by Lord Forster (a local family), to provide for the pastoral care of the incoming residents of the new Downham Estate built by London County Council. St Mary's in Tottenham was funded as a mission from Marlborough College, together with support from the East London

⁴ From Gunstone, J (2010) *Lift High the Cross: Anglo-Catholics and the Congress Movement*, Canterbury Press Norwich (p.328)

⁵ A fuller account of the life and work of Fr Basil can be found in our 2015 report "Our Common Heritage: Housing associations and churches working together" available on the Centre for Theology & Community website

Churches Fund. This latter fund was set up by the suffragan Bishop of Bedford, Walsham How to support the building of many new churches and the establishment of new clergy positions.

From the 19th Century through to the second world war, many Anglican Catholics were actively involved in planting churches in new housing areas where London was expanding and were also leading new missions to the slums of the inner city.

The aim of this brief historical foray is not nostalgia for the past but a reminder of what the tradition has given to the Church of England and to its many local communities in previous generations. It is an encouragement to celebrate current growth and consider what new work might be possible in the future, whatever that might look like – undoubtedly different, but potentially no less significant.

10.4 CONCLUSIONS

The history of Anglican Catholicism is full of inspiring stories of growth, mission and service. Today, our own case studies have found encouraging stories of growth across London – and there are other stories too which we have not had space or time tell.

In particular, the tradition's profound understanding of the importance of incarnational ministry and the rootedness of its worship in age-old truths is surely more relevant than ever in a city typified by constant change and rootlessness.

Yet it is clear that the tradition has a challenge on its hands to recover the vision and energy it once had for growth and mission.

As a new generation of priests take up the challenge of working out how to care for their parishes in the 21st century could this herald a new moment for the tradition? Is there the confidence and energy to renew the movement?

AFTERWORD

AN URGENT CHALLENGE

Many Anglican Catholics have embraced a number of damaging myths about church growth:

“It’s all sheep-stealing – no-one is really making new disciples”

“Churches are focussing on growth at the expense of social justice”

“Growth only happens in the suburbs and among the middle classes”

“The churches which grow have sold out to the dominant culture”

“Church growth is an evangelical phenomenon”

In *Love, Sweat and Tears*, Tim Thorlby’s research debunked the first four myths. His study of evangelical church plants in east London showed that they are indeed making new disciples; that the congregations most engaged in social justice seem to be best at reaching the unchurched, and that these churches are drawing worshippers from a growing range of cultures, races and social classes. *A Time to Sow* reinforces those conclusions.

Most importantly, the report debunks the final Catholic myth. It refutes the consoling claim that growth is “not for us”. For Catholic church growth is happening in some of England’s poorest neighbourhoods. Far from selling out to the dominant culture, the churches which are growing are challenging injustice and proclaiming the faith with confidence.

The stories in this report demonstrate the value of the parish system, drawing together people from every part of the community. But they remind us that parishes are at their strongest when they are open to new ideas.

This report leaves no room for complacency. There is a striking contrast between the stories of renewal in the body of the report and the picture of decline presented in the final chapter. *A Time to Sow* shows

that Catholic growth is possible. But it also shows that such growth is only happening in a fraction of the parishes where it could – that there is a need for a change in the culture of Catholic Anglicanism if it is to fulfil its God-given potential to transform lives and communities.

At its best, Anglo-Catholicism has always had a radical, disruptive streak. In my own parish, the liturgical changes brought about by the Victorian Catholics led to riots on the streets. In his words and deeds, the late Fr Ken Leech reminded us that Catholic orthodoxy is also deeply subversive.

Fr Ken was not waiting for another movement to begin in Oxford. He thought renewal should start in the back streets, not the gleaming spires. *A Time to Sow* suggests that such a movement is already beginning. It shows us the potential, and the urgency, of joining in that work.

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